



# Why Cashless?

## Reasons for Going Cashless

- Implementing the cashless system into our county parks is not a new idea, or concept. Many states already use a similar system.
- Site information is instantly updated on MyCountyParks.com
  - Campers can see what sites are available when doing a search for availability.
  - It is no longer a guessing game to know what sites are available and if it is worth your drive
- Reserve sites can be reserved for Holidays with specific dates required.
- Limits the liability for staff handling money
- Streamline the process for campground hosts
- Auditing, collecting payment for bad checks, being shorted cash in envelopes
- Modern experience for users, as many no longer use checks or carry cash
- Other counties and states made the change and did not experience pushbacks
  - Hardin, Jefferson, Johnson, Kossuth, Linn, Polk, Story
- The Iowa DNR uses online reservations only, with approximately 25% first-come first-serve onsite.
- This system will allow our Rangers more time with public engagement and security in the campgrounds.
- Labor savings to process the envelopes and collect data needed for reports, grants, and trends.
- Auditing will be more efficient for the annual audits.
- Without evaluating and assessing cost savings on how we conduct business, we would have no choice but to raise the nightly camping fee.
- By changing how camping fees are paid, we can keep our camping rates the same.
- The \$4 per facility rate is retained by the website to help offset the PCI Compliance fee for secure transactions.
- Credit/Debit card information is not stored in our system.
- Increased Wi-Fi service at all three of our campgrounds.
- Firewood and Canoes/Kayaks can still be paid with cash – no checks. If you choose to pay for these services with a credit/debit card, the Campground hosts can process with their tablets.

**Briggs Woods Park** In May of 2021 Hamilton County Conservation (HCCB) finished renovations to the campground, which included upgraded wi-fi that is free to campers in all areas of the campground. At this time, we established 33 reservable campsites out of 82 total campsites.

**Little Wall Lake Park** In 2025 fiber optics was brought into the campground, and the wi-fi hardware was upgraded to increase the coverage in the campground. There are 34 campsites out of 106 that are reservable online or by using the QR code posted at selected campsites. This does not include the group camping of six campsites which are paid together as one reservation.

**Bells Mill Park** Currently having new high speed internet service installed that will be available throughout the campground for 2025.

MyCountyParks.com (MCP) is our website for all 99 Iowa counties. The site allows facility reservations for those counties using the E-commerce system, which is the majority of counties. In addition to making reservations from home or while traveling, we have an option that allows campers to use a QR code to scan at the campsite, check the availability, and make a reservation onsite if the campsite is available.

The Hamilton County Conservation Board started a strategic planning process in 2023. Part of this process is to evaluate operations and look for efficiencies that will benefit the public, along with our department, and save materials and labor costs. Camper registration envelopes purchased annually cost \$1,700. Park Rangers spend around 1,000 hours combined, with law enforcement duties during the season, and about 10 hours per week on camper registrations. They collect camper registrations daily and make sure that each campsite is current on payment. If not, then they contact the camper for payment. They are placed into the safe to be processed by office staff. Rangers spend around 400 combined hours with registrations. Paper copies of daily registrations are retained by the campground host at each park, and one in the Conservation office.

Administrative duties include opening and handling the money/checks from each camper registration envelope, reconciling, and taking deposits to the bank. If anyone is short, then a letter is submitted to collect the difference. If a check happens to be returned for non-sufficient funds, we are notified almost two weeks after their stay. The bank tries to deposit the check twice before returning to us, and we are charged for this. In addition to the financial duties, data is also collected, such as number of people camping, where they are from, and number of nights stayed. This information is used when applying for Grants used to help with renovations. Reservations made on the website are also audited. An average of 16 hours per week or 384 hours per year spent by Office Manager throughout the camping season. Hamilton County goes through a complete state audit each year. Every camping envelope is part of this process for checks and balances. With the streamlined cashless system, a report can be run from the website with specific parameters requested by the auditing firm.

Additional costs are printer toner, paper and our volunteer hosts time creating daily registration sheets and keeping accurate records.

**An APP is NOT NEEDED for your smart phone.** Using the camera on your phone, hover over the QR code and the link will pop up on your screen for that campsite. Follow the steps from there. Your information is protected through MyCountyParks.com and your credit/debit information is not stored in the system. We are PCI compliant for both our safety. The credit card merchant fees (up to 3%) are being absorbed by HCCB and not being passed on to the campers. The \$4 per facility rate is retained by the website to help offset the PCI Compliance fee for secure transactions.

### **Conclusion**

There is no change to the Reservable sites. The only change is how the first-come first-serve sites are being paid. It is a different method of payment, that's the difference. Each campground will have easy to follow instructions located in the kiosk and our staff are more than willing to assist you in the process. Please call us if you have any questions at 515-832-9570 or email [conservation@hamiltoncounty.org](mailto:conservation@hamiltoncounty.org)