

23rd Annual Iowa Project AWARE Summary Statistics
Little Turkey and Turkey Rivers, July 12-17, 2026
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23rd Annual Iowa Project AWARE • July 12-17, 2026 • Little Turkey and Turkey Rivers • Gouldsburg Park to Eldorado Bridge Access (Little Turkey River), Fort Atkinson City Park to Eldorado Bridge Access (Turkey River), Eldorado Bridge Access to Turkey River Canoe Access (Turkey River), Gilbertson Park to Elkader Sandpit Rd Access (Turkey River), Turkey River Rentals Access to Motor Mill (Turkey River)

- **River Miles** – 66.9
- **Volunteers** – 276
 - Average volunteers per day – 178
 - Age Range – 6 to 84 years
 - River Cleanup Rookies – 77 (28 %)
 - In addition to Iowa, volunteers came from Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oregon, and Wisconsin.
- **Sponsors** – 104
- **Total Trash & Recyclables** – 23,667 lbs (11.8 tons)
 - Recyclables – 22,911 lbs (11.4 tons; 97% recycled)
 - Tires - 126 (8,300 lbs; 4.2 tons)
 - Scrap Metal – 12,800 lbs (6.4 tons)
 - Misc. recycling (appliances; burnable; plastic; cardboard; pop cans; glass; compost) – 1,811 lbs. (0.9 tons)
 - Trash – 756 lbs. (0.4 tons; 3% landfilled)

2026 Iowa Project AWARE Volunteer and Sponsor Summary Stats

- Paddled and removed trash from 12 miles of the Little Turkey River from Gouldsburg Park to Eldorado Bridge Access. Then transitioned to removing trash from 54.9 miles of the Turkey River from Fort Atkinson City Park to Eldorado Bridge Access, Eldorado Bridge Access to Turkey River Canoe Access, Gilbertson Park to Elkader Sandpit Rd Access, and Turkey River Canoe Rentals Access to Motor Mill.
- 276 participants registered for the event
- Daily average number of participants on the river – 178. Number of volunteers on the water each day: Monday (204), Tuesday (211), Wednesday (181), Thursday (158), and Friday (156).
- In addition to Iowa, volunteers came from Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oregon, and Wisconsin..
- 77 (28%) of volunteers were first year volunteers; 14 volunteers were recognized for their 5th year on Iowa Project AWARE; 11 participants were recognized for being on Project AWARE 10 years, and 4 participants were recognized for 15 years, and 3 participants were recognized for 20 years.
- Volunteers ranged in age from 6 to 84; 53 (19%) of this year's participants were 18 years or younger; 13 (5%) were 10 years of age or younger; 57 (21%) of the volunteers were age 62 or older.
- 112 participants were registered for all five days on the river.
- Participants included 37 members of the Conservation Corps of Iowa, including 6 as Iowa Project AWARE staff for the week.
- A total of 104 sponsors made this event possible through both monetary and in-kind donations. Grants supporting this year's event included: Alliant Energy, Cargill, Fayette County Community Foundation, Hanson Family Foundation, ITC Charitable Giving Program, Koch Fertilizer, Kwik Trip, Max and Helen Guernsey Charitable Foundation, MidAmerican Energy Foundation, Mitchell and Howard County Opportunity Fund, Two for the Trails, Wings2Water, and the Winnebago County Community Foundation.
- 21% of participants identified as beginners to paddling; 40% intermediate; and 30% as experienced, 9% did not answer.

Click the following to enjoy photos from the 2026 Iowa Project AWARE river cleanup on the Little Turkey and Turkey Rivers.

- [Google Photo Album](#)

In-kind sponsor contributions included the following:

1. Donated camping and use of park facilities
2. Cut-resistant gloves
3. Use of canoes, lifejackets, paddles, trailers
4. Hydration and nutrition supplies for week
5. Shuttle location parking
6. Educational programs
7. Use of trucks, dump trailers, enclosed trailers, and rolloffs
8. Staff for the event

9. Zanafel poison ivy cream
10. Recycling of tires
11. Hand sanitizer
12. Recycling bags
13. Donated shower facilities
14. Local planning committee
15. Storm shelters
16. Website management
17. Transportation of recycled materials
18. Portable toilet trailer
19. Use of jon boat for scouting
20. Log jam clearing before the event
21. On-water first aid kits
22. Storage unit
23. SPF lip balms
24. Trash and recycling coordination

2026 Iowa Project AWARE Sponsors

Platinum Paddle Sponsors

Big Grove for Good • Cargill • City of Elkader • Conservation Corps of Minnesota and Iowa • Iowa DNR River Programs • Fayette County Community Foundation • Get Fresh • Hanson Family Foundation • IIHR Hydrosience and Engineering • Mark Bohner • Max and Helen Guernsey Charitable Foundation • MidAmerican Energy Foundation • State Hygienic Laboratory at The University of Iowa • Toppling Goliath Brewing Co. • Two for the Trails • Wings2Water • Winneshiek County Community Foundation • Zanafel Laboratories, Inc. • Zimmerman Buildings, Inc.

Golden Yoke Sponsors

Ansell Protective Products • Camp Ewalu • Clayton County Recycling • Diane and Ken Birt • Fayette County Conservation Board • Greg and Cheryl Long • Iowa Division of the Izaak Walton League • Iowa Whitewater Coalition • ITC Midwest • Monticello River Rentals • Renee and Steve Schaaf • Taylor Hopper • University of Iowa Office of the State Archaeologist

Silver Stern Sponsors

Alliant Energy Foundation • In Memory of Andrew Holcomb • Koch Fertilizer, LLC • Mitchell and Howard County Opportunity Fund • Steve Simpson

River Steward Sponsors

Brendan Young • B4-Brands • Cindy Barrowcliff • Hy-Vee, Inc. • Iowa Geological Survey • Jeff and Christianna White • Jim Urban • John, Shawna, Aaron, Katelynn Larison and Madisen Hoffschneider • Lisa and Randy Howell • Lynette Seigley • One Love LLC/La Calle • Shelly and James Weeks • Stantec • The Steve and Lori Marso Charitable Fund • Troop 242 BSA

River Rescue Sponsors

Angel Shawda • Bank 1st • Clayton County Conservation Board • Cupola Inn B&B • Dennis Evans • Don Wall • Dustin Elin • Emily Hesse • Ev and Terri Petersen • Harlan Jesse • In Memory of Andrew Holcomb • Jacqueline Schmitt • Jeffery Eaton • Julie Allen • Kent Precision Food Groups (KPF) • Leah Hause • Legacy Manufacturing • Liz and Ryan Maas • Loyd Herzberg • Michael McGinn • Michelle Birt Leeds • Moehle Salvage • Richard Worm • Rick Dietz • Rodney Schreck • Skunk River Paddlers • Steve Hanken • Steve Veysey • The Dental Practice • Turkey River Recreational Corridor • Vincent Moyer

Life Jacket Sponsors

Abigail Gries • Alan Kruse • Amanda Dotson • Brendan Zimmermann • Dean Zimmerman • Donna Gentry • John Miller • Lorin Dudley • Mary Koester • Paul Arickx • PayPal Giving Fund • Scott Miller

Media Coverage for Iowa Project AWARE 2026

Press releases distributed

- Volunteer River Cleanup Coming to The Little Turkey & Turkey Rivers This Summer - March 1, 2026 [March Press Release](#)

Publications

- Decorah News - March 4, 2026 [Volunteers to Clean 67 Miles of Little Turkey, Turkey Rivers](#)
- Decorah News - March 30, 2026 [Winneschiek County Community Foundation Awards \\$156,816 in 2026 Grants](#)
- Corridor Business Journal - May 22, 2026 [Wings2Water Awards \\$30,000 in Water Quality Grants for 2026](#)

Newspaper

- The Guttenberg Press - March 4, 2026 [Volunteer River Cleanup Coming to Little Turkey, Turkey Rivers This Summer](#)
- The Oelwein Daily Register - March 30, 2026 [Be AWARE of Local River Cleanup Registration](#)

Educational Programs for Iowa Project AWARE 2026

Sunday, July 12

- **3:00 pm – Afternoon Campground Programs** (Gouldsburg County Park, Hawkeye)
 - *Animals of the Mississippi River* - Callie B. Ritchie (National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium)
- **4:00 pm – Afternoon Campground Programs** (Gouldsburg County Park, Hawkeye)
 - *Not so Driftless: The Quaternary History of NE Iowa* - Phil Kerr (Iowa Geological Survey)
 - *Snakes of Northeast Iowa* - Jesse Matt (Clayton County Conservation)
- **4:30 pm – Afternoon Campground Programs** (Gouldsburg County Park, Hawkeye)
 - *Canoe Skills and Safety Clinic* - Glenn Harman (Iowa DNR Certified Instructor) Shelly Weeks, Jim Dodd, Cindy Barrowcliff, Diane and Ken Birt (Iowa Project AWARE Volunteers)
- **7:00 pm – Welcome and Introductions**

Monday, July 13

- **AM - Yoga - Kathy Dumont**
- **4:30 pm – Concurrent Informal Afternoon Activities** (Gouldsburg County Park, Hawkeye)
 - *Exploring Macroinvertebrates & Water Quality* - Jennifer Shekleton (Fayette County Conservation)
 - *Benefits of the Prairie* - Ethan Dickey & Ella Miller (UNI Tallgrass Prairie Center)
- **7:30 pm – Concurrent Evening Sessions** (Gouldsburg County Park, Hawkeye)
 - *Fort Atkinson State Preserve: An 1840s Military Past in the Vicinity of the Turkey River* - Kathy Gourley (State Historical Society Archaeologist)
 - *Iowa's Lost Lichens* - Jim Colbert (Emeritus ISU Professor)

Tuesday, July 14

- **AM - Yoga - Kathy Dumont**
- **4:30 pm – Concurrent Informal Afternoon Activity** (Gouldsburg County Park, Hawkeye)
 - *Plants & Lichens Nature Walk* - John Pearson (Iowa DNR Ecologist)
 - *Wildlife Habitat Jeopardy* - Angie Dougherty (Iowa 4-H Youth Program Specialist)
- **7:30 pm – Concurrent Evening Sessions** (Gouldsburg County Park, Hawkeye)
 - *Discovering Fayette County: Then & Now* - Jennifer Shekleton (Fayette County Conservation)
 - *Fort Atkinson Neutral Ground Field Trip*

Wednesday, July 15

- **4:30 pm – Concurrent Informal Afternoon Activity** (Elkader City Park, Elkader)
 - *Water and Wildlife in Northeast Iowa* - Jim Pease (Retired ISU Professor)
 - *Canoe Skills and Safety Clinic* - Glenn Harman (Iowa DNR Certified Instructor) Shelly Weeks, Jim Dodd, Cindy Barrowcliff, Diane and Ken Birt (Iowa Project AWARE Volunteers)
- **7:30 pm – Concurrent Evening Sessions** (Elkader City Park, Elkader)
 - *Dye tracing and water quality in NE Iowa springs* - Claire Hruby (Drake University)
 - *Archaeology of the Turkey River Winnebago Subagency* - Cindy Peterson (Office of the State Archaeologist)

Thursday, July 16

- **AM - Yoga - Kathy Dumont**
- **4:30 pm – Concurrent Informal Afternoon Activity** (Elkader City Park, Elkader)

- o *Effigy Mounds and Mound Preservation* - Susan Snow (Effigy Mounds National Monument)
- **7:30 pm – Concurrent Evening Sessions** (Elkader City Park, Elkader)
 - o *Using Remote Sensing to Investigate Iowa's Effigy Mounds* - Colin Betts (Luther College)
 - o *Music at the Opera House* - Dave Moore