What’s Project AWARE?
Think RAGBRAI, but with a splash of ecotourism, a focus on river cleanup, and a whole lot of fun!
The idea behind Project AWARE is simple – if there’s trash in the stream, take it out. Using an arsenal of tools, from bare hands to pick axes to come-alongs, AWARE volunteers muscle thousands of pounds of trash out of Iowa’s rivers. Regardless of the river, the end result is always the same – muddy volunteers, a cleaner, more aesthetically pleasing river, and memories that last a lifetime.

This simple strategy has led to an explosion of river cleanup projects, creating what some have termed a Cleanup Culture. River cleanups are about more than just trash – they help Iowans connect with their rivers, understand their watersheds, and make a difference in their communities. There’s just something about river cleanups – the place, the people, and the trash; something that gets in your blood; something that, if enough people experience it, will lead to a cleaner, healthier, and stronger Iowa.

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) – Help out one day, the whole week, or anywhere in between.
Why: ● To engage volunteers in a service learning project that produces tangible 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 Iowans are passionate, motivated, and dedicated to making a difference in water quality – one stretch of river, one week a year, one piece of trash at a time.
The 4th Annual Project AWARE was a record setting event. Nearly 200 volunteers converged on the Iowa and English rivers in southeast Iowa in an effort to cleanse them of unsightly trash. Volunteers traveled 79 miles from Iowa City to the confluence of the Iowa and Mississippi rivers near Oakville. A record amount of trash was removed – 224 cubic yards – more than any other year since AWARE started in 2003.

2006 Statistics
- River Miles: 79
- Participants: 176
- Trash Removed: over 24 tons (66 10-wheel dump trucks)
  - Electronic Waste – 120 lbs.
  - Aluminum – 350 lbs.
  - Plastic – 681 lbs.
  - Glass – 1,753 lbs.
  - Tires – 194 tires, 8,982 lbs.
  - Metal – 23,767 lbs.
  - Garbage – 13,080 lbs.
- Trash Recycled: 74%

Talkin’ Trash – Inspiration often comes when you least expect it, and in the case of Project AWARE, it also comes from where you may least expect it – the trash itself. A washing machine agitator, along with the rest of the machine, was wrenched from the bottom of the English River, hauled out by volunteers, and scheduled for reincarnation with a recycled purpose, however, is when David Williamson stepped in.

Williamson, an Iowa artist, sculptor, and poet, worked with AWARE volunteers and Iowa State and Johnson County fairgoers to transform trash into art. Working together with strong minds, and, of course, backs, Williamson and volunteers began constructing a sculpture called “Strongback,” which also happens to be a term that describes the shape of a can. The curved design of the trashed out washing machine agitator inspired the arches concept. Volunteers pitched in to give a hand and help give the sculpture a voice – Strongback will call to action for Iowans to do their part to protect and improve Iowa’s natural resources.

As part of Riververse, Project AWARE volunteers and David Williamson teamed up to create a poem called “Bearings.” By sharing their collective thoughts and experiences about rivers, hundreds of volunteers authored this poem, with Williamson editing it by recycling their words. Like the river and the reasons mentioned in the final lines of the poem, the legacy of the volunteers and their work will roll on through these pieces.
Collaborative Poem from Riverse at the Iowa State Fair, Johnson County Fair, & Project AWARE, 2006.

**Bearings**

Inside a soggy sleeping bag, the nose is first to awake. Camp coffee or the cold? Either will push us toward another morning on an Iowa river. How will the water measure our reach? What’s the real distance of a step in the right direction? Probing swift current, who receives the next angry lesson, discovering firsthand, after years submerged . . . a barb still works?


Around most bends, caked trash will calve delivering dirty pink tatters or a blackened label . . . echoes of the gutted axle mired a few miles back . . . whispering of bearings lost.


A river. The reasons.

Roll on . . .

**2007 Plans**

Drop in to lend a hand cleaning up the Raccoon River watershed. Working together with strong hearts, minds, and backs, AWARE volunteers will help revitalize the Middle and North Raccoon rivers in south-central Iowa. Covering nearly 100 miles in seven days, the 5th Annual Project AWARE would like you to join us as we roll on down the river.

For more information and to register, visit our website: [www.iowaprojectaware.com](http://www.iowaprojectaware.com)
Thanks for helping protect and improve Iowa’s rivers...

If it weren’t for the sponsors...

- Tons of trash would stay in the river.
- We’d miss our chance to dig through the muck.
- We’d lose out on all the fun.

2006 Project AWARE Sponsorship Series


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Iowa Watershed Monitoring and Assessment Program Web Site – wqm.igsb.uiowa.edu

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

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