



Project AWARE 2004

~ Promoting river safety, education, and recreation ~

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Project AWARE Update

by Nate Hooegeven, IWC President

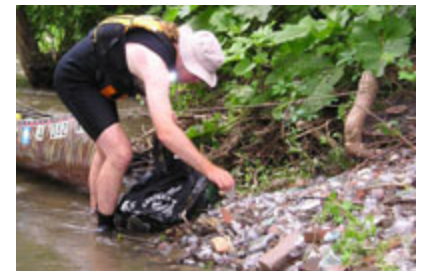
I'm completely pumped about the state of things here in Iowa right now. While water levels cranked, I think a lot of whitewater boaters were exposed to what Iowa's got to offer these past couple weeks. Nine of our group ran Lizard Creek at a high level, and I think whitewater boaters can continue to test it at even higher levels as available. The gauge was at 7.2', but the South Branch was actually adding more flow than the main branch. We put in on the South Branch, and there's one good rapids there (class II) before entering the main branch, where the Gypsum Mine Rapids was a fun and chaotic. Beyond the 169 bridge was a beautiful green surfing wave easiest to attain from the river left, although Peter Clay in his longer sleek boat could attain it from anywhere. Once you were in, you could carve to your hearts content and surf as long as you cared to. There was a decent hole just downstream of the dam remains, which I surfed, and then broke my paddle on a rock while ferrying back out.

In particular, I was excited to have run Soldier Creek for the first time ever. It was at sort of a minimum fun level. It's an urban creek in Fort Dodge, class III. The drops aren't Briggs Falls, but this is a longer run with numerous ledges. As Lyle mentioned, there's a must-make turn at a concrete block below Armstrong Park in Fort Dodge (the put-in). Beyond that, there's a super-fun double drop (let's call it Double Drop) with a back-to-back 2-footer, then ~3 footer.

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We were all impressed by the quality of the run, and the rocky scenery, except that the creek was really trashed. There were also some dangerous anchored pieces of rebar here and there. Clearly, this stream needed attention. So, Rick Dietz and I left for Project AWARE after ogling Breens', and we were talking about how the following day the creek would probably be at a fine level for a clean-up -- low enough that we could walk it, but with enough water that we could float canoes full of trash. After some con work, the following day, nine adventurous canoeist put in at Armstrong and proceeded to pull all kinds of stuff out of the creek. Rick and Jim Dodd hacksawed rebar, and we all pulled out sheet metal, blown-in plastic bags, the front end of a motorcycle, a Goetz Country Club Beer sign, etc. It was a great adventure, and we were lucky there were no serious injuries. Take a look at Rick's pics of the stream clean-up and the trash. It's a safer and more pleasing stream now, although it could use successive clean-ups. In particular, the historic Fort Dodge Glass company seems to have used the banks as a dump -- a some point we'd likely be better off capping this is some way with rocks, soil, and vegetation rather than attempting to excavate. A sculptor named David Williamson from Ogden will turn much of this trash into art at the Iowa State Fair in August.

The rest of AWARE was a great learning experience. Yeah, it turned out that the Des Moines River was too high for a meaningful clean-up, and unsafe for some paddlers, but that didn't stop us. We cleaned up numerous streams, and got the whole group to clean up parts of Lizard Creek, the South Skunk River, and Walnut Creek in Des Moines, as well as lakes like Brushy Creek Lake, Badger Lake, and Fraser Pond. There were more than 100 people willing to take a week of vacation to make our waters better. This is a very cool event, and I highly encourage you to think about it for next year.



Photos by Rick Dietz

Happy paddlin'!