



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

# EcoNewsWire

Environmental Services

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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- [Trout thrive again in two northeast Iowa streams thanks to improvements](#)
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## Trout thrive again in two northeast Iowa streams thanks to improvements



**MEDIA CONTACTS:** Steve Konrady, Iowa DNR Watershed Improvement, at 515-725-8388 or [steven.konrady@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:steven.konrady@dnr.iowa.gov); Mike Siepker, Iowa DNR Fisheries, at 563-382-8324 or [Michael.Siepker@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:Michael.Siepker@dnr.iowa.gov).

After struggling for years to sustain a population on their own, recent sampling shows native brook trout are again thriving in the Yellow River headwaters and Mullen Creek

following work on the land to improve water quality.

Once, brook trout thrived in most of northeast Iowa's clear, spring-fed streams in abundant numbers, but years of erosion and polluted runoff harmed trout habitat. Cloudy with eroded soil and manure runoff, the streams could no longer sustain the native trout. In 1994, a genetic strain of healthy brook trout – likely there since before European settlement – was found in South Pine Creek in eastern Winneshiek County. To save this fragile native Iowa species, the DNR brought a number of the trout to the Manchester fish hatchery, raising new brookies to live in restored creeks.

Communities have come together on two of those streams, Yellow River and Mullen Creek (a tributary of Silver Creek) through the DNR-funded Yellow River Headwaters Watershed Project, led by the Winneshiek Soil and Water Conservation District, and the Silver Creek Watershed Project, led by the Howard Soil and Water Conservation District. Teaming with Mike Siepker and Theresa Shay with DNR Fisheries to restock the streams with South Pine brook trout, the watershed projects also worked with landowners in the area to make changes on the land to protect and improve water quality.

“Everything's worked hand-in-hand,” says Neil Shaffer, Silver Creek Watershed Project coordinator. “We had been working on the watershed for a few years, the water temperature was right and the DNR was looking for a home for these trout.”

The ability to sustain trout indicates great stream improvement, as they're an indicator species of northeast Iowa's streams, demanding the coldest and cleanest waters to prosper. DNR staff consider water temperature, water monitoring results, current fish populations and streambank erosion data before stocking trout in a stream.

Farmers and landowners in the watershed – the area of land that drains into a waterway – use cover crops and grass waterways to prevent erosion and sediment buildup.

“We've worked with landowners to build upon keystone practices,” said Corey Meyer, former coordinator for the Yellow River Headwaters project. “This is a great example of landowners working together to improve their watershed.” Avid trout angler Sam Franzen, now coordinating the project, has an eye out for more Yellow River tributaries with the potential to host trout.

The two watershed projects are partially funded by DNR through EPA Section 319 grants, which provide financial assistance for water pollution cleanup. Landowners and the watershed projects have invested almost \$6 million throughout the region to restore and clean creeks and rivers.

Since the mid-1990s, work to reintroduce brookies has resulted in four streams with self-sustaining wild populations, while eight streams have inconsistent natural reproduction that requires occasional stocking to keep the population prosperous. Overall, the number of streams consistently supporting naturally reproducing brown and brook trout have

risen from 6 in 1980 to 45 today, thanks in large part to improvements to in-stream habitat and in watersheds.

Recent monitoring shows good growth in size and population after a year in Mullen Creek and the Yellow River headwaters, with plans to stock more native Iowa brook trout in 2018 to help establish the population.

### **CATCHING WILD TROUT**

Looking for the challenge of reeling in a wild-raised trout? Streams with wild South Pine brook trout with publicly accessible segments include South Pine Creek, French Creek, Pine Spring Creek, Dutton Spring Creek, Little Paint Creek and an unnamed tributary on Lansing Wildlife Management Area. Find maps and more at [iowadnr.gov/trout](http://iowadnr.gov/trout).

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## **Water Summary Update: March continues streak of above-normal moisture conditions**

**MEDIA CONTACT:** Tim Hall, 515-725-8298, [Tim.Hall@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:Tim.Hall@dnr.iowa.gov).

DES MOINES —March brought 2.5 inches of rain to Iowa, the third month in a row of wetter than normal conditions. Despite this moisture, an area of persistent dryness remains in southern and southeast Iowa.

“The state is entering into the normally wetter months, so hopefully we will see improvement in the driest parts of the state, while avoiding any extensive spring flooding,” said Tim Hall, Hydrology Resources Coordinator for the Iowa DNR.

This March was wetter than normal, with some areas getting more than 150 percent of normal rainfall. Temperatures across Iowa were generally cooler than normal, especially in eastern and southeastern Iowa, where temperatures were, on average, four to five degrees cooler than normal. These cooler temperatures have slowed vegetative growth, helping to maintain soil moisture levels for the upcoming growing season.

Streamflow conditions in much of the state remain in the normal range, and shallow groundwater conditions continue to improve.

For a thorough review of Iowa’s water resource trends, go to [www.iowadnr.gov/watersummaryupdate](http://www.iowadnr.gov/watersummaryupdate).

The report is prepared by technical staff from Iowa DNR, the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, IIHR—Hydroscience and Engineering, and the U.S.

## **DNR enforcement actions**

**MEDIA CONTACT:** Ed Tormey, DNR, at 515-725-8373 or [Ed.Tormey@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:Ed.Tormey@dnr.iowa.gov).

DES MOINES – DNR staff work with individuals, businesses and communities to help them protect our natural resources by complying with state and federal laws. This approach is very effective. In the few cases where compliance cannot be achieved, the DNR issues enforcement actions. The following list summarizes recent enforcement actions. Find the entire, original orders on DNR's website at [www.iowadnr.gov/EnforcementActions](http://www.iowadnr.gov/EnforcementActions).

### **Consent Orders**

A consent order is issued as an alternative to issuing an administrative order. A consent order indicates that the DNR has voluntarily entered into a legally enforceable agreement with the other party.

#### **Butler County**

David and Donald Albrecht

Develop and implement plan of action to ensure no future manure discharges occur at facility and pay \$4,000 penalty for past discharge.

#### **Linn County**

City of Cedar Rapids

Develop standard operating procedure to prevent treated water discharges during construction activities, pay \$2,000 penalty and \$20,805 in fish restitution and investigative costs for past discharge. In lieu of payment of the \$2,000 penalty to DNR, payment is to be made to Linn County Conservation Board for use as a Supplemental Environmental Project.