

Iowa Whitewater Coalition  
2006 Annual Report



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## Letter to our Supporters

Dear Friends and Supporters:

Events in 2006 marked a turning point for the Reconnecting the Rivers campaign of the Iowa Whitewater Coalition. Significant funding from Prairie Meadows and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources allowed IWC to increase its public outreach activities to raise awareness of the dangers and ecological impact of lowhead dams.

The City of Des Moines with financial support from Principal Financial selected McLaughlin Whitewater Design Group to conduct a feasibility study for a river trail and whitewater course with important goals of also improving safety.

IWC provided financial assistance to Story County Conservation to begin engineering of first-in-state modifications of the lowhead dam in Story City.

Tragically on July 10<sup>th</sup> the Boone Waterworks lowhead dam claimed the life of Megan Pavelick who was on a tubing trip with friends. IWC led efforts to bring people together for improving safety at that dam with signage and a portage trail.

The remainder of this report will provide details of those efforts as well as IWC support for other events in communities across the state, training for paddlers, advocacy for water quality and river stewardship.

As we look ahead, we will continue our public outreach programs to raise awareness of the dangers of lowhead dams. This will include distribution of the reprinted *Drowning Machine* brochures, sponsorship of a statewide dam awareness symposium, and display of the lowhead dam model at community events. IWC will continue cooperative efforts to conduct paddling skill development clinics and to construct a low impact access at Commerce Ledges. River stewardship efforts will include support for the Clean Rivers Team and sponsorship for the Iowa Rivers Revival conference and Project AWARE.

IWC thanks its generous contributors and tireless volunteers.

See you on the river,



Lyle Danielson  
President

### *Iowa Whitewater Coalition*

#### ***Mission Statement***

*IWC protects, supports and improves whitewater areas and water trails by reconnecting the rivers throughout Iowa.*

#### ***Vision Statement***

*IWC envisions a future in which all Iowa waters flow clear and clean through wild valleys grown over in woods, marshes and prairies. All river structures will be well-designed for safety, biological integrity and exhilarating recreation.*

#### ***Values Statement***

*IWC members believe that all river users should be able to safely enjoy the adventure, scenery and solitude available on Iowa's rivers in both rural and urban settings. Rivers should be regarded as waterways that are not divided by dangerous dams. Continuous habitats along river corridors are critical for both human and wildlife. IWC promotes the highest water quality possible. We favor workable, practical solutions that do not always require dam removal. We will strive to reconnect Iowa's rivers for safety, for aquatic species, for riverbank wildlife habitat and for high-quality recreation experiences.*

## 2006 Special Highlights

Currently most Iowa Whitewater Coalition members live in central Iowa, however IWC supports river trail and whitewater endeavors statewide. IWC members strove to support other communities and organizations by participating at events such as the following:

- Waterloo Jaycees Canoe Races
- Iowa Games, Canoe & Kayak (Des Moines, 13 Gold and 3 Bronze medals to IWC members)
- Safety boat volunteers for 1.5 km swimming segments of the Dutchman (Pella) and Big Creek (Polk City) triathlons
- North Raccoon Watershed Association Paddlefest (Adel)

To improve personal paddling skills and to promote another organization with common interests, six IWC boaters participated in the Missouri Whitewater Association Beginner/Intermediate Clinic over the April 22-23 weekend on the St. Francis River. IWC also facilitated river paddling clinics on the Skunk (near Ames) and Winnebago (near Mason City). IWC members were encouraged to participate at “Gray’s Lake Tuesdays” for flatwater skill development and at “Swiftwater Thursdays” on moving water at Commerce Ledges upstream of Walnut Woods State Park in West Des Moines. Over the Labor Day weekend several IWC members joined up with other Iowans for a summer’s last hurrah on the Wausau Whitewater Course and Wolf River Section IV in Wisconsin.

IWC advocated for improved water quality and to bring Iowa into compliance with the Clean Water Act of 1972. IWC members held face-to-face meetings and corresponded with members of the Iowa Legislature, staff of the Iowa DNR and Environmental Protection Commission members. IWC became an organizational member of the Iowa Environmental Council. IWC members also volunteered for IOWATER monitoring snapshots and served in a City of Johnston focus group for the Lower Beaver Creek watershed.

IWC hosted the first Iowa Rivers Revival conference and retreat (March 4-5). The event attracted more than 90 river enthusiasts to the scenic Boone 4-H camp for two days of speeches, beautiful natural surroundings, entertainment, and most importantly, discussion and brainstorming. The conference aimed to foster discussion and action in the pursuit of improved river stewardship and awareness.



## Reconnecting the Rivers

In March IWC learned that the City of Story City in conjunction with the Skunk River Paddlers and the Story County Conservation Board were recipients of a grant from an Iowa Water Trails Grant Program to modify the lowhead dam in Story City to a rock rapids. Unfortunately funding for the grant would not be released until July or later and the situation could delay the project by more than a year. IWC awarded a grant of \$2160 to SCC to jumpstart the engineering efforts for a first-in-the-state dam modification that would also reconnect two sections of the river along the Skunk River Water Trail.

In June a progress update to the City of Des Moines by McLaughlin Whitewater Design Group regarding a downtown river trail and whitewater course indicated that it would be feasible to create a recreation destination of national or regional significance even if not as grandiose as the Ocoee Whitewater Park. The report and its carefully designed conceptual alternatives were presented to a focus group of concerned citizens including power boating, rowing, fishing and paddling enthusiasts. Infrastructure issues such as utilities and sewers created significant complexities and constraints in the designs. An alternative to initial concepts is a design that would raise the river pool to better blend into the Principal Riverwalk project and to consequently inundate the Scott Avenue Dam. Facilities that meet safety, fisheries and recreation criteria could be constructed just downstream of the confluence of the Des Moines and Raccoon Rivers. Engineering and economic studies will continue into 2007.

On July 10 at the start of a tubing trip on the Des Moines River, Megan Pavelick, a recent college graduate, drowned at the Boone Waterworks Dam. (The dam is pictured on the cover page of this report.) The event troubled IWC members who felt more needed to be done to prevent such tragedies in the future. Within days the IWC board voted to purchase and donate DNR-approved dam warning signs to the city. The city installed the signs on the very next day after donation. IWC also met with Boone city officials, Iowa DNR staff and concerned citizens to investigate options to improve safety at the dam site. Agreement was reached to quickly build a portage trail around the dam. City, state and federal officials and employees worked out trail design and began construction. On September 23 more than 20 volunteers turned out for a work day to finish a foot bridge deck, install trail signs, and apply gravel and wood chips along the trail. IWC continues to work with the city to investigate additional safety improvements at the dam.

IWC also purchased and donated warning signs for the lowhead dam at Fraser. Leadership efforts such as these at Boone and Fraser contributed to establishment of a program at the Iowa DNR to support safety improvements for lowhead dams across the state.



## Reconnecting the Rivers -- continued

For more than two years IWC has been conducting community outreach to raise dam safety awareness. IWC members take turns making presentations to county conservation boards, civic and community groups or manning a display booth at community events. To demonstrate the powerful and deadly effect of dams IWC acquired a working model of a low head dam and shows videos of incidents at lowhead dams. Just as in real life, miniature boats that pass over the dam in the model or approach too closely from below become entrapped in the hydraulic that forms when water passes over the dam face. Several public outreach efforts included:

- Waukee Rotary Club (February 9)
- Iowa Capital Rotunda (March 6)
- Iowa Children's Water Festival, Ankeny (May 11)
- Safe Boating Week, Grays Lake, Des Moines (May 23)
- Waterloo Jaycees Canoe Races (June 10)
- Boone Bash River Dash, Webster City (July 8)
- NRWA Paddlefest, Adel (August 26)

Nate Hoogeveen volunteered at the Iowa Children's Water Festival and submitted the following report:

*Hi all. I wanted to give a (very) brief report on the Iowa Children's Water Festival, which John Wenck (for IWC) and I (for Iowa DNR) exhibited at today.*

*There were about 2,000 fifth graders present, and they came through the exhibit halls in waves of 100-200. What a bunch of excitable and enthusiastic kids. I wanted to post this here to mention how exceedingly effective this pump-driven model was at educating children about lowhead dam dangers. John asked them to place toy kayaks above the dam and asked them what they thought it would do. Ninety-five percent thought the boat would go downstream really fast. When it stopped in the hydraulics, they'd ask why. He'd point to the Plexiglas side and show them how it re-circulated, and they'd instantly get it. Then he'd place an attachment (step dam) on the face of the dam, and let them see how the boat floated past the bottom. Finally, he'd ask what they'd do if they came upon the dam. "Get out!" they'd shout.*

*Anyway, there's a bunch of kids who are much more knowledgeable about this now, and likely to inform grown-ups. I got about 800 safety brochures handed out and talked about life jackets, including an inflatable one. I quickly became John's sidekick, though, because kids love playing with water!*

IWC requested and received permission to reprint a Minnesota DNR brochure entitled *The Drowning Machine*. The brochures are available to people who visit the IWC display at various events. Funding to reprint the brochure was provided by a community betterment grant awarded to IWC by Prairie Meadows Race Track and Casino in Polk County. IWC also worked with the Iowa DNR to distribute the brochures to paddle sport retailers and paddling liveries as well as county recorder offices (e.g. for boat registrations) across the state.



## Clean Rivers Team

In 2005 Don Propst was almost arrested for dumping tires at boat ramp in Des Moines until the officer finally understood that Don had actually pulled the tires from the river and was staging them for proper disposal. IWC supports Don's passion for clean rivers and is pleased to provide an organizational home for Don and the Clean Rivers Team (CRT).

During 2006 Don personally spent about eight weeks on the Raccoon River while conducting cleanup efforts along 113 miles of the Raccoon River watershed. He led three organized public cleanup events with volunteers (more than 400 man-hours on 32.5 river miles) and another with Drake University students.

Dedicated volunteers helped Propst and Don Zeliad remove some unbelievable trash from the river. In addition to the usual cans, bottles and litter, items removed from the river included half-burned redwood patio furniture, part of a children's plastic playhouse, car and truck tires including rims, a rusty automotive fuel tank, part of a farm implement, steel culverts, refrigerators and a water heater.

Trash removed from the river included:

- 2,340 pounds plus 3 ½ pickup loads of metal scrap
- 98 tires
- furniture
- 5 large appliances
- hundreds of gallons of cans, glass and plastic
- hundreds of pounds of general garbage

An estimated 80-90 percent of the trash removed from the river was recycled.

IWC and the Clean Rivers Team thank all cleanup participants, especially Don Wall of Ames. He volunteered at all three public events and was a true cleanup warrior.



Iowa Whitewater Coalition, Inc.  
Statement of Activities - Accrual Basis  
January through December 2006

Ordinary Income/Expense

Income

Charitable Contributions	9,055.49
Grants	24,900.00
Instruction Fees	425.00
Membership Dues	500.00
Registration Fees	1,845.00
Revenue – Bank Error	300.00
Sale of Inventory Items	403.00
Special Events Revenue	520.00
Sponsorship Income	4,100.00

Total Income 42,048.49

Expense

Advertising	210.00
Convention or Meeting Expense	2,065.50
Dam Safety Signage	941.32
Entertainment	800.00
Grant and Contract Expense	2,868.75
Instruction Expense	829.00
Lodging	42.50
Meals	2,304.06
Organizational Affiliations	145.00
Outreach & Awareness Education	2,984.63
PayPal Fees	19.17
Post Office Box Fee	28.00
Printing and Reproduction	2,318.96
Reconciliation Discrepancies	300.00
River Cleanup Expenses	4,338.98
Speaker Expense	1,075.00
Supplies and Materials	916.34

Total Expense 22,187.21

Net Ordinary Income 19,861.28

Net Income 19,861.28

## Personal Donations

Anonymous Donors  
Buzz Brenton  
Central Iowa Paddlers  
Lyle Danielson  
Otter Run Media  
Rosie Partridge  
Jim Todd  
John Wenck



## Reconnecting the Rivers Grantors

Prairie Meadows Race Track and Casino Community Betterment  
Iowa Department of Natural Resources



## Clean Rivers Team Grantors and Contributors

Keep Iowa Beautiful (Iowa Department of Transportation)  
Metro Waste Authority  
Iowa Department of Natural Resources (CLEAR Mini-grant)  
USDA NRCS Iowa RC&Ds (Ankeny & Carroll)  
Des Moines Chapter of The Izaak Walton League  
Home State Bank, Jefferson  
Iowa State Bank, Sac City  
Raccoon Valley Bank, Perry  
Stine Seeds (Harry Stine)  
Anonymous Donors





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## Coalition Affiliations

American Whitewater  
Iowa Environmental Council



Iowa Whitewater Coalition  
PO Box 65453  
West Des Moines, IA 50265

Email questions or comments to [IowaWhitewater@yahoo.com](mailto:IowaWhitewater@yahoo.com).