



Clean Rivers Team

~ Promoting river safety, education, and recreation ~

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After a summer of participating in any clean-up he could, Don Propst developed a dream: to make his life's work cleaning up Iowa's rivers. Iowa Whitewater Coalition's board, cooperating with Nate Hoogeveen in his AmeriCorps water trails coordinator position with the Iowa DNR, voted to aid Don in reaching his goal by creating a new program.

"I enjoy floating down the rivers of Iowa, but it bothers me to see how inconsiderate some people are towards our precious natural resources, with little or no regard for mankind or wildlife," says Propst, a retired sprinkler system and safety installer who lives in Des Moines.

Hoogeveen worked with Propst to develop a program within the nonprofit Iowa Whitewater Coalition. The Iowa Clean Rivers Team was born. Propst believed a two-pronged approach was necessary. First, the rivers needed a longterm commitment to get tires, appliances, old farm implements, and other large trash out of them. Second, he knew that others needed to be involved in order to cultivate local commitments to keep rivers clean, prevent neighbors from dumping illegally, and promote better water quality. As a member of the North Raccoon Watershed Association, he also knew he wanted to target that river for his first project.

"So far, everyone's really supported this program," says Propst. "It has developed quickly into reality, with a lot of help from a lot of people."

But Propst saw several barriers, too. Insurance would be expensive, for instance. So would fuel. He wasn't sure how to raise funds, or make the public aware he was coming. He needed a larger boat than a canoe for the largest trash. Developing a plan that includes the value of labor Propst plans to donate, it was apparent that the Clean Rivers Team program would need to be a nearly \$50,000 program.

Propst and Hoogeveen began developing several connections. Iowa Heartland RC&D, a U.S. Department of Agriculture-sponsored nonprofit organization, was able to declare Propst and any participants as Earth Team members, which will provide insurance, a \$7,500 value. They co-wrote several grant applications and began making request.

To date, a \$5,000 grant from the Keep Iowa Beautiful Program has been awarded to the Iowa Clean Rivers Team program. A \$2,500 grant from Metro Waste Authority will purchase a boat, motor, and trailer. An additional \$2,500 grant from MWA will provide services such as trash hauling, recycling and other sanitation fees. Izaak Walton League of Des Moines will contribute \$1,000. The program is well on its way to becoming a reality throughout the summer of 2006.

Propst also recruited a friend, Dennis Zeliad, to help daily with ongoing clean-up efforts using a flat-bottom boat and motor. They are capable of removing large metal items using a chop-saw and other tools.

Last updated: 9/22/2006

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Join a cleanup event!

This May through November, Don Propst and Dennis Zeliad will focus on cleaning up trash along the 180-mile-long North Raccoon River and Raccoon River from Sac County to Des Moines. You can join them on three special volunteer events:

- [Booneville to Walnut Woods State Park \(Des Moines area\), May 20, 2006](#)
- [County Road D15 to Sac City, July 8, 2006](#)
- [Spring Valley Access on County Road P58 to Perry \(Dallas County\), September 16, 2006](#)

You will need a canoe, appropriate safety gear and attire, water, lunch and any personal items. If you don't have a boat, contact Don to get teamed up with another volunteer.

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