



TURKEY RIVER
RECREATIONAL CORRIDOR
2024 Annual Report



Dear Supporters and Friends,

In 2024, we undertook numerous impactful initiatives and strengthened key partnerships, contributing to the growth and visibility of the Turkey River Recreational Corridor (TRRC) and its surrounding communities. Our efforts began with facilitating the Elkader City Council's goal-setting session in January, followed by assisting with plans for the Keystone Bridge Rededication, a landmark event for Elkader held in May. In March, we supported the Motor Motor 5k/10k in collaboration with the Clayton County Conservation Board (CCCB), bringing nearly 100 participants together for a successful race.

Throughout the year, our focus on community outreach and event support was evident. We assisted with Gilbertson's Earth Day event in April and provided registration support for the Driftless 100 gravel bike race. Additionally, we worked closely with local governments and organizations, offering recommendations for infrastructure improvements in Clermont. Our long-term planning efforts continued with support for the Pony Hollow Trail Expansion, including writing a successful \$325,000 State Recreational Trail grant application. We also supported the Master Conservationist Statewide Meeting hosted by Clayton and Fayette Counties in August and were featured at the Iowa County Conservation System annual conference hosted by Fayette & Winneshiek Counties. Notably, we initiated conversations with the City of Elgin regarding their historic kiosk project at 401 Mill Street.

Promoting tourism and recreational activities was a key priority this year. Attending the Iowa Bike Expo in January, we distributed over 500 bike maps and nearly 200 water trail maps, resulting in increased interest in our region. Our partnership with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources allowed us to secure river clean-up bags for Canoeopia, furthering our commitment to environmental stewardship. Social media and outreach efforts remained strong, with targeted promotions for events in Clermont, Elgin, and Elkader. We distributed updated fishing guides at local stores, ensuring visitors had access to essential tourism information. TRRC was also featured in the 2024 Iowa Travel Guide.

One of the year's standout programs was the 2024 Turkey River Safari, which attracted over 300 participants from various states, with ages ranging from 1 to 67. This family-friendly adventure encouraged exploration of scenic and cultural landmarks throughout the corridor. We were proud to partner with a variety of sponsors, whose contributions helped make the event a resounding success.

Trail usage data continued to be collected from our eight infrared counters across Clayton and Fayette Counties, providing valuable insights into patterns over the past five years. In-person counts in July allowed us to gather demographic information to further refine our data.

Our board met monthly to review progress, set priorities, and guide programming. Collaboration with local organizations, including the ISU Extension and County Conservation offices, remained a cornerstone of our efforts, culminating in successful participation in the statewide Master Conservationist meeting.

These accomplishments would not have been possible without the unwavering support of our volunteers, community partners, and sponsors. As we reflect on 2024, we are energized by our progress and look forward to continuing our mission of enhancing recreational opportunities and fostering community growth in the coming years. Thank you for your continued support and partnership. We look forward to even greater success in 2025!

Warm Regards,

Mallory Hanson, Director
Turkey River Recreational Corridor
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Report Contents

The 2024 annual report was prepared to reflect a summary of tasks laid out in the annual contract for services between the Turkey River Recreational Corridor (TRRC) Board and Northeast Iowa Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D).

.01

Project Support, Grant Writing, & Progress

The TRRC provided support and guidance for multiple projects throughout the year including fundraising, grant writing, project management, and promotion.



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Marketing the Corridor

The TRRC implemented various strategies to raise the public profile of the Turkey River Corridor in 2024, including social media influencer marketing and photography.



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Turkey River Safari

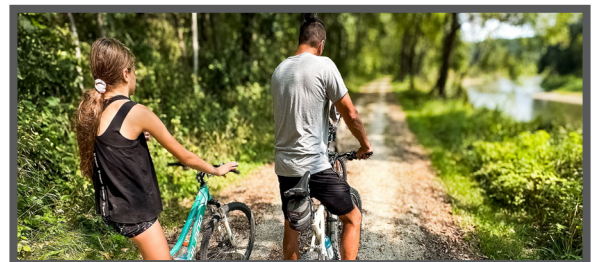
The Turkey River Safari continues to be a popular way for multi-generational families to get outside and explore the Corridor's recreational and historical amenities.



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Trail Use and Economics

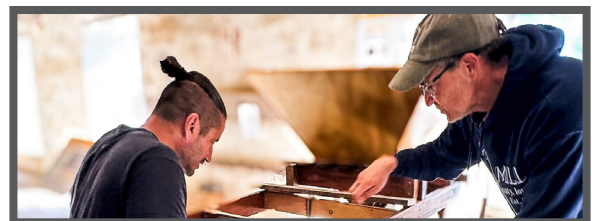
Trail enhancement, marketing, and expansion is a major priority for the TRRC. The board worked throughout the year to continue tracking use and aligning that with economic data.



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Board Management & Partnerships

The TRRC board meets regularly throughout the year to work on their strategic priorities. Partnerships are also a key strategy for success.





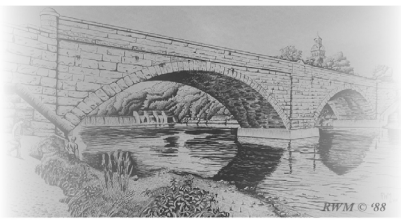
The Mayor and City Council
of the
City of Elkader
invite you to join us for a

**REDEDICATION and CELEBRATION
OF THE KEYSTONE BRIDGE**

Tuesday, May 7, 2024 | 3:00 p.m.
Keystone Park: 103 S Main Street, Elkader

Reception to follow
The Collective: 129 N Main Street, Elkader

Join us to celebrate the 135th anniversary of the Keystone Bridge and the completion of a substantial rehabilitation project. Following the rededication, join us at The Collective for a reception and art exhibition.



.01

Project Support, Grant Writing, & Progress

In early 2024, a series of impactful initiatives and collaborations were undertaken, beginning with facilitating the Elkader City Council’s goal-setting session in January. Design work for the Keystone Bridge Rededication was finalized ahead of the May 7th event, alongside planning support for this important occasion. Significant effort was dedicated to the Motor 5k/10k, held on March 16th in partnership with CCCB, which saw nearly 100 participants. Continued focus on community outreach included assistance with Gilbertson's Earth Day event in April and supporting registration for the Driftless 100 gravel bike race on April 27th.

There were numerous interactions with local city governments and organizations, including providing recommendations for infrastructure projects in Clermont, such as a sewer update and a pedestrian crossing on Hwy 18, and contributing to conversations about replacing trail kiosks and road barriers near the Turkey River Corridor Trail. Key partnerships were strengthened with the Friends of the Elgin Public Library and the Clermont Community Club, ensuring they remained on track with their Fayette County Community Foundation Grants.

Long-term planning efforts also moved forward, including support for preparation for the Master Conservationist Statewide Meeting hosted by Clayton County and Fayette County Conservation & ISU Extension offices in August, participating in the Iowa County Conservation System annual conference hosted by Fayette & Winneshiek Counties, and writing a successful \$325,000 State Recreational Trail grant application to support the Pony Hollow Trail Expansion. Additionally, communications with the City of Elgin concerning their kiosk project at 401 Mill St. were initiated, although the project is delayed until 2025/2026. Finally, research into UTV/ATV parks and trails, as well as facilitating the Motor Mill Foundation's visioning session in July, contributed to advancing recreational development across the region.



Kiosks to be replaced in Clermont in spring of 2025 along the Turkey River Corridor Trail.

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Marketing the Corridor

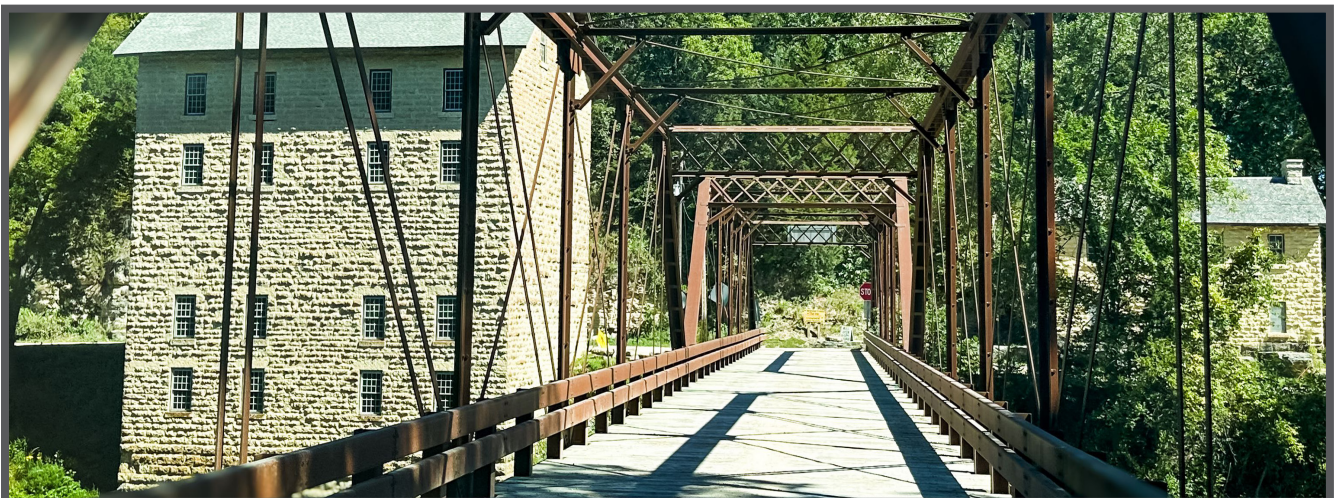
Throughout the year, significant progress was made in promoting the Turkey River Recreational Corridor (TRRC) and supporting tourism in Fayette and Clayton counties. Efforts began with research into marketing opportunities and drafting budget recommendations for FY '24 and FY '25 programming. A key promotional activity was attending the Iowa Bike Expo in Des Moines on January 27, 2024, where over 540 bike maps and 192 water trail maps were distributed, resulting in a group booking a weekend at the Motor Mill Inn. Coordination with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) also led to securing river clean-up bags for Canoecopia in March 2024.

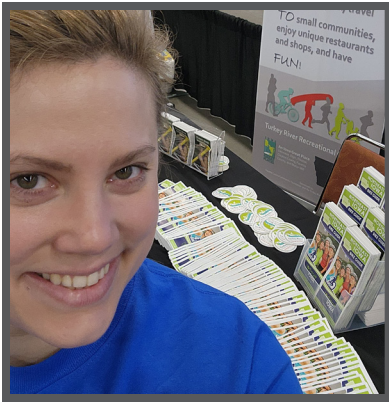
Social media efforts remained strong, promoting community events in Clermont, Elgin, and Elkader. The TRRC's visibility was further enhanced through the distribution of updated Fayette County Trout Fishing Guides and the Clayton County Trout Guide. These materials were made available at local convenience stores and nature centers, ensuring wide access to essential tourism information.

The TRRC was featured in the 2024 Iowa Travel Guide, and extensive outreach at Canoecopia in March 2024 resulted in over 1,500 interactions and the distribution of 848 publications, including water trail maps, trout fishing guides, and Elkader Promotional Cards.

Collaboration with local organizations, including the Iowa State University (ISU) Extension and County Conservation offices, focused on preparing tourism materials for the statewide Master Conservationist meeting in August 2024. Additionally, plans were made for a TRRC/Clayton County photoshoot, which took place on June 18, 2024, with the content now being edited for future promotional use.

The TRRC's representation at various events, including the Fayette County Fair and the Iowa State Fair, further solidified its presence in the region. Partnerships, such work with Family Travel Nomads through the Shrpa/Fayette County Tourism Influencer Partnership, contributed to promoting the area as a travel destination. The Shrpa influencer visit took place in early September 2024, coinciding with continued follow-up on the June photoshoot to finalize promotional content. The year's accomplishments culminated in successful participation in the statewide Master Conservationist meeting in late August, continuing the TRRC's role in supporting conservation and recreation tourism in Northeast Iowa.





Represented the TRRC at the Iowa Bike Expo January 27, 2024 and handed out regional Bike Trail Maps and Turkey River Water Trail maps.



Represented the City of Elkader and TRRC at Canocopia March 8-10, 2024 and documented 1,500 interactions.



Represented the TRRC in partnership with the Northeast Iowa Tourism Association at the Iowa State Fair August 10, 2024.



Participated in the Iowa Travel Industry Partners (ITIP) legislative day at the capitol in Des Moines, Iowa January 17, 2024.



Promoted the TRRC at the Fayette County Fair in partnership with Fayette County Tourism July 23-27, 2024.



The TRRC was featured in the 2024 Iowa Travel Guide. The Corridor is highlighted as part of a "48 Hours in Fayette County" feature.



Facilitated a Clayton County/ TRRC photoshoot on June 18, 2024 focused on recreational promotion.



Updated Clayton and Fayette County Trout Fishing Guides and re-printed Fayette County guides.



Facilitated a social media influencer visit from Family Travel Nomads through Shrpa.

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Turkey River Safari

The Turkey River Safari, organized by the Turkey River Recreational Corridor (TRRC), is a family-friendly outdoor adventure that encourages participants to explore the scenic beauty and cultural landmarks along the Turkey River. Participants receive safari kits with maps and clues, leading them to designated locations throughout the corridor. At each location, they do a crayon rubbing on a pre-installed tile as proof of their visit. The safari is designed for all ages, promoting outdoor activity, environmental awareness, and regional exploration.

The 2024 Turkey River Safari was a resounding success, with 300 safari kits distributed and 117 registered participants, ranging in age from 1 to 67. Participants included out-of-state visitors from Prairie du Chien and Lancaster, WI, as well as Tempe, AZ. In-state participants came from various areas, including northeast Iowa, Anamosa,



The 2024 Turkey River Corridor Safari received generous support from a diverse group of sponsors, making the event a true community effort.

At the Platinum level, Mark and Denise Nelson, Fayette County Economic Development & Tourism, and the Motor Mill Foundation played a significant role in ensuring the program's success.

At the Gold level, Brian Balster, the Elgin Community Betterment Club, and TJ's Pizza in Clermont provided key contributions that helped elevate the experience for participants.

A host of Silver sponsors, including Alpine Communications, Body Kneads, Brown's Sales & Leasing, Mrs. Catherine T Britt, Clayton County Development Group, Elgin State Bank, Fennelly's Irish Pub, Freedom Bank in Elkader, Palmer Lutheran Health Center, Torkelson Motors, Inc., ThINK Custom, and Valley Fresh Market, showed their commitment to supporting the local community and the event.

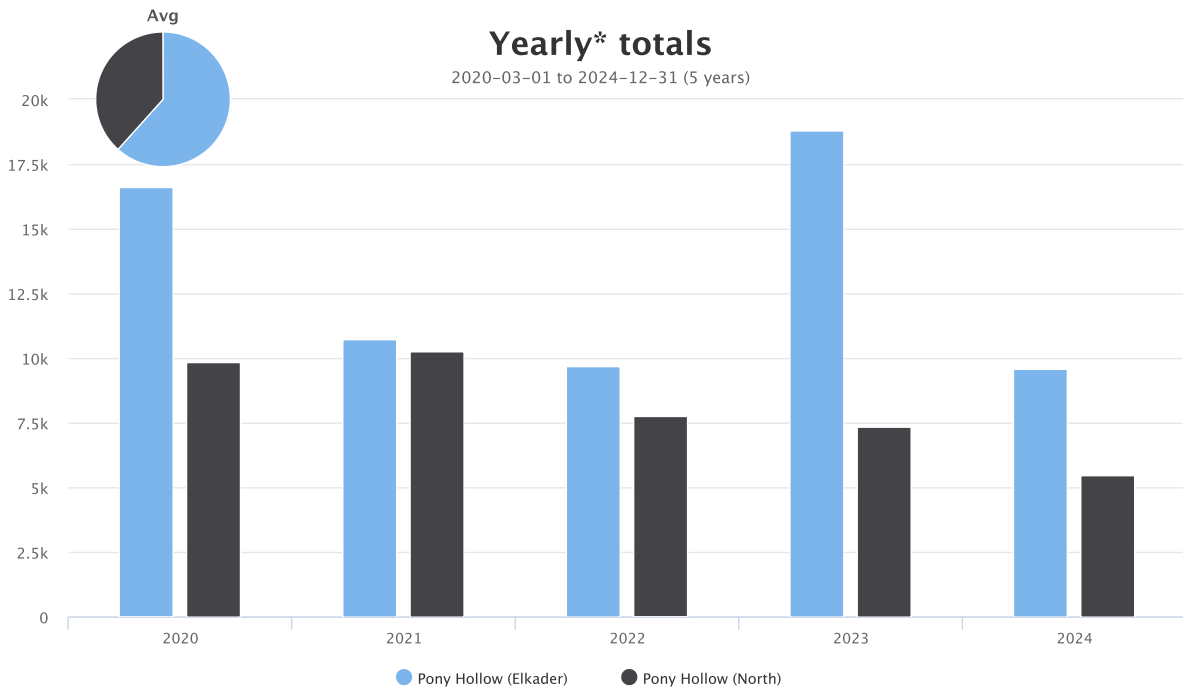
Additionally, Bronze sponsors like Andy and Maureen Johnson, Deer Run Resort, Elkader Area Chamber of Commerce, and Skip-a-Way Resort & Quarry Lodge provided valuable backing, further demonstrating the strong community support that the Turkey River Corridor Safari enjoys.

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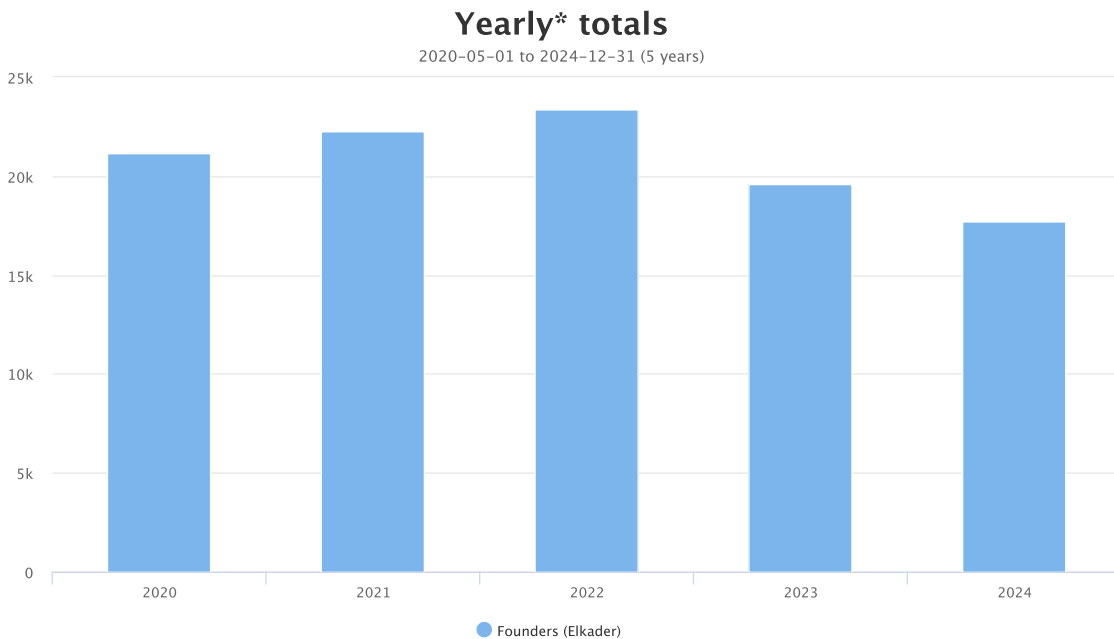
Trail Use & Economics

The Turkey River Recreational Corridor (TRRC) manages eight infrared trail counters across Clayton and Fayette Counties. These counters have now provided five years of consistent data for most locations, particularly along the Pony Hollow, Turkey River Recreational Corridor, Motor Mill, and Founders' Park trail systems. This data offers valuable insights into trail usage patterns and trends over time. In person trail counts also took place July 12-13 in Clayton County and July 19-20 in Fayette County to determine demographic information and compare visual counts with the infrared data. Yearly comparisons of infrared data for each trail can be viewed here.

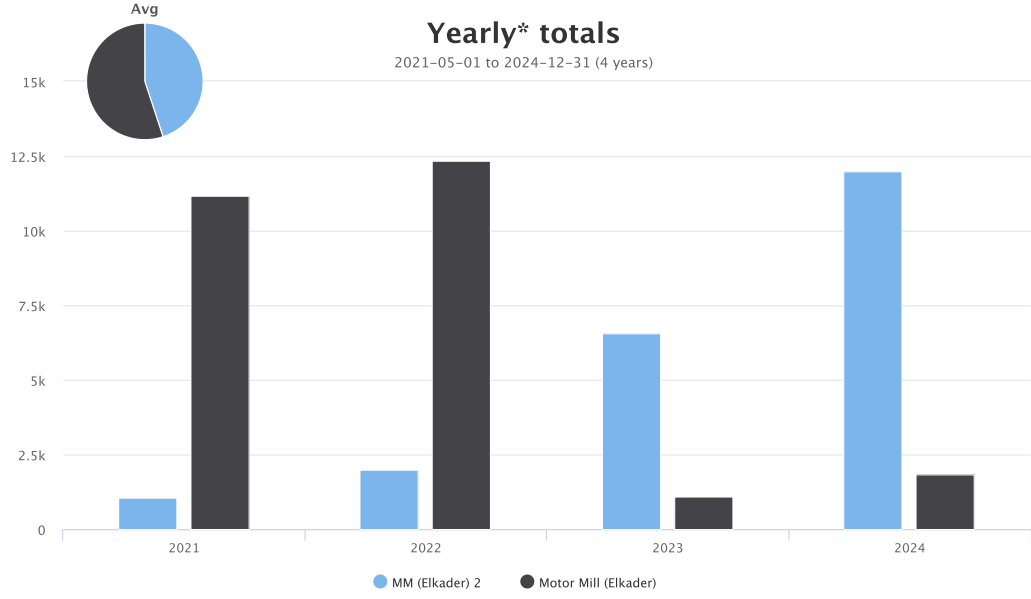
Pony Hollow Trail - Elkader



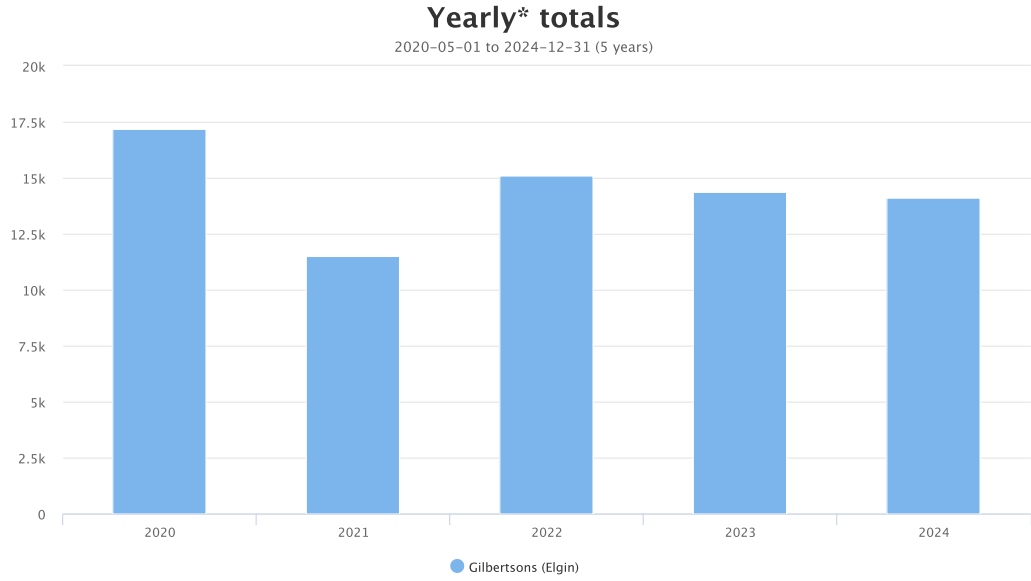
Founders' Park - Elkader



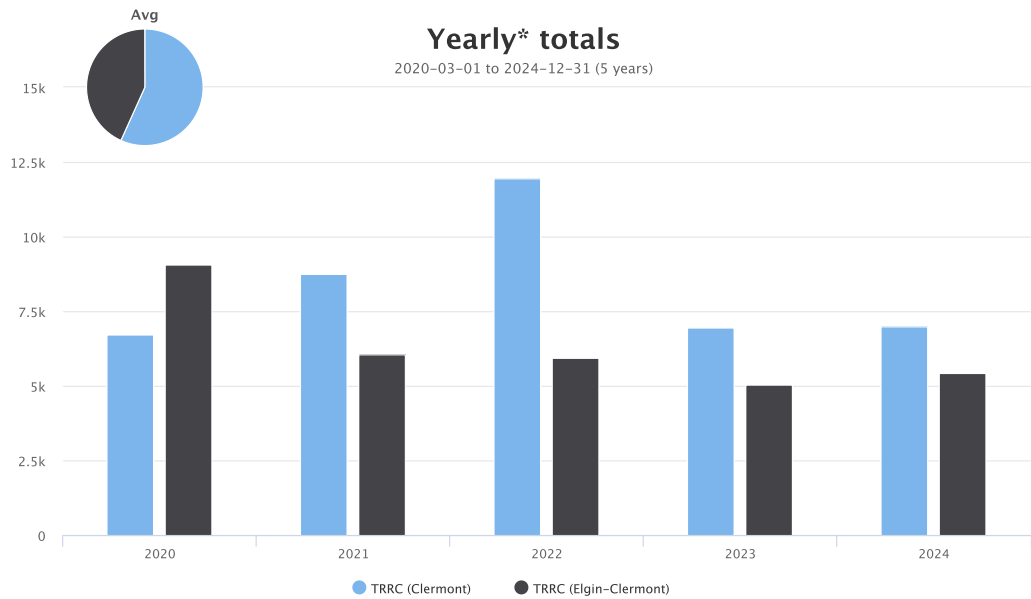
Motor Mill Trail - Elkader



Gilbertson Park - Elgin



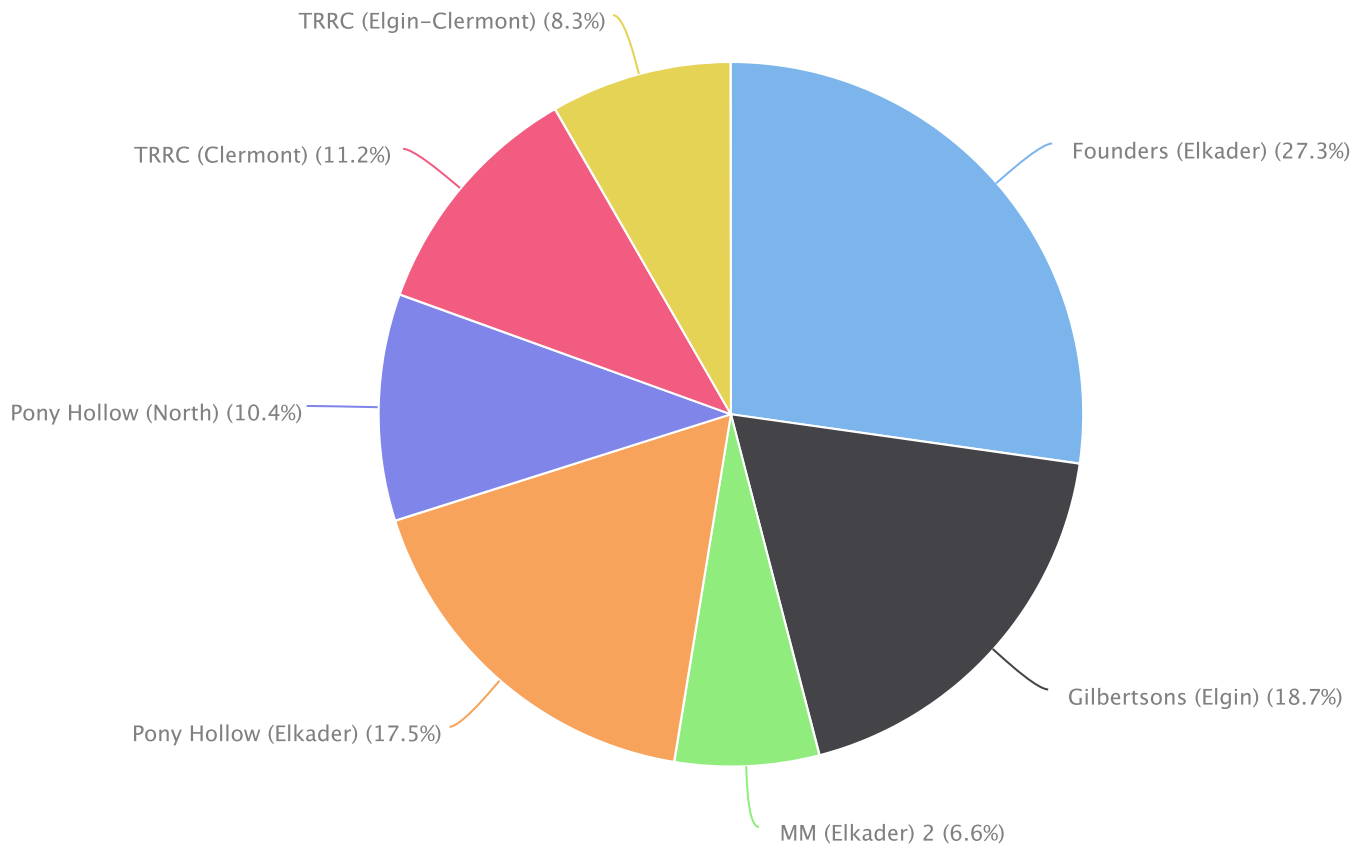
TRRC Trail - Clermont



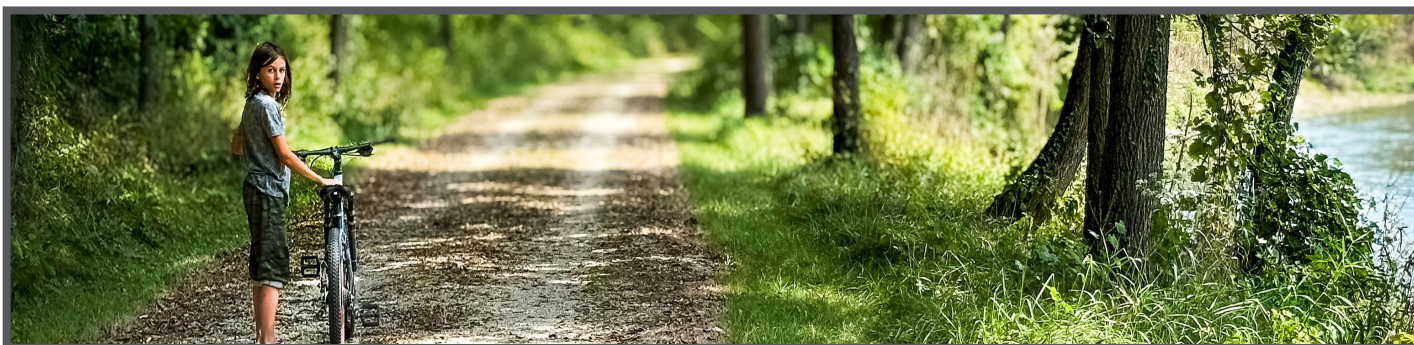
Below you'll see a comparison of all eight sites 2020-2024.

Compare Sites

2020-03-21 to 2024-08-07



Site Name	Daily Average
Founders (Elkader)	57.5 (27.3%)
Gilbertsons (Elgin)	39.4 (18.7%)
MM (Elkader) 2	14 (6.6%)
Pony Hollow (Elkader)	37 (17.5%)
Pony Hollow (North)	21.9 (10.4%)
TRRC (Clermont)	23.5 (11.2%)
TRRC (Elgin-Clermont)	17.5 (8.3%)



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Board Management & Partnerships

Board members met monthly to receive updates from the TRRC Director and to make decisions about funding priorities, programming, advertising, and partner support. Current representatives are included below. The TRRC Director also participates in other partner meetings including Northeast Iowa Tourism Association, River Bluffs Scenic Byway, and RPA 1 Enhancement Committee.

County Representation

Bruce Lehmann (Fayette County Supervisor)
Janell Bradley (Fayette County Supervisor Alternate)
Steve Doeppke (Clayton County Supervisor)
Ray Peterson (Clayton County Supervisor Alternate)

City Representation

Deb Schmidt (Elkader City Council)
Kayleen Schrader (Clermont City Council)
Greg Larson (Clermont City Council Alternate)
Chris Wachal (Elgin City Council)
Barb Wenger (Elgin City Council Alternate)

At-Large Representation

Rod Marlatt (Fayette County Conservation) *Chair
Jennifer Cowsert (Clayton County) *Vice-Chair
Jenna Pollock (Clayton County Conservation)
Kenneth Slocum (Clayton County Conservation Alternate)
Troy Schott (Fayette County)
Chris Schoen (Motor Mill Foundation)
Dan Slagel (Motor Mill Foundation Alternate)





The TRRC Board procures Mallory Hanson's coordination services through an annual contract with Northeast Iowa RC&D