

Iowa Rivers Revival

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Elgin Named Iowa “River Town of the Year”

Iowa Rivers Revival: “The Turkey River has been good for Elgin, and Elgin has been good to the river. The river and its valley are extraordinary assets for visitors and residents alike. Elgin is collaborating with partners to protect and promote the river and watershed.”

Elgin, Iowa. Iowa Rivers Revival, a non-profit group that advocates for rivers and streams, has named Elgin the 2018 “River Town of the Year.”

Elgin is a picturesque town of 683 people on the banks of the Turkey River in Fayette County in Northeast Iowa. It is nestled in beautiful territory, with wooded bluffs and a deep valley cut by the river.

“Elgin is a tiny town, but it’s done a mighty job of promoting and protecting its cherished Turkey River,” said Robin Fortney, board member for Iowa Rivers Revival.

Iowa Rivers Revival is presenting the “River Town of the Year” award at a public reception Friday morning in Elgin (10 a.m, Dotzy’s Restaurant and Saloon, 240 Center Street). Mayor William Pfister and other leaders are accepting the award on behalf of Elgin.

The annual “River Town of the Year” award goes to an Iowa community that demonstrates a commitment “to reclaiming the waterfront as an anchor for recreation, economic development, and ecological practices, as well as addressing some of the challenges and solutions related to water quality.”

Here are some of the accomplishments that earned Elgin the River Town of the Year award:

Elgin and its partners in the [Turkey River Recreational Corridor \(TRRC\)](#) succeeded in getting a State Water Trail designation for a 98-mile stretch of the Turkey, including the river at Elgin -- considered to be one of the most beautiful stretches in Iowa. (The TRRC includes Fayette and Clayton Counties and the cities of Elgin, Clermont and Elkader, nearby on the Turkey River.)

Elgin has two good and safe accesses to the Turkey, and helpful signage, maps, information, camping and outfitters nearby – everything to draw even more visitors to Elgin and the area. A beautiful [“Turkey River Water Trail Map & Guide”](#) is available online and in Elgin. “It’s become a significant

state tourism destination,” Fortney said. “Featuring the river has been good for visitors, good for residents, good for the economy, good for quality of life.”

The Turkey River Recreational Corridor also developed a pedestrian trail along the river between Elgin and Clermont, and recently raised over \$1.4 million to expand the trail eastward from Elgin over a new bridge to Gilbertson Conservation & Education Area and Campground. The bridge is close to completion. The TRRC hosts events featuring the pedestrian trails, including triathlons and 5K runs.

Elgin and TRRC partners participated in State-organized Project AWARE in July 2011, when 429 volunteers removed 32 tons of trash from the Turkey River near Elgin.

Iowa Rivers Revival recognizes Elgin for working to protect and restore the health of the river and watershed. Again, Elgin works in collaboration with partners:

Turkey River Watershed Management Authority (WMA). The WMA consists of 23 cities (including Elgin), five counties, and seven soil and water conservation districts in the Watershed. The entities voluntarily work together to reduce flood risks and improve water quality – including working on a Turkey River Watershed Plan. [www.turkeyriver.org]

Otter Creek Watershed Pilot Project. Otter Creek is a tributary of the Turkey R., with confluence at Elgin. It’s a collaboration of the Iowa Flood Center, Northeast Iowa RC&D (Resource Conservation & Development), and Fayette County Soil and Water Conservation. The project aims to reduce flood impact; it has installed permeable pavers in parking along Center Street in Elgin to better manage storm water runoff and improve water quality. It installed a wetland to address surface water drainage issues in the community, and installed gauges and sensors to monitor flooding.

Fortney said almost all the projects are done by Elgin in cooperation with other entities – the County Conservation Boards and staff, other towns nearby, the State DNR and State funding, private donors, and many others. “Elgin works with others to do together what they could not do alone,” Fortney said. “And by ‘Elgin’ we mean city officials, business owners, residents, stakeholders, donors, and volunteers from Elgin,” Fortney said.

As Mallory Hanson of Northeast Iowa RC&D said, “Elgin is truly a community of enthusiastic ‘doers’ that want to better their community in every possible way to improve the lives of residents, create a fantastic tourist destination, and preserve and enhance its natural and community resources.”

Iowa Rivers Revival is very pleased to recognize Elgin as River Town of the Year!

Iowa Rivers Revival was founded ten years ago to be a voice for rivers. IRR is committed to helping Iowans work on education and public policy to restore and protect Iowa’s rivers and streams.

Helpful web sites: www.iowarivers.org

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