**RRWA News, July 22, 2017**

**Check out Jim Pease on the river interview with Charity Nebbe**

**I’ll send you the link by separate e-mail in a moment.**

**New Website --http://www.northraccoon.org**

**Facebook Page--https://www.facebook.com/groups/107052089361843/**

**IWLA Stream Selfie program--http://iwla.org/conservation/water/clean-water-challenge/stream-selfie**

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**Board**

**Steve Roe-president (Panorama)**

**Liz Blessington –vice president (Auburn)**

**Michael Murphy—secretary/treasurer (Windsor Heights)**

**Rob Davis—board (Coon Rapids)**

**Darren Fife—board (Des Moines)**

**Craig Fleishman—board (Minburn)**

**Ben Maas –board (Buena Vista)**

**Eileen Miller—board (Lake City)**

**Brian McGarvey—board (West Des Moines)**

**Lee Searles—board (Des Moines)**

**Jennifer Terry—board (Des Moines)**

**Colby White—board (Adel)**

**Steve Witmer—board (Johnston)**

Editorial—Mike Murphy

On Monday July 17 I did chemical/physical and biological monitoring at my two sites on North Walnut Creek (NWC) , in Windsor Heights and Urbandale.  I have been monitoring under the IOWATER volunteer program since 2007, and this year became a volunteer in the Polk County Conservation Board (PCCB) monitoring program.  North Walnut Creek originates in the south part of Grimes and flows south, southeasterly through the western suburbs of the Des Moines Metro area, and enters Walnut Creek south of University Boulevard and just west of 73rd Street (west of Sam's Club).   From there, Walnut Creek flows mostly southerly and some easterly, to join the Raccoon River, a short distance upstream of the Des Moines Water Works facility.  Thus NWC is an "urban stream", as is Walnut Creek in this area.  It doesn't meander much and has relatively poor habitat for aquatic life or activities.  However, both NWC and Walnut Creek are maintained extensively as greenbelt areas, with nice biking/pedestrian trails and natural riparian areas, and NWC has pretty good canopy cover throughout.  One of my sites is about a block north of University Boulevard, below the confluence with a large storm sewer outlet (I don't go there when it rains.)  The other site is about a  block north of Hickman Road, below the confluence with a small tributary.  I used to sample at five other sites within this stretch, but scaled back to these two sites this year.

Under the PCCB program, PPC staff and volunteers sample twice per month for chemical/physical parameters, and do a biological assessment once per year in the third week of July.  This assessment tries to locate and tabulate living Benthic Macro Invertebrates (BMIs) at and upstream and downstream from the site.  BMIs are critters, mostly insect larvae and clams, snails, crawdads, and worms that live in or near the streambed, have no backbone and are visible to the eye.  The existence of and types of BMIs at a given location in a stream are indicators of water quality in that vicinity.  BMIs have been categorized scientifically into three groups: pollution intolerant (high quality group);  somewhat pollution tolerant (middle quality group); and pollution tolerant (low quality group).  If no BMIs or mostly pollution tolerant species are found, that is an indication of poor water quality.  If many BMIs are found and many are in the pollutant intolerant group, that is an indication of good water quality.  And of course there is a range of poor to good water quality in between.

Usually my 2 sites don't have much going for them as far as BMIs - NWC is mostly shallow sand bottom with habitat that support BMIs being few and far between.   BMIs like partially submerged rocks in or near riffles, partially submerged logs and logjams,  overhanging vegetation along the stream banks. etc.  I had a good experience yesterday at the storm sewer site.  I picked up a fairly good-sized rock at the end of a downstream riffle and there were 7 Caddisfly larvae on it, 4 of them being in the shelters they sometimes build,  both leaf and gravel.  Caddisflies are in the high quality group.  First time I've seen that many at either of these sites.  There was also a small leech (low quality) on that rock and in the rest of my investigation at this site I found one more Caddisfly, 2 Crawdads and a Water Scorpion (middle quality).   Still not a large number of critters, but given the larger number of high quality species,  it would get a pretty high water quality rating for this day.  At the other site I found one small Mayfly larva (high quality) and it had a small bloodworm  (low quality) clinging onto one of its tails, 2 Damselfly larvae and many (~50)  Water Striders (middle group), and a pouch snail (low quality).  With the predominance of the middle quality group, one high quality and 2 low quality, it would get a slightly lower than average rating for this day.  But not many critters besides the Water Striders.

As far as chemical quality, the main parameter of interest is of course Nitrate.  Nitrate levels have been zero at these sites in July, 2mg/L in June, and 5mg/L in May.  NWC has somewhat higher levels of Chloride than most Iowa streams, but it is not excessive by any standards that I am aware of.  Other measurements have been pretty normal.

Editorial—Delaney

From an essay by one of my students taken from Suzuki’s Sacred Balance by Thomas Berry—

“Tell me of the river and the valley and the streams and woodlands and wetlands, of shellfish and fin fish. A story of where we are and how we got here and the characters and roles that we play. Tell me a story, a story that will be my story as well as the story of everyone and everything about me, the story that brings us together in a valley community, a story that brings together the human community with every living being in the valley, a story that brings us together under the arc of the great blue sky in the day and the starry heavens at night…”

**Insect Study:**

Dr. Keith Summerville, Drake, has agreed to look at insects collected in traps at Tipton Prairie and a couple other locations in the Raccoon Watershed. Mike Delaney, Eileen Miller, Colleen Radebaugh, Liz Blessington and Chris Henning are involved in the study. Hope to have some results at the August 5 meeting.

**Next meeting Saturday, August 5**

Hotel Pattee

Board 9:00

General Meeting 10:30

Eileen Miller will present a program on Dragonflies

Agenda in the next newsletter—August 1

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**Drake Conference**

**July 27**

The Drake University Agricultural Law Center, in cooperation with Farmland Stewardship Solutions, the Iowa Water Center, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, and The Nature Conservancy will host a state-wide conference designed for landowners to share their experiences and learn about how to protect their land, care for the soil and water, and look to the future of their farmland.

More than a dozen speakers are scheduled for the event.

Registration fees:

General $75

Additional spouse/partner/family member $25

**Student $25**

Registration includes light breakfast, lunch, and snack break.

Register [online](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/soil-2017-cultivating-your-investment-landowners-and-stewardship-tickets-34241883395).

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/soil-2017-cultivating-your-investment-landowners-and-stewardship-tickets-34241883395>

For more information about the 2017 SOIL Conference including an updated list of speakers and topics, visit <http://drakeaglaw.org/soil-sustaining-our-iowa-land/>

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**From Whiterock**

**Whiterock Conservancy**

**Upcoming Events**

**Aug. 18** **WOW Savanna Communities (Whiterock Outdoor Walks)** ▪ 4-6 pm ▪ River Campground ▪ Free

**Aug. 20** **Slow Sunday Drive** ▪ 5-8 pm ▪ Garst Farmhouse Pond ▪ $25 ▪ Bring your Gator or similar vehicle for the tour

**Sept. 15** **WOW Historic Garst Farmstead (Whiterock Outdoor Walks)** ▪ 4-6 pm ▪ Garst Historic Farmhouse ▪ Free

**Sept. 15** **Star Party Public Viewing Night** ▪ 7:30 pm-late night ▪ Star Field ▪ Free ▪ Guided by astronomy enthusiasts, peer through telescopes at the wonders of the night sky.

**Sept. 23** **Volunteer Prairie Work Day Seed Harvest** ▪ 9 am-1 pm ▪ River Campground ▪ Free (lunch provided) Learn about the prairie and help harvest seeds for future plantings. No experience necessary.

**Oct. 8** **Slow Sunday Drive** ▪ 2-5 pm ▪ Garst Farmhouse Pond ▪ $25 ▪ Bring your Gator or similar vehicle and spend the afternoon touring Whiterock Conservancy

Check Whiterockconservancy.org for the Liberty Bell Cup rain date and another Forest Therapy Walk.

**From Dallas County Conservation.**

**Little Wagon Train**

**Wednesday** July 26

9 - 11 a.m. Forest Park

**FREE**

Bring your little wagon packed with your favorite snack, drink, toys, books and blanket and have your whole family join the fun of a simulated miniature wagon train rolling through the prairie at Forest Park. The day's adventures will include activities and artifacts from when European settlers were first moving into the area. This program is weather dependent **- preregistration is requested. To register please call the office—515-465-3577**

**Make your cabin and camping reservations.**  Call us at 515.465-3577 for available dates and prices. With the nice weather we are receiving many requests to book cabins and lodges. Book your reservations by contacting the Dallas County Conservation Board,

515-465-3577.

**RRVT Trail Permits**

Trail Permits on sale for just $10 each. Stop in our office, download an order form from our website, pick up a green envelope at any trail head and mail it to us or purchase online. We accept credit cards in our office or online. [Click here for more information!](http://www.co.dallas.ia.us/department-services/information-services-department/remote-assistance/annual-trail-pass)

**Facebook**

Join us on Facebook as we post “Trail Tuesday” and “Throw Back Thursday” plus updated information on programs! Click [here](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Dallas-County-Conservation-Board/661552600535507?ref=hl) for more information!

**Dallas County Parks**

**Sportsman Park**, **Dawson:** Open 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. daily. Reservations will be accepted for the camping, shelters and cabins. Primitive and modern camping will be allowed on a first come, first served basis. Restroom facilities will be open

**Kuehn Conservation Area, Earlham:** Open ½ hour before sunrise to 10:00 p.m. daily. Restroom facilities will be open. Primitive camping allowed on first come first serve basis. Primitive campsite #1 can be reserved.

**Voas Nature Area, Minburn:** Open ½ hour before sunrise to 10:00 p.m. daily. Restroom facilities will be open.  
  
**Hanging Rock, Redfield:**  Open 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. daily. Restroom facilities will be open. Reservations will be accepted for the shelter.   
  
**Trindle Park, Van Meter:** Open from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. daily. Restroom facilities will be open. Reservations will be accepted for the shelters.  
  
**MUSEUMS:** FREE! No fees to visit!  
**Forest Park Museum**, **Perry**: Monday-Friday~8am-4:30pm Saturday, Sunday and Holidays~1pm-4:30pm  
**Voas Rock & Mineral Museum** **near Minburn**: Open selected Sunday afternoons or by appointment anytime.   
**Grand Army of the Republic, Redfield:** Open most Sundays ~ 1pm-4:30pm or by appointment.  **\* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \***

**For more information, or to register for any of our programs, contact:**

**Dallas County Conservation Board**  
**14581 K Avenue**

**Perry, IA 50220**  
**515-465-3577 Office hours M - F 8am - 4:30pm**

[**conservation@dallascountyiowa.gov**](mailto:conservation@dallascountyiowa.gov) **[www.dallascountyiowa.gov\conservation](http://www.dallascountyiowa.gov\\conservation)**

**Membership Form**

Membership Categories:

 \_\_\_\_Student --$5

\_\_\_\_Individual--$10

\_\_\_\_Family--$15

\_\_\_\_Organization--$50

\_\_\_\_Business--$50 (free ads in the newsletter included)

\_\_\_\_Supporting--$100

\_\_\_\_Lifetime--$100

\_\_\_\_RRWA Research and Education Fund

Make checks made out to “RRWA.” Make Research and Education “tax deductible” checks out to “INHF/RRWA”

Send to:

Mike Murphy, 6507 Del Matro, Windsor Heights, IA 50324

Name (include names of family members) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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Mailing address\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_