



River Town of the Year Recipients

Each year, Iowa Rivers Revival presents the “*River Town of the Year*” Award to an Iowa river community that demonstrates a commitment “to reclaiming the waterfront as an anchor for economic development, recreation and ecological practices, as well as addressing some of the challenges and solutions related to water quality.”

Clinton (2016):

Clinton is a historic river town whose first European settlers arrived about 1835; it was incorporated in 1857. “Clinton celebrates its past, and it prepares for its future. “We are especially impressed with Clinton’s forward-looking efforts to protect the environment, improve waste water going into the river, and reduce storm water and pollutants discharging to the river,” said Jerry Peckumn, Iowa Rivers Revival Chairman.



The Regional Wastewater Reclamation Facility

is a model for Iowa, IRR says. It uses new technology to reclaim waste water and reduce nutrient pollution discharges to the Mississippi. It reduces harm to marine life in the river. It is a collaborative regional facility (with nearby Camanche and Low Moor) that saves money, spreads benefits, and positions the communities well as new strategies and regulations emerge to reduce nutrient pollution.

The Main Avenue Green Infrastructure Project is a recently-completed, \$1.2 million project improving storm water retention, treatment and filtering. It will result in reduced discharges to the Mississippi of bacteria and solid, metal and nutrient pollution. The Green Infrastructure Project includes permeable brick parking areas, rain gardens and barrels, bio-retention cells, a bio-swale, tree plantings, and soil-quality restoration. Half the funding for the Project was provided by the Iowa Dept. of Natural Resources (DNR).

“Clinton also has a rich collection set of facilities and events that celebrate its connection to the Mississippi,” Peckumn said:

- **Sawmill Museum** celebrating Clinton’s history as “Lumber Capital of the World.”
- **Clinton Area Showboat Theatre** on restored old river paddle-wheeler boat.
- **Small Boat Harbor Marina** with slips and service for 150 boats.
- **Eagle Point Park** (and Bald Eagle Watches).
- **Soaring Eagle Nature Center** (a Silos & Smokestacks “Emerging Site.”)
- **Fishing tournaments.**
- **“American Queen” Steamboat tour stop** since 2015.
- **Discovery Recreational Trail and Mississippi River Trail**, now 12 miles, for walkers, runners, bicycle riders.
- **Spring and Fall river cleanups by community volunteers.**

Council Bluffs (2015): Council Bluffs leaders and local partners are making the Missouri River riverfront the center of life and bringing citizens and visitors “Back to the River.” Council Bluffs’ “Back to the River” initiative provides the vision and focus for protecting and preserving the Missouri River greenbelt and natural space along the riverbank for flood protection, recreational use, and ecological enhancements, including water quality and improved habitat benefits.

Manchester (2015): Manchester is reviving the Maquoketa River as the heart and soul of the community. Local leaders have developed a vision to make the riverfront the town’s defining attraction, which includes a strong commitment to restore the river to its natural state and to do it in a manner beneficial to both the health of the river and the health of the community.” Ongoing projects and plans for the future will deepen Manchester’s connection to the Maquoketa River through recreation, economic development, and environmental stewardship opportunities.

Decorah (2014): Decorah and the Upper Iowa River valley are regarded by many as Iowa’s *most scenic, most popular, and most visited* interior Iowa river. The people of Decorah and the “Oneota Valley” are deeply aware of the legacy they have inherited with this beautiful valley, and they are passionate about protecting it, enjoying it, sharing it, improving it, and passing it on for generations to come. City leaders have recognized the value and importance of cooperation and partnerships in protecting and embracing the Upper Iowa River Valley. Decorah serves as a model for their efforts to improve water quality and clarity in the Upper Iowa River. City officials are connecting residents and visitors through an impressive trail and park system bordering the river, and continue to develop plans for future expansion and attractions. Educational opportunities focused on river issues and ecosystems reach elementary, middle and high school students, Luther College environmental studies programs, and community events and programs reinforce the Upper Iowa River as a foundation of this community.

Dubuque (2013): This historic city is in the midst of a renaissance in its relationship to the Mississippi River – improving recreation, protecting the environment and bolstering its economy. Dubuque has accomplished a remarkable turnaround over the last couple decades, and the river is right at the heart of it all. Dubuque is a great example of public officials, community leaders, civic organizations, businesses and citizens who refocused on their river to improve quality of life. Dubuque is thriving on teamwork, partnership, and community involvement. These collaborative efforts have led to the transformation of the Port of Dubuque, showcasing the river’s influence on residents and visitors. The “daylighting” of Bee Branch Creek is a unique and innovative example of the community embracing its local stream resources by opening up the historic creek that was buried in a storm sewer more than a century ago. Other features are the 11-mile Dubuque Water Trail that runs along the Mississippi River and Catfish Creek; the Catfish Creek Watershed Management Authority (CCWMA), a multi-jurisdictional organization working on water quality, flooding and other issues in the 57-square-mile watershed; and an extensive biking and hiking trail system spanning 45 miles along the river front, connecting the Mississippi to community parks, the downtown, and some of Dubuque’s oldest neighborhoods.

Central City (2013): For the past dozen years Central City has been revitalizing its relationship to the Wapsipinicon River. Central City is a great example of an Iowa town that values and features its river. The leadership, foresight and remarkable collaboration of the Central City Mayor and City Council, City Park & Recreation Board, City staff, Central City Main Street, the Mainstreet Design Committee, the Linn County Conservation Board and staff, civic organizations, and many other volunteers and citizens led to opportunities that connect residents and visitors to the “Wapsi.” After the Flood of 1999, Central City responded by working with FEMA to buy out flood-plain properties, and dedicated the land primarily to be riverfront parks. There are many activities and events flourishing at the river – people are fishing, canoeing, walking, biking, kayaking, tubing, and paddle-boating.

Charles City (2012): Charles City, on the Cedar River, is a superb example of a community that has embraced its river. Charles City citizens and officials responded to record floods in 1999 and 2008 by engaging the river with new ideas and bold projects. One of the community’s most notable features is the transformation of a low-head dam into Iowa’s first whitewater kayak course, which is a magnet for visitors from all over the Midwest and beyond. Opening the river also improved habitat and passage for fish, and increased the number of people fishing in the area. Other key projects include Iowa’s largest permeable paving system, a new ultraviolet disinfection system at the wastewater treatment plant, redesign and replacement of a beloved century-old suspension bridge over the river, and development of new riverside parks with recreational opportunities for all ages.

Cedar Falls (2010): Cedar Falls lies along the Cedar River in Black Hawk County. Cedar Falls and its residents have made significant efforts to foster river and stream stewardship and create recreational opportunities in its rivers and streams. Among these efforts are the implementation of storm water best management practices, legislative reforms including the flood plain ordinance, recreational opportunities such as walking and biking trails, and volunteer efforts such as the Cedar River Festival annual river clean-up.

Coon Rapids (2009): Coon Rapids was designated as one of Iowa’s “Great Places” by Governor Vilsack in 2005 and was granted the opportunity to implement local projects that focused on improving access to and increasing use of the river and the land surrounding it. Coon Rapids is located on the Middle Raccoon River in Carroll County. Coon Rapids has demonstrated a deep connection and appreciation for the river. Residents are actively engaged in preserving and enhancing the river and surrounding area. These efforts include protecting greenbelts and ecosystems through natural habitat restoration, enhancing river tourism accommodations (lodging and recreational amenities), local education and advocacy efforts, community involvement through annual river clean-ups, and making water quality a priority by investing in innovative storm water controls to protect the river.

Elkader (2008): The Turkey River serves as a centerpiece for nearly every aspect of life for Elkader residents. Running parallel to Main Street, people can enjoy the historical, cultural, and natural appeal the river brings to the heart of town. The elementary school is located right along the river, where 5th grade students have the advantage of participating in a comprehensive river and stream ecology class. Many local businesses and cultural attractions directly reflect the historical connection to the Turkey River. For example, the public library, restaurants, stores, bed and breakfasts, museums, canoe rentals, and the historic Elkader Opera House all have a river theme. Every year, countless visitors and tourists venture to Elkader to take advantage of the variety of outdoor recreation associated with the Turkey River. Canoeing, tubing, fishing, camping, and hiking along the river are the main interests related to the river and are easily accessible to the public. The city has invested in protecting the Turkey River by implementing a \$5 million plan to improve the wastewater treatment system.

Webster City (2007): Over the past 150 years, residents in Webster City, along the Boone River, have characterized their city as “River City” due to the community’s many connections with the river and its cultural, geological and historical assets. Many of the city’s parks are found along the Boone River, including a multi-use recreation trail that parallels much of the river and connects the city to Briggs Woods Park. City officials appreciate the value the river brings to the community, and are focusing efforts to enhance the river’s assets to attract new people to the city to live, work and play. Webster City has a history of holding events that showcase the Boone River, including annual river clean-ups and the Boone Bash River Dash, a multi-sport event that has canoe and kayak events, foot races, and community entertainment along the river.