



IOWA WATER TRAILS ECONOMIC BENEFITS, QUALITY OF LIFE

PADDLE

FISH

FLOAT

Iowa Rivers Benefit Rural Economy

Recreation on Iowa rivers generated an estimated **\$824 million in sales** and **\$130 million in personal income** in 2009.

River recreation supports 67 businesses that rent canoes, kayaks, innertubes and stand-up paddleboards, generating \$1.4 million in direct sales.

Low-head Dams - Aging and Hazardous

Low-head dams are hazardous to people, barriers to fish movement and to business opportunities.

In 2011, Charles City spent \$1.2 million to remove a hazardous low-head dam and replace it with a set of whitewater rapids that accomplished the same goal as the low-head dam, but also provided a unique river water course and allowed fish to move upstream.

That water course has become a source of community pride and the focus of a paddling competition called Charles City Challenge drawing competitors from across the Midwest.

Motels fill up as do the restaurants and local retail shops and services all because of the whitewater event.

The public use of the area has increased and the initial uncertainty on the part of anglers before construction has turned into support of the project upon completion. Anglers are catching more fish and are asking how projects of this sort can be done on other parts of the Cedar River to improve fish habitat.

Water Trails

Water trails lead Iowans to choose their water adventures, from sea kayaking alongside the cliffs of Lake Red Rock, to canoeing through Olympic-style whitewater courses, to bobbing down a lazy stretch of the Turkey River on innertubes.

DNR supports local groups in defining what is special about their waterway, developing infrastructure that solves parking quagmires and lack of access and markets those experiences.

Local businesses – like the 67 paddling or tube rental businesses, major riverside campgrounds developed since the 1990s, convenience stores, bait shops, sporting goods stores – all benefit when they have right scale of parking lots, accesses, bathrooms, maps, and so on.

Iowa Streams

Iowa has about **70,000 miles** of streams, of which about **18,000 miles are navigable**.

About **half** of all Iowans recreate on rivers annually

Low-head Dams

- 6 have been mitigated
- 18 projects are open
- 181 remain with half considered in good or better condition

Major Riverside

Campgrounds

- Skip-a-Way Resort, *Clermont*
- Rock-and-Row, *Eldora*
- Scenic View Campground, *Yellow River*

SUCCESS STORIES

Whitewater Course Puts Charles City on the Map

Charles City wanted to be a destination. It wanted to be a 'go to' place for river recreation and it got its chance when hard work met opportunity in 2008.

The community, City Hall and paddling groups rolled up their sleeves to improve the downtown riverfront area. Work in the Cedar River traded a low-head dam for an Olympic quality whitewater course that has been drawing visitors from across the Midwest and beyond to Floyd County since 2011.

Bill Kyle has seen impact firsthand. Kyle is the manager for the northeast Iowa regional airport and has seen many small planes land with boats on board that he promptly shuttles to the river.

He said the visitors often express that they can't believe such a perfect whitewater venue exists right here in Iowa. But there are more benefits than the water course itself.

Gordon Mead, of Meads Bait Shop, said demand for bait has increased along with the options of where to buy it since the whitewater course was added.

"People are fishing the river in places where they could never catch fish because the fish are now able to move up river into new, accessible areas," Mead said.

And the visitors are staying. Randy Vanveenter, owner of R Campground in Charles City, said he has seen an increase in campers since the water course opened.

"Many more families are coming out to enjoy the new riverfront and whitewater park," Vanveenter said.

Businesses catering to fishing and the water course are popping up to fill the need.

"We have never rented tubes, but have sold them for many years," said Doug Rogers, co-owner of Mikes C&O Tires, in Charles City. "Sales have increased up to 10 percent since the whitewater park opened and all of the new access work was done. We expect sales to continue to climb but it really depends on the river's water flow. If we have water, we sell tubes."

Making a Good Thing, Better

Central Iowa's busiest stream could get even busier. Brian Keller, of Rivers Access in Redfield, is forecasting a 30 percent increase in his business in 2014 in part because the Pleasant Valley Access on the Middle Raccoon River southeast of Panora was cleaned up and redesigned to be a functioning river access.

"I was very skeptical about doing any rentals down that bottom stretch past Hanging Rock due to the eyesore of the old access," Keller said. "In 2014, I will be marketing this new stretch as an added option."

The bulk of Keller's clients come from Iowa, but 25 percent are from Nebraska, Missouri, Florida, California, Georgia, Tennessee and even China and India.

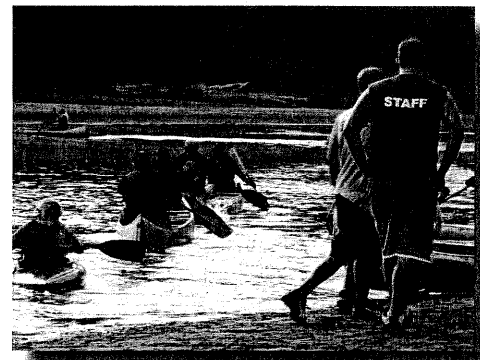
He said visitors stop to eat at Off-sides, a local pizza place, and at Casey's for gas and snacks.

"Money invested into Iowa's rivers has a huge payback and I personally experienced this first hand. Due to higher demand, my plan is to continue investing into boats and providing people with memorable experiences," he said.

The popular water trail has added signs at each access and a portage round the low-head dam at Redfield.



"Even if you remove the paddling aspect, you would still have professional fishermen from all over the Midwest come to fish in the Cedar River along the waterfront," said Bill Kyle, manager of the Northeast Iowa Regional Airport.



"The river not only provides people a place to relax and enjoy friends, it also helps support other small local businesses in our community," said Brian Keller, of Rivers Access in Redfield.