

IOWA'S WATER

Ambient Monitoring Program

Project AWARE Scrapbook

Believe it or not, hundreds of Iowans are willing to spend a week of National Rivers Month slogging through mud, wrenching canoes over sand bars and shallow riffles, and spending their vacations dungy, drenched, and dead tired – all in the name of water quality. It may sound miserable, but **Project AWARE can evoke wonderful memories that last a lifetime.**



Who: Anyone - paddlers of all ages and skill levels are welcome!

What: 7-day, 7-night float trip down an Iowa River - volunteers participate in water quality and wildlife monitoring, educational programs, and river cleanup.

When: National Rivers Month (June) – Spend one day, the whole week, or anywhere in between on AWARE.

Why: ● To engage volunteers in a service learning project that produces tangible, quantitative results (citizens involved, river miles traveled, and quantity of trash removed, recycled, reused, or properly disposed). ● To increase awareness about, and involvement in, water quality issues that threaten the health of Iowa's water resources, and to promote advocacy and action towards their improvement and protection. ● To demonstrate that Iowa citizens are passionate, motivated, and dedicated to making a difference towards water quality **one stretch of river, one week a year, one piece of trash at a time.**

Where: www.iowaprojectaware.com

"I thought it was fabulous – I've never been so filthy and so happy at any time in my life." – Cara Braveman, Waterloo

1st Annual Project AWARE June 1-8, 2003

Maquoketa River

Backbone State Park to the Mississippi River

Although daily rains dampened gear, spirits soared as volunteers on the inaugural expedition traversed the Maquoketa River from its headwaters in Backbone State Park to its confluence with the Mississippi River. Scenic, rocky-bottomed, riparian-protected stretches in the river's headwaters sharply contrasted with the cut-banks, silty streambeds, pastures, and urbanization that were found in the lower reaches of the watershed. As the river matured, so did those who participated in Project AWARE.

2003 Statistics

- **River Miles:** 105 ● **Participants:** 90
- **Trash Removed:** ● 109 Tires ● 91 Bags of Trash ● 20 Barrels
- 16 Chairs ● 10 Tarps ● 1 Meth Lab ● 1 BMX Bicycle
- 1 Easy-Bake® Oven



**Tell me, and I'll forget.
Show me, and I might remember.
Involve me, and I'll understand.**

Through educational programs, on-site demonstrations, and hands-on activities, Project AWARE helps us to better understand the watersheds that surround us.



clear

"Let's make one thing clear . . . water."

That's what he said,
at the Iowa State Fair.

Seated among the others--

men and women . . .

some with families in tow . . .

each comprehending how

Iowa's fallopian borders

could mean

more life than death. . . here.

Learn here: a river without water is an empty bed.

Taste here: the sweetest raspberries picked in childhood are wild at the river.

Awaken here: on a sun-speckled sand bar, all the senses begin to make sense.

Remain here: like the father whose father

ushered his young son toward Turkey creek and a willow grove.

The family's whetstone had prepared their knife.

A willow stick was culled, then experienced hands

tapped, tapped the bark--coaxing it forward

to reveal fresh wood and the spot to cut the notch.

Resetting its yellow sleeve,

a new willow whistle was handed to the boy.

Amid the applause of poplar leaves and cottonwood confetti,

the instrument was steadied on eager lips

as branch and breath, together,

trickled a small gift toward the creek . . . a note;

and it was clear.

Collaborative Poem from Riverse at the Iowa State Fair,
Project AWARE, 2004

"These people are motivated...they see
a piece of trash, they pick it up. They
have the attitude they're going to leave
the place better than they found it."

— Carl Schumann, Ankeny

"Education fosters understanding; under-
standing breeds passion; passion stimulates
involvement. It all starts with **awareness**."

— Brian Soenen, IOWATER Coordinator

2nd Annual Project AWARE June 19-26, 2004

Des Moines River Watershed

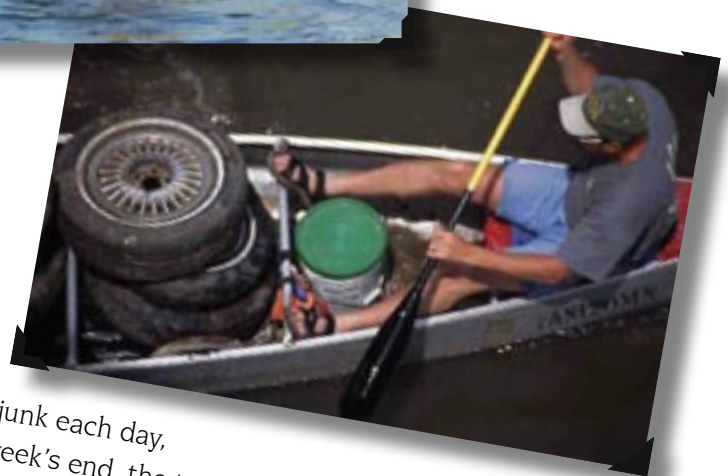
With 107 Des Moines River miles separating Gotch State Park near Humboldt and Prospect Park in Des Moines, the stage had been set for the 2nd Annual Project AWARE. Dangerously high water, however, led to alternative plans. Instead of floating the river, volunteers traveled throughout the watershed clearing brush from prairies, hauling garbage from lakes and creeks, and allowing Project AWARE to evolve into what can now truly be called a watershed rejuvenation effort.

As an addition to the expedition, David Williamson (photo, right), an artist from Ogden, Iowa, was brought on board to help bring beauty and life to the trash volunteers were pulling from the mud. During the 2004 Iowa State Fair, Williamson helped AWARE volunteers and fair goers sculpt AWARE trash into a mammoth, 13-foot rod iron canoe paddle. As an indicator of healthy water, a stonefly is perched on top of the paddle. Like the stonefly, we all need clean water to survive. The volunteers who help protect and improve Iowa's water quality give us hope that we'll have clean water forever. This year, the stonefly sits atop the sculpture. Next year, who knows? The truth is in the trash...see 'ya on the river!

2004 Statistics

- **River Miles:** 17 ● **Lakes Paddled:** 4 ● **Participants:** 147
- **96 Cubic Yards of Trash Removed:**
 - 2 Tons of Scrap Metal
 - 50 Pounds of Aluminum ● 34 Tires
 - 21 Propane Tanks ● 1 Refrigerator
 - 1 Railroad Boxcar Door
 - 1 Goetz Country Club Beer Sign
- **Trash Recycled:** 95%

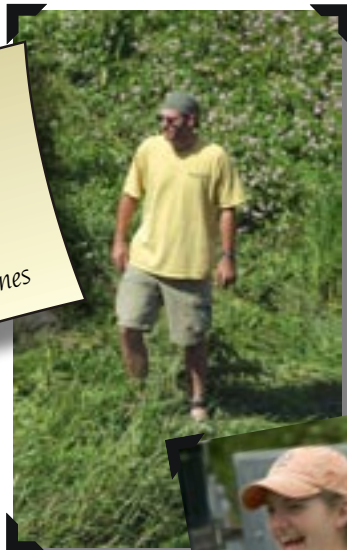
We do not have permission from the Des Moines Register to display this photo on our web site.



Although canoes and kayaks are overburdened with junk each day, and rivers and lakes look better by the week's end, the true impact of AWARE lies in the environmental education, involvement, and understanding of the volunteers. **Citizens have the power to protect, preserve, and cherish Iowa's precious natural resources.**



"I wanted an active vacation, wanted to get some sun, and I wanted to give something back to the community."
 – Phyllis Jessen, Des Moines



Iowa has nearly 72,000 miles of streams. With one week of camping, miles of paddling, on-going educational opportunities, and hundreds of dedicated and hard-working Iowans, **Project AWARE can make a difference** – one stretch of river, one week a year, one piece of trash at a time. **If it seems like a vacation to the participants...it is.** They just learn and improve the river as they go.

Acknowledgements

2004 Project AWARE Sponsorship Series: Platinum Paddle (\$3,000) – Anderson Erickson Dairy, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, IOWATER, Johnston Autostores & ACDelco, Keepers of the Land, Metro Waste Authority, Principal Financial Group. **Distinguished Bow** (\$2,000) – Iowa Recycling Association, Iowa State University, RESTOP Personal Sanitation Systems. **Golden Yoke** (\$1,000) – Firestone Farm Tires, Hy-Vee Inc., MidAmerica Recycling, Tone's Brothers, Inc. **Silver Stern** (up to \$500) – Boone County Soil & Water Conservation District, Casey's General Stores, Dallas County Environmental Health & Secondary Roads, Des Moines Parks and Recreation, Fort Dodge Parks & Recreation, Humboldt County Conservation Board, Iowa Waste Exchange, Keep Boone County Beautiful, North Central Iowa Regional Solid Waste Agency, Polk County Conservation Board, Seven Oaks Recreation Area, Snyder & Associates, Townsend Engineering, Webster County Conservation Board.

Photos by Clay Smith, Lynette Seigley, Jackie Neely, and Rick Dietz.

Funding

Water monitoring activities of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources are funded by Iowa Infrastructure – Environment First Fund appropriations, as well as grants provided by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency from Sections 106 and 319 of the Clean Water Act.

Iowa Water Monitoring Program Web Site – wqm.igsb.uiowa.edu



Prepared by
 Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Geological Survey
 109 Trowbridge Hall, Iowa City, IA 52242-1319