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VOLUNTEER RIVER CLEANUP COMING TO THE SKUNK RIVER THIS SUMMER

KEOKUK, WASHINGTON, JEFFERSON, HENRY, LEE, AND DES MOINES COUNTIES – This July, hundreds of volunteers will pile into canoes to take on seventy-five miles of the Skunk River, to scrounge out every tin can, lost shoe, bowling ball, tire, and any other trash they can find from the waterway.

Iowa Project AWARE, an acronym for A Watershed Awareness River Expedition, is a canoeing and educational event where participants paddle down a different river in Iowa every summer, removing trash along the way. This year's Iowa Project AWARE is scheduled for July 7-12 on the Skunk River from the Keokuk/Washington County border to just before the Mississippi River in Des Moines County.

Local organizations, such as Skunk River Paddlers, are excited for the event to visit their river. “Skunk River Paddlers firmly believes that Project AWARE increases civic participation, community connections, and public awareness of the importance of our rivers, in addition to removing tons of trash and junk,” says Skunk River Paddler, Diane Birt.

After a long day of cleaning the river, volunteers gather back in camp to enjoy educational programs that broaden watershed awareness and strengthen community understanding. Topics include geology, ecology, natural resources, local history, and archaeology of the watershed. Along with programs, there are interactive activities where participants can improve their outdoor skills and get hands-on experience with water quality testing and nature identification. The public is welcome and encouraged to attend in-camp programs requiring no registration. (Registration is required for on-river cleanup only.)

In the 20 years since this event started, over 6,000 volunteers have removed 489 tons of trash from 1,429 miles of river, with 81% of all trash recycled!

Whether you can join for an evening program, one day on the river, or the entire weeklong expedition, Iowa Project AWARE volunteers can expect to leave with an improved understanding of the Skunk River, the beautiful communities that call it home, and a rejuvenated sense of appreciation for local watersheds.

Registration will open March 20th at www.iowaprojectaware.org, with limited space available!

Iowa Project AWARE is coordinated by N-Compass, Inc., an Iowa 501(c)(3) nonprofit based in Marion, Iowa. The mission of N-Compass, Inc. is to protect and improve the environment and natural resources through environmental education and community engagement. For more information about Iowa Project AWARE, to make a donation, or to register for the event, visit www.iowaprojectaware.org.