

## **Flip The Ballot on Election Day**

Let's temporarily set aside our morbid preoccupation with the U.S. economy, and dwell on more pleasant considerations.

Mother Nature and her critters don't give a hoot - so to speak - about our relatively petty (to them) and transient problems. It's up to us to give a hoot about theirs, namely having places to hang out here and there within the virtual desert of urban sprawl and tilled fields that Iowa has become in the last 150 years.

In the early 1800's, Iowa consisted of about 75% prairie, 15% forests and 10% wetlands. Today, over 99% of the prairie has been tilled, over half the forests have been cleared and about 95 percent of the state's prairie pothole wetlands have been drained.

Far too few voters know the details about the \$20 million bond issue that will be on the Nov. 4 ballot. It would authorize the Johnson County Conservation Board (JCCB) to acquire appropriate natural areas (often marginal cropland) from willing sellers. These properties would be permanently preserved.

If you're a "What's in it for me" type (nothing wrong with that), we're also talking about protecting and enhancing the quality of our water sources, increasing hunting and fishing opportunities, and building recreational trails.

This being a flood year, you may also be interested in the possibility of restoring wetlands where the wetlands used to be instead of planting crops in low-lying areas and hoping for the best. We keep trying to push floodwater farther downstream instead of contouring bottomland to let it spread out where it wants to go.

It's hard – especially during uncertain economic times – to vote for what could be viewed as a voluntary tax increase. I know there are also fiscal

conservatives who are uncomfortable with writing a blank check - we don't yet know which properties are likely to be acquired.

My response to them is: When you gave Mother Teresa a donation, did you ask her what she was going to spend the money on? Or did you have a certain amount of faith that she would apply it where it would do the most good?

The JCCB is no Mother Teresa, but there are a bunch of smart people serving on it - I have no qualms whatsoever about how the money will be spent.

This Election Day, we'll cast our votes for the people we believe can save us from our sizeable assortment of problems. Arguably as important, on the back of that same ballot we can cast our votes to help save Mother Nature and her critters from our relentless assault on their habitat.

If not now, when? Let's not let them (and ourselves) down.

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