

Two area families honored for efforts to protect Loess Hills land

Two area families will be among those honored at a ceremony at Iowa's State Capitol April 4 for helping protect Loess Hills land in Plymouth County.

Craig and Cathy Bobier, of Westfield, donated a conservation easement protecting 73 acres within the Broken Kettle Grasslands Bird Conservation Area in the northern Loess Hills to the Nature Conservancy, Iowa Chapter.

The easement protects a high quality prairie remnant that provides habitat for regal fritillary butterflies, bobolinks and other prairie species.

The conservation easement prohibits the cultivation of the remnant prairie and the grasslands surrounding the prairie, mining, off-road motorbikes and ATVs, subdivision of the tract, new building sites and aerial spraying.

Grazing, seed harvest and

hayage are allowed with a management plan and people can also cultivate a portion of the farmland, but they will maintain a buffer around the remnant prairie.

Donald and Mary Schenk, of Sioux City, donated a 133-acre conservation easement over land located within the Plymouth South Special Landscape Area, one of 12 priority areas in the Loess Hills.

The Schenk tract is located in Plymouth County approximately one mile northeast of Stone State Park and the Mount Talbot State Preserve and contains prairie and oak woodland habitat.

Schenk has been restoring and managing the prairie by removing encroaching brush and shrubs, prescribed burning and removing interior fence.

The easement will prohibit the cultivation of prairie and the grasslands, mining, off-

road motorbikes and ATVs, subdivision and new building sites.

Grazing, hayage and sustainable timber harvest is allowed with a management plan.

The ceremony honoring these families along with others who helped protect nearly 4,300 acres of land in Iowa is set for 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. April 4 in room 116 at the State Capitol, in Des Moines.

Governor Terry Branstad is scheduled to attend.

The first Monday in April is designated as the Gift to Iowa's Future Recognition Day to recognize, celebrate and honor individuals and corporations who have donated land or a conservation easement to benefit Iowa's parks, trails, fish and wildlife habitat, natural areas, open spaces and public recreation areas for other public uses and benefits.