

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: APRIL 6, 2010

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TAKE A VACATION...AND HELP CLEAN A RIVER!

IOWA CITY – Seven years ago, a small but determined cadre of volunteers embarked on the Iowa Department of Natural Resources' fledgling river cleanup event called Project AWARE (A Watershed Awareness River Expedition). Since then, thousands of people have volunteered for the weeklong river cleanup event, trading in luxurious vacations to far-off destinations for mud, sweat, trash, and adventure right here in Iowa.

This year's expedition, scheduled for July 10-17, will focus on more than 100 miles of the West and East Nishnabotna rivers in southwest Iowa. Volunteers participate by paddling down the river in a canoe or kayak and cleaning up river trash along the way. A limited number of canoes are available for those who need them, and opportunities for land-based volunteers are also available. While the expedition itself lasts an entire week, volunteers may stay and help for as little or as long as they like.

Even though it can be dirty, smelly, and exhausting, Project AWARE is one of the most meaningful and rewarding efforts Iowans can ever experience. In addition to river cleanup, Project AWARE also offers a unique blend of educational programs and demonstrations, volunteer camaraderie, camping, and other outdoor recreation opportunities that enrich the experience. Past participants have said that AWARE is one of the greatest ways for someone to connect with nature and make a difference in protecting it.

In the seven-year history of Project AWARE, the expedition has achieved nationally recognized results: 1,500 participants, 497 sponsors, more than 500 river miles, and 1,700 cubic yards of trash with a recycling average of 72 percent. Volunteers have also restored native prairie, renovated trails and enhanced recreational areas.

For more information on this event and to download the registration materials, visit www.iowaprojectaware.com.

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