



# 2013 HEAVY METAL TRASH TOUR



## HIT THE RIVER: PROJECT AWARE ON TOUR

For the past 11 years, Project AWARE has been on tour through watersheds across Iowa. Each summer, volunteers from Iowa and beyond become rock stars on the river, spending anywhere from a day to the entire week with family, friends and fans of the event as part of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources' volunteer river cleanup.

The 2013 event, held July 9-16, focused on the Des Moines River watershed in north-central Iowa. The tour first visited the Des Moines River in 2004, but high water forced volunteers onto other water bodies. Now a decade later, it was time for the tour to make a second pass through the Des Moines River watershed. Through the heavy lifting efforts of 343 rock stars, more than 34 tons of trash were removed from 91 river miles with 88% of the bounty recycled.

In its 11 years on Iowa's waterways, more than 2,800 Project AWARE volunteers have been on tour with the crew, removing 277 tons of trash from 877 river miles with the support of more than 850 sponsors. Each river is its own stage. Each event provides its own experiences and memories. Plus, an average of 72% of all Project AWARE trash has been recycled, so it can "keep on rockin'" in another form.



## RIVER CLEANUP: WE'RE NATIONWIDE!

Project AWARE is a community of individuals committed to protecting and improving Iowa's waterways. Each year, that community grows as the event moves around the state and welcomes new volunteers. This year, 47% of participants were newcomers. While most were from Iowa, volunteers traveled from Arkansas, California, Illinois, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Carolina, Utah and Washington to take part in this unique venture. In 2013, an estimated 45% of participants joined a family member on Project AWARE. Whether related through blood or just a common desire to help Iowa's rivers, Project AWARE is a "family" event.



# 11TH ANNUAL PROJECT AWARE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

JULY 9 – 16, 2013 | DES MOINES RIVER

| EVENT STATS                  |         |
|------------------------------|---------|
| River Miles                  | 91      |
| Total Participants           | 343     |
| Average participants per day | 156     |
| Youngest                     | 4 yrs.  |
| Under Age 10                 | 18      |
| Under Age 18                 | 39      |
| Over Age 62                  | 48      |
| Oldest                       | 74 yrs. |
| Rookies                      | 161     |
| 5+ Year Veterans             | 84      |
| Sponsors                     | 92      |

| SOLID WASTE   |                         |
|---|-------------------------|
| Total Materials Collected   | 68,480 lbs. (34.2 tons) |
| Trash: 12%  | 8,317 lbs. (4.2 tons)   |
| Recyclables: 88%  | 60,163 lbs. (30.1 tons) |
| Tires: 267  | 9,200 lbs. (4.6 tons)   |
| Scrap Metal   | 46,880 lbs. (23.4 tons) |
| Miscellaneous Recycling<br><i>(Appliances, Cardboard, Plastic, Redeemable Cans/Bottles)</i> | 4,083 lbs. (2.0 tons)   |

| WATER QUALITY     |                    |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| Sites Monitored   | 27                 |
| Transparency*     | 17 centimeters     |
| Water Temp.*      | 75°F               |
| pH*               | 9                  |
| Dissolved Oxygen* | 5 mg/L             |
| Nitrate-Nitrogen* | 20 mg/L (Max 50)   |
| Nitrite-Nitrogen* | 0 mg/L             |
| Phosphate*        | 0.4 mg/L (Max 1.0) |
| Chloride*         | less than 30 mg/L  |

\* Median values



however, posed a challenge to get both volunteers and trash off the river. Fortunately, Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa (CCI) members were part of the Project AWARE staff this year, and in a few short hours had transformed a primitive access point into a highly functional path to the Boone. One volunteer said, "kudos to those involved. The access south of Eagle Grove was awesomely designed and functioned well for AWARE's purposes." The access will also benefit Boone River users well into the future.

## LOCAL LANDOWNERS JOIN THE BAND

It takes a community effort for Project AWARE to happen each year. It starts with a planning committee made up of local community members that plan the event, it is supported and sustained by organizations and businesses along the route, and it is successful thanks to the volunteer community that participates. Thankfully, during this year's event Project AWARE volunteers benefitted from the generosity of local landowners, who provided access to the river when no public access was available. For two of the seven days, no halfway access was available. Rick and Jean Weishaar and Russ and Collette Clark, landowners along the route, graciously offered use of their property on those days to unload trash from the canoes. Don and Connie Garrett on the Boone River also allowed permission to improve passage through their property and invited volunteers to visit their rescued animals. As Rick Weishaar stated, "It was eye opening to see what Project AWARE was doing

and the effort that went into the event. It made me realize that we always can do a little more. I was honored and proud to be part of the event." Since Project AWARE, Weishaar has continued cleaning up his stretch of river. Partnerships with people like this are the heart and soul of Project AWARE.

## HEAVY METAL HEROES

Digging a half-buried car tire from the bottom of the river can be a daunting task when tackled alone, but as Project AWARE volunteers discover, help is often just around the bend. Again this year, little trash was immune to the team efforts of the volunteers. Whether it was a tire (one of 267 removed), a hog feeder, a large metal barrel, a damaged duck blind, a piece of plastic drain tile, the kitchen sink, a boiler, or the 1924 John Deere manure spreader, all were painstakingly extracted, strategically loaded on the canoes, and carefully maneuvered downriver to a takeout location. Once again, volunteers demonstrated that each day on Project AWARE there are many acts of teamwork with the common goal of cleaning the river and making a difference. Together, everyone truly accomplishes more on Project AWARE.

## RIVER ROCK STARS: A FAMILY TRADITION

For Jim Blakeney, Project AWARE affords him the opportunity to do three of his favorite activities: paddle, pick up trash and most importantly, spend time with his grandchildren. For five of the seven years Blakeney has participated, two of his grandchildren have shared in the Project AWARE experience with him – each having an individual experience as part of the Project AWARE Tour.

For the Pearson family of Indianola, Project AWARE was a chance to spend a working vacation with seven members of their family, which included present and future in-laws from California, Utah, and Washington. As one family member commented in 2013, "This is the single most rewarding and valuable volunteer opportunity I have ever participated in."

For the Cox and Zimmermann families, their family adventure on Project AWARE spans three generations, and also includes birthday celebrations with their "extended" AWARE family.

For Mark Bohner, a nine-year veteran of Project AWARE from northwest Iowa, seeing a river clean gives him enjoyment. His participation in Project AWARE over the years inspired him to set a personal goal of doing a cleanup in all 99 counties of Iowa. For years, Bohner has encouraged family members to join him on Project AWARE, including in 2008 when volunteers paddled by his family farm near Shell Rock. In 2012, Bohner's brother Matt was able to join him for two days, and again all week in 2013. The Bohner brothers are now hooked on cleanups.



## ROADIES WITH A CAUSE: TRASH OUT, FISH IN

Every good tour needs reliable roadies. This year, Project AWARE had supreme backstage crew support in the East Fork Walleye Club, a Kossuth County fishing club established in 1996. When a hauler was needed for the scrap metal removed by Project AWARE volunteers during the week, the club stepped up to help. The money raised from recycling the scrap metal will purchase walleye fingerlings to be stocked in the East Fork of the Des Moines River for future fishermen.

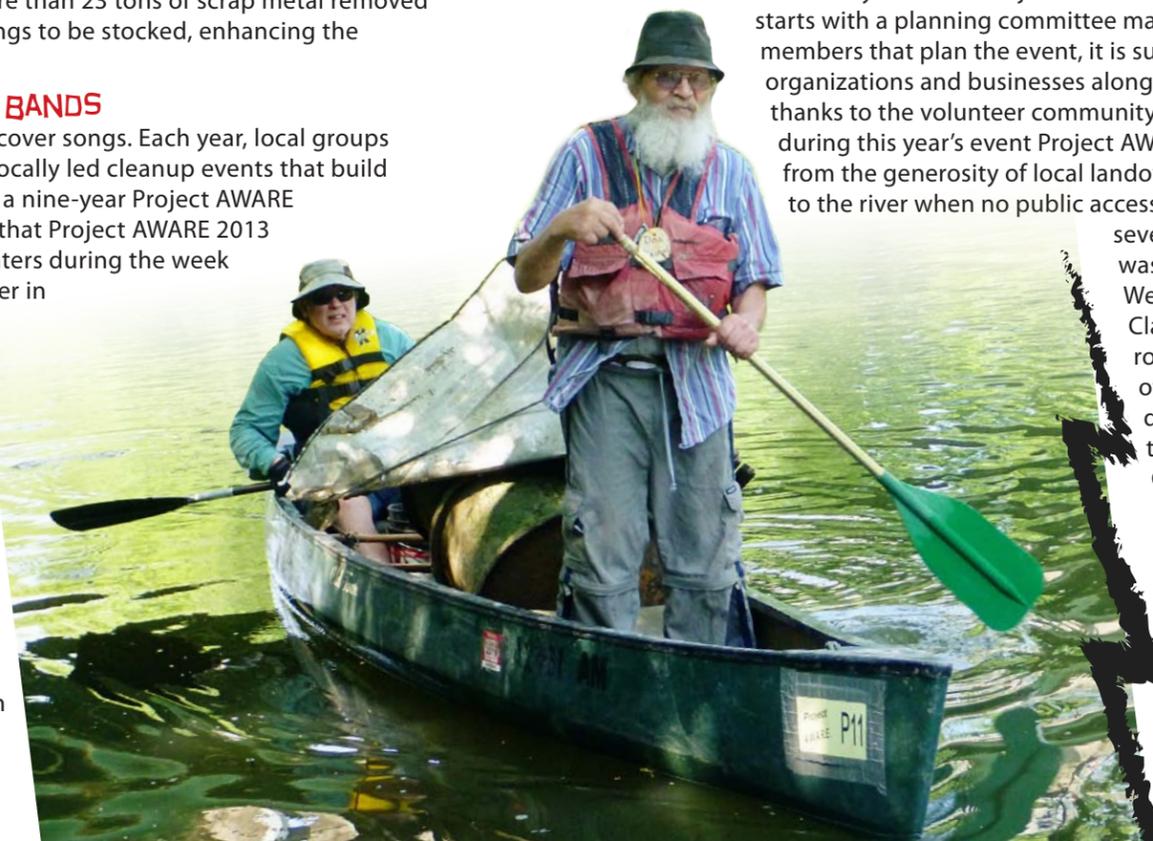
"Project AWARE was one of the most impressive events I have been involved in and I hope to participate in the future," said Ron Reefer, club president. Due to the efforts of Project AWARE volunteers and the East Fork Walleye Club, more than 23 tons of scrap metal removed from the river will allow 1,000 walleye fingerlings to be stocked, enhancing the experience for future recreationists.

## BEYOND PROJECT AWARE: TRIBUTE BANDS

Every good act spawns its tribute bands and cover songs. Each year, local groups continue the good work of Project AWARE in locally led cleanup events that build on the energy created by the event. Jim Dodd, a nine-year Project AWARE veteran and resident of Humboldt, was thrilled that Project AWARE 2013 was coming to the river in his backyard. High waters during the week of the event, however, prevented part of the river in and around Humboldt from being cleaned, but Dodd was determined to finish the job. A few weeks after Project AWARE, he paddled the stretch of the Des Moines River that Project AWARE volunteers were not able to reach, and in the process removed an additional 12 tires in the cleanup effort.

## THE ULTIMATE RIVER CREW: CCI GETS IT DONE

With high water on the Des Moines River (again), alternative plans offered volunteers the opportunity to paddle the Boone River in Wright County. Difficult access on the Boone,



This is the single most rewarding and valuable volunteer opportunity I have ever participated in and it makes a real difference to the rivers we clean. I can't think of a more inspiring way to combine state resources with the eager energies of Iowans.

*It's a wonderful opportunity to experience the beauty of Iowa's rivers and rural areas – with the added benefit of accomplishing something worthwhile in the process.*

**It's fun, greatly needed and hard work, but so worth it!**

**2013  
SPONSORS**

## THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES

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