

IOWATER

Iowa Dept. of Natural Resources
109 Trowbridge Hall
Iowa City, IA 52242-1319



YOU (IOWATER and Project AWARE volunteers)
are invited, at no cost to you...

7th Annual
Water Monitoring Conference
Addressing Current and Future Water Issues

Benton Auditorium, Scheman Building
Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa

Thursday evening – Friday, February 1-2, 2007

RSVP by January 22, 2007, by calling 319-335-1761
or e-mailing iowater@iowater.net. Please include
your e-mail and/or phone number with your RSVP.

<http://wqm.igsb.uiowa.edu>

IOWATER

Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring

Water Magic

by Chris Adkins, Naturalist – Dallas County Conservation

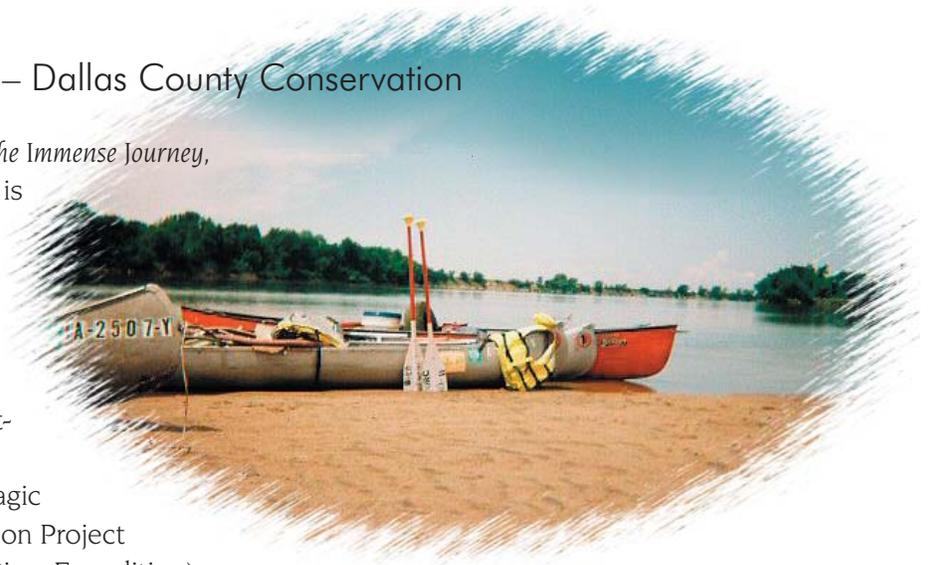
Loren Eiseley wrote in his book, *The Immense Journey*, "If there is magic on this planet, it is contained in the water." For many of us with a passion for life at the end of a canoe or kayak paddle, magic comes to us in our rivers. Dallas County Conservation, along with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, would like to invite you to explore the magic this coming summer by joining us on Project AWARE (A Watershed Awareness River Expedition).

This year's event will be a week's worth of canoe floats and river cleanup on the Middle and North Raccoon rivers. By joining AWARE 2007 (June 16-23), you can explore both the Raccoon and the depth of your appreciation of its magic. And what do you know of your own water connections?

As a biologist, I recognize that we are water beasts. Seventy percent of our body weight is water. The remainder is composed of a few common elements; carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen, phosphorus, and sulfur. Don't believe it, however, if someone proclaims you to be of little worth. You are an aqueous magician, a millionaire no less! Through the wonders of water and biochemistry, our bodies combine these elements into a myriad of organic compounds, valued at over 3 million bucks. The water that flows through our bodies is one and the same with the magic Eiseley identifies in our world. The connection is undeniable, priceless, but do you acknowledge it?

I recall the moment when my own water epiphany occurred in the Boulder Creek drainage of the Selway Bitterroot Wilderness of north-central Idaho. For the first time in my adult life, I took a drink of water from a surface water source. No faucet and glass, no chlorination, no civilized liquid from the tap. Just me, drinking in the coolness of that mountain stream, inhaling magic! The thirst it quelled was not a physical one. Instead, the drinking of this water served as a spiritual event. In this wild place, I was totally at one with the natural world around me. The snow pack, the summer's heat, gravity, shared thirsts, past travels, future destinations, and me. I was a shared part of the magic that day and now it travels with me and haunts the ripples and eddies of the Raccoon.

(continued on page 2)



YOU CAN DRINK THE WATER. Think of the profoundness of that statement – you can drink the water – and feel yourself transported into all that surrounds you. Just don't try it in Dallas County, or anywhere else in Iowa for that matter! Think about it for a moment. I suspect this is no revelation to you. It is a fact of life that has been passed down to us – "Euuww, don't drink that, it will make you sick." And, with this one statement, the magic is gone from our world.

I often begin a presentation on water issues by offering the audience a drink of water from the nearest watershed. No one has yet taken me up on the offer. The absurdness of this offer, and the absurdness of our willingness to accept as a fact of life – that YOU CAN NOT DRINK THE WATER – is in need of our serious consideration. Why do we accept this condition? Why are we not up in arms over being robbed of the magic?

Water Magic...Water Magic...Water Magic

We can turn to science to help us wrap our minds around this liquid paradox of modern life. Humans, like other critters with developed central nervous systems, exhibit a phenomenon biologists call acclimation. I'll describe a classic experiment which illustrates this phenomenon. If a frog, residing in a pot of water at room temperature, is abruptly relocated to a pot of near boiling water, it will leap out, probably thinking – "geez, what's up, that water is really hot!" However, if the frog and the room temperature water are placed on a hot plate and gradually heated, to warm, to hot, to boiling – the frog will remain in the pot oblivious to the change and will meet his demise. Acclimation is the inability of an organism to perceive changes in its environment, if the changes are slow and gradual. The changes can be of epic proportions, but will go unnoticed due to their small, incremental nature as they accumulate through time.

Imagine for a moment that I have the ability to construct the following experiment: My great-great grandfather Peter Bergman immigrated to the prairies of Iowa from Germany in the 1860s. Peter and his family walked from the Mississippi River to homestead in the Spirit Lake region. I am certain that along this trek, when thirst presented itself, these Germans did not crack open a bottle of Aquafina™. Indeed, they drank the available water, and I suspect they recognized the magic of their new home. What if I could reach back in time and transport Peter to present day Dallas County? When he became parched and knelt down by the Raccoon to take a drink, imagine the look on his face when I tell him that he should not drink the water. "Ach de liber! What kind of place is this that you call home?" Peter might exclaim. Our figurative water just got as hot as the frog's pot in a hurry.

In today's world, we are the frogs, and the water is very "hot." But unlike the time-traveling Peter, we are acclimated. We lack the ability to perceive the danger. The headlines of the *Des Moines Register* can warn us. Our legislators can debate until they are blue in the face about our impaired waterways and unmet EPA standards, yet no one seems to be jumping from the pot. Acclimation.

Prepare to be de-acclimated. Join us as we experience the magic that is our water. AWARE 2007 will afford you an opportunity to check the temperature of your pot. It is not our intent to singe your toes, but we do want you to examine the conditions of our water and explore your relationship to it. Eiseley had it right. *There is magic here for those who seek it.*

Would you like to participate in Project AWARE? See page 6 for details.

...from IOWATER's Coordinator

If rivers could speak, what would they say? Members of the North Raccoon Watershed Association believe one river would say, "Thanks."

"Thanks Don Propst" – Raccoon River. Forever branded on aluminum and perched over an oxbow that once was home to the river's main channel, these words salute an individual who has given back to the river that has given him so much.

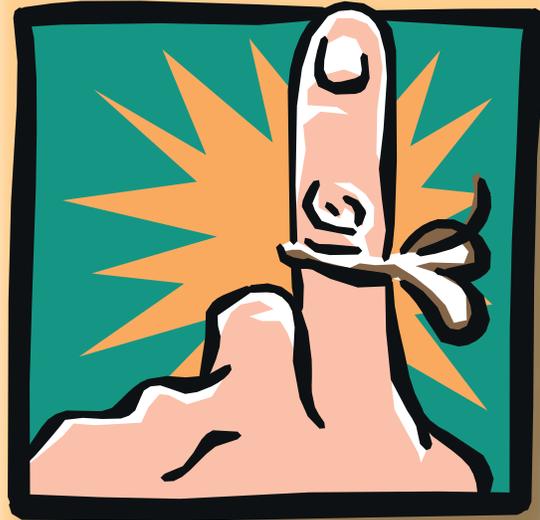
In the fall of 2005, Don Propst decided to follow his dream: to dedicate his life's work to cleaning up Iowa's rivers. Working with the Iowa Whitewater Coalition, Don started the Iowa Clean Rivers Team and dedicated 2006 to cleaning up 113 miles of the North Raccoon River, and challenging Iowans to keep rivers clean, combat illegal dumping, and promote water quality improvements.

If rivers could speak, what would they say? Rivers like the Raccoon might say, "HELP!" Data collected on the Raccoon and its tributaries indicate increasing levels of nutrients and bacteria, and diminishing populations of aquatic life. Those who know the river, however, don't need data to tell them that – they already know. Landowners, paddlers, anglers, volunteer monitors, and others who take the time to get to know rivers know that they do speak – the question we have to ask ourselves is, "Are we listening?"

Through monitoring, recreation, or otherwise spending time on our rivers and lakes, we learn how to listen to them. If we listen, we can protect and improve them.

*Thanks, IOWATER Volunteers,
for all you do for Iowa's waters.*

RE M I N D E R



**If you want to continue receiving
the IOWATER Newsletter,
please let us know!**

If you haven't already done so, contact Jackie by phone or email **ASAP** or you'll be removed from our mailing list.



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lseigley@igsb.uiowa.edu phone: (319) 335-1598

Volunteer viewpoints

... in their own words.



My First Paddle article and photos by John Wenck, Iowa Whitewater Coalition (IWC)



After months of a friend's cajoling, I conceded to paddle with him in October of 2004 on the Des Moines River just to get him off my back. I didn't think anyone actually paddled the Des Moines. I thought the Upper Iowa was the only destination for such a sport. I was a little cranky at 6:00 AM and as I was putting on borrowed neoprene "booties" to keep my feet warm (turning my head to avoid the stench), I wondered what in the world I was doing.

We put in at Prospect Park in the heart of the city and paddled upstream. My friend loaned me his longer kayak, while he took the shorter, less stable one. While I still had problems paddling in a straight line, I immediately felt a freedom I couldn't put in words. It was the closest to the Des Moines River I'd ever been, and I was seeing familiar things from a different perspective. As I dipped my paddle on each side of the boat, my hands sometimes brushed through the water. The sensation was pleasing.

Because I frequently had to correct my course and we both had to work that day, we turned back after a mile or so. Just upstream of the Euclid Avenue Bridge, we spotted a bald eagle perched high in a tree peering down at the many frantic drivers hurrying to get to work on time. We put our paddles to rest and floated silently while marveling at the sight of this majestic bird I had only seen in pictures. I realized we were on the edge of two worlds. From that day on, I've desired to be a part of the world I discovered that morning.



I have heard an argument about not wanting more paddlers crowding our rivers. It's unfortunate because the more people there are who enjoy paddling, the more strength paddlers will have in decision making at

the top end concerning our natural resources. Our state currently has some of the dirtiest water due to excess sediment from



Photos top to bottom: Great Egret, Bald Eagle, American White Pelican, enthusiasts paddling the Des Moines River.



Photos top to bottom:
"Surfing" at Clay Hole on the Cedar River, Green Heron, IWC's Clean Rivers Team North Raccoon River Cleanup, cliffside view of Lake Red Rock.

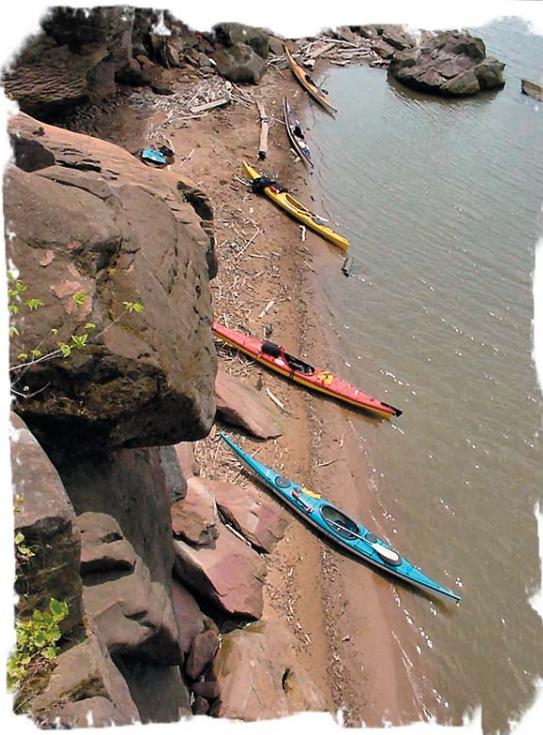
fields and urban development as well as bacteria from animal manure and human waste. Trash lines our river banks and some folks think it's a place to dispose of unwanted vehicles. Low-head dams no longer in service litter our rivers and hinder

the health of aquatic life, as well as serve as a death trap for those who get too close.



The perception of Iowa's rivers could use an overhaul. Most of our residents don't make the connection between recre-

ation and rivers here. I hope that will be changing. In fact, that would be a major goal of a paddling advocacy group. Personally, my life has changed because of rivers. Since becoming a paddler, I've seen a side of Iowa that I've fallen in love with. My perception of Iowa has completely changed. I think if we can get more folks off the interstates and onto our rivers, a change in perception will come on a much larger scale.



We'd like to hear from you, so **send us a note...** about your **IOWATER** activities, thoughts, and ideas **...in your own words.**

Upcoming events

... snapshot sampling & more.



Feb 1-2, 2007 (Thur-Fri); Water Monitoring Conference, Scheman Building, ISU, Ames, IA. Contact: Mary Pat Heitman (319) 335-1576, mheitman@igsb.uiowa.edu

April 14 (Sat); Carter Lake Clean-up. Contact: Jeanne Eibes (712) 347-6455, carterlake@hotmail.com

April 24 (Tue); Cedar County Snapshot
Contact: Dave Meyer, rockcrk@netins.net

April 28 (Sat); Beaver Creek Watershed Snapshot
Contact: Steve Witmer (515) 727-7765
switmer@ci.johnston.ia.us

May 8 (Tue); Scott County Snapshot
Contact: Carrie Anderson (563) 391-1403 ext. 3
carrie.anderson@ia.nacdn.net

May 12 (Sat); IOWATER Spring Statewide Snapshot
Contact: Katie Foreman (319) 335-1571
kforeman@igsb.uiowa.edu

May 19 (Sat); Wapsipinicon River Watershed Snapshot
Contact: Katie Foreman (319) 335-1571
kforeman@igsb.uiowa.edu

May 19 & 26 (Sat); Riverbend Middle School's Iowa River Clean-up. Contact: Karen Koenig (641) 648-6430
kkoenig@iowa-falls.k12.ia.us

May 23 (Wed); Polk County Snapshot
Contact: Susan Heathcote (515) 244-1194 ext. 12
heathcote@iaenvironment.org

June 16-23 (Sat-Sat); Project AWARE – Raccoon River Watershed. Contact: Brian Soenen (515) 205-8587
brian.soenen@dnr.state.ia.us or Luke Wright (319) 930-0125
luke.wright@dnr.state.ia.us

July 14 (Sat); IOWATER Summer Statewide Snapshot
Contact: Katie Foreman (319) 335-1571
kforeman@igsb.uiowa.edu

July 21 (Sat); North Raccoon River Watershed Snapshot
Contact: Steve Witmer (515) 727-7765
switmer@ci.johnston.ia.us

Aug 24-26 (Fri-Sun); Lower Wapsipinicon River Cleanup Allen's Grove to Walter's Landing (McCausland)
Contact: Melisa Petersen (309) 737-9016 or
KJ Rebarcak, rebar@netins.net

Oct 13 (Sat); IOWATER Fall Statewide Snapshot
Contact: Katie Foreman (319) 335-1571
kforeman@igsb.uiowa.edu



What's Project AWARE?

Think RAGBRAI, but with a splash of ecotourism and a focus on river cleanup. The idea behind the event is simple – if there's trash in the stream, remove it. But Project AWARE is about more than just trash – it helps Iowans connect with their rivers, understand their surrounding watersheds, and provides them with an opportunity to make a difference.

Wanna Help Out?

Project AWARE 2007 – June 16-23, Raccoon River

Spend one day, the entire week, or anywhere in between on AWARE.

For more information, visit www.iowaprojectaware.com

Contact: Brian Soenen at brian.soenen@dnr.state.ia.us, or by phone (515) 205-8587
or Luke Wright at luke.wright@dnr.state.ia.us, or by phone (319) 930-0125.

IOWATER 2006 Level I Workshop Schedule

Date & Time	Location	Contact	Phone	E-mail
April 20 (5-9 PM) April 21 (9 AM- 3 PM) @ TBA	Black Hawk Co.	Rebecca L. Kauten 2950 Southland Dr. Waterloo, IA 50701	(319) 296-3262	Rebecca.Kauten@ia.usda.gov
May 11 (5-9 PM) May 12 (9 AM- 3 PM) @ Graham Park Shelter House	Carroll Co.	Mark Licht 1240 Heires Ave., Suite D Carroll, IA 51401	(712) 792-2364	lichtma@iastate.edu
June 8 (5-9 PM) June 9 (9 AM- 3 PM) @ Southeastern Iowa Community College	Lee Co.	Mike Sallee 335 Messenger Rd. Keokuk, IA 52632	(319) 524-3221	jimsallee@secc.cc.ia.us
July 13 (5-9 PM) July 14 (9 AM- 3 PM) @ Metro Waste Ecology Field Station	Polk Co.	Mary Gillaspay 300 E. Locust, Suite 100 Des Moines, IA 50309-1864	(515) 323-6505	mgi@mwatoday.com
July 27 (5-9 PM) July 28 (9 AM- 3 PM) @ Lime Creek Nature Center	Cerro Gordo Co.	Todd Vonehwegen 3501 Lime Creek Rd. Mason City, IA 50401	(641) 423-5309	tvonehw@co.cerro-gordo.ia.us
Aug 10 (5-9 PM) Aug 11 (9 AM- 3 PM) @ Oneota Park	Clay Co.	Lisa Anderson 420 10th Ave. SE Spencer, IA 51301	(712) 262-2187	clayconat@ncn.net
Aug 24 (5-9 PM) Aug 25 (9 AM- 3 PM) @ Iowa City Public Works	Johnson Co.	Carol Sweeting 410 E. Washington St. Iowa City, IA 52240	(319) 356-5164	Carol-Sweeting@iowa-city.org

To register for a workshop, contact the appropriate person listed above.

IOWATER action!

Press releases, events, & news articles involving IOWATER monitors – Many thanks to all of you for your continued efforts.

- **Boone County** – The Boone Soil & Water Conservation District, Boone County Conservation, Boone County ISU Extension, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service included IOWATER testing with their 4th Grade Outdoor Classroom event.
- **Dallas County** – Congratulations to Ray Harden for receiving an Environmental Journalism Award from the Iowa Chapter of the Sierra Club.
- **Hardin County** – The Iowa Falls Boat Club and Riverbend Middle School science students and teacher Karen Koenig conducted educational river tours and monitored the Iowa River.
- **Ida County** – Ida County Naturalist Steve Hummel and teacher Carol Sadler and Battle Creek-Ida Grove High School environmental science class monitored Odebolt Creek.
- **Johnson County** – Thanks to Northwest Junior High students and instructors Dan Mascal and Dan Hill, as well as Arnold Lindaman, for their efforts on Clear Creek.
- **Lyon County** – Rochelle Ebel and Justin Smith with the Lyon County Conservation Board, instructor Mary Stai and Inwood Biology students monitored Lake Pahoja.
- **Muscatine County** – Instructor Brian Ritter and the Muscatine Community College Environmental Science class monitored waters in Muscatine County.
- **Story County** – Thanks to volunteers Erv Klaas and Mike Lazere for their continued efforts on Squaw Creek.
- **Story County** – The Skunk River Navy and "Admirals" Jim Colbert, James Holtz, and Justin Rice continue working to clean up and monitor the Skunk River.

If we missed your happenings, please call or email Jackie Gautsch with an update.

