

The Nishnabotna River – Southern Drift Plain Region

East

- 696,400 Acres
- 76% in Row Crop
- 75% of lower 100 miles straightened
- Heavily channelized

West

- 489,500 Acres
- 80% Cropland
- The most physically altered river in the state
- 15 ft banks, no riparian zone
- 2013 High priority for IA Nutrient Reduction Strategy
- Only designated Water Trail in State

March 9-11, 2024 Red Oak, Iowa Fertilizer Spill

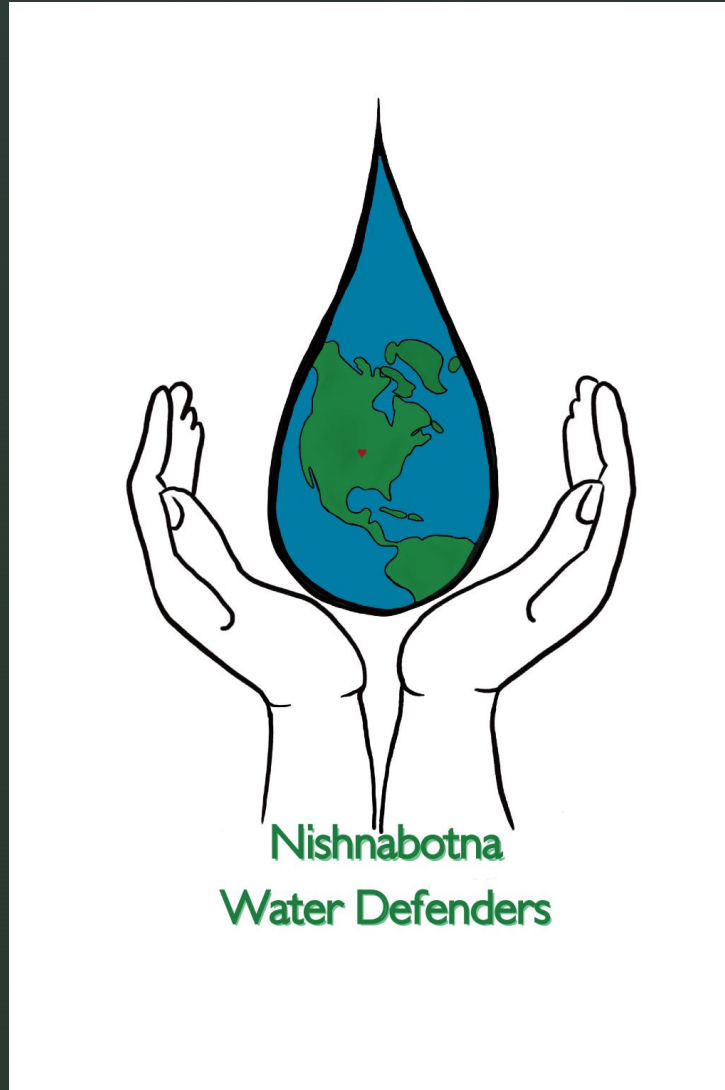
- 265, 000 gallons of Nitrogen Fertilizer in the East Nish
- Detected down river for 60 miles
- Killed 800,000 Fish
- An unknown number of other water animals
- No remarks from NEW Coop
- DNR responded
- Clean-up
- Environmental Protection Commission Unanimously recommended AG pursue
- Since May 2024 on Brenna Bird's desk



Chicken Analogy

Frenzied with something new and lost interest after they found some nuggets and then moved on. I did however see them returning with much more calm to investigate my plantings later in the day. Gives me hope

A Very Brief History



- Jim called Denise- Denise asked us
- Crashed a meeting that night in Shenandoah where Jess Piper was speaking and Seth Watkins was in attendance.
- People there from Red Oak passed around a sheet and started our email list

Feb 18	Phone call with Jim Shenandoah Meeting
March 2	Meeting in R.O. to assess resolve for new group
March 12	Board Formed
March 17	501c3 Official
March 23	Zoom Prep with Chris on DNR alum tx
March 25	Terry to Soil and H2O Conf and R.O. Rotary Mtg
March 26 and 27	NWD Representation in Harlan (Prairie Rose Lake) & Creston – (Green Valley Lake)
April 6	Chris Jones – 1 st Mtg
April 12	Friends of Racoon River Anniversary
April 13	Shenandoah Listening Session

*It pays to
know people
who know
people*

Initial Gathering in Red Oak



DNR Alum Treatment in two SW IA Lakes

- 3/16 announced public meetings – Chris wrote about this on his Substack
- Quick organizing!
- Denise wrote a document to prepare persons for giving public testimony
- Via FB and found persons from Creston and Harlan
- Chris held info session on IA lakes



April 6 with Chris Jones and SW IA Indivisible, followed by our first meeting



Great Questions from Red Oak

- How many communities have water from the Nishnabotna?
- How many wells are impacted?
- What effects does a spill have on aquifers and floodplain?
- Wildlife impact – flora and fauna?
- Interested in learning Water Testing – Nitrate Watch
- Engaging with New Co-op for transparency – leveraging their dissatisfaction of farmers with their service and prices

Friends of the Raccoon River Anniversary Shenandoah Listening Session



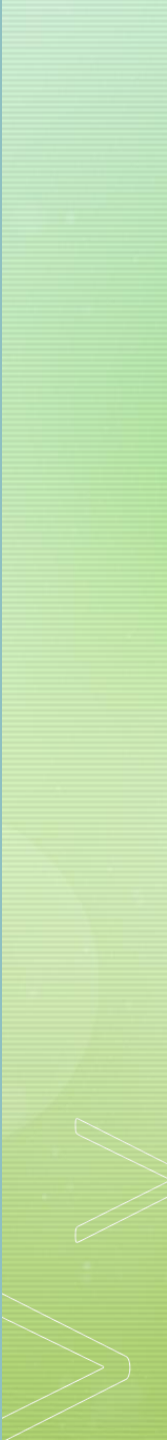


Shenandoah Listening Session

- Investigated their water challenges ahead of meeting and shared
- Green Plains Bulk water use permit
- Wabash Trace and Rapp Park – place for events and testing?
- Arrange tour of Wastewater Plant
- What effects does irrigation have on run-off and water quantity?
- Presbyterian Women's Bible Study theme this year is Climate Change – Lesson #4 is Water Justice – “God's call to care for our neighbors and for creation.”
- Youth Group with 4 area Parishes



Ideas for Advocacy and Action

- Develop questions for Water Department Reps and City Officials
 - Train citizens know what to look for and how to report possible violations
 - Presence at City Council, Soil and Water and Town Hall meetings – Denise wrote giving public comment instructions
 - Calls and letters to decision-makers
 - Continue to grow our membership
- 



Nish at Rapp Park

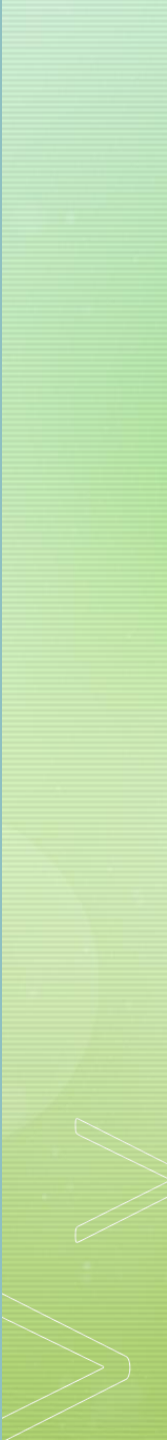


New Culvert for a “bad bridge”



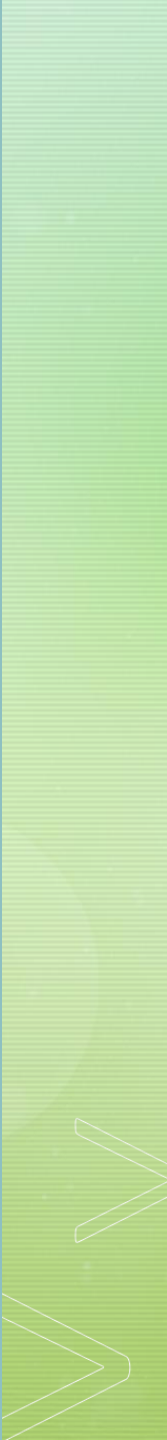


Challenges

- Out own lack of skills, knowledge and time
 - Sparking Interest
 - Motivating people to get involved
 - Finding Water Champions within the watershed
 - Perceived to go against farmers
 - Some see it as a political issue
 - Board consensus on messaging – What is the focus?
 - Lots of time commitment
 - Money for media and operating expenses
- 



Garnering momentum

- Recreation users (fisherman, boating, camping, birding)
 - Younger generations – messaging, education, testing supplies to meetings and schools
 - Church groups
 - 4H, Scouts, FFA - activate and engage in restoration efforts
 - Stay curious and Listen to others
- 

Billboard in Shenandoah

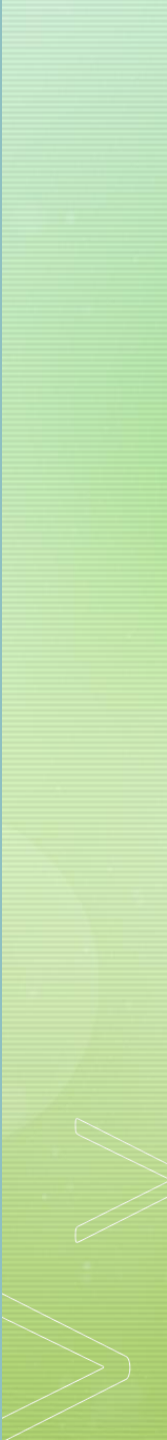


Moving Forward

- Working with NRCS for Rain Simulator and other tabletop activities for events
- Have some fun! Cook outs.
- Art show
- Journalism students/media intern
- HS Science teachers get on their radar for 2025/26
- Teach water testing
- Community Scientists
- City "Days" vs County Fairs
- Billboard in Red Oak
- Connect with other environmental organizations and community groups
- Drake water studies
- Well testing resources
- Find people with Standing
- Paddling events




Upcoming Events

- 4/22 Earth Day: Clean-Up Red Oak Creek
 - 5/3 Sidney, IA Peace, Love, and Mushrooms Art Festival
 - 5/17 Clean Water School
 - Much more!
- 



Much Gratitude

- Driftless Water Defenders
 - Izaak Walton League
 - Friends of the Raccoon River
 - Dubuque Area Land and Water
 - Golden Hills
 - Chris Jones
 - So many more!
 - Those who make connections and share their knowledge
- 



Cold Springs Park Lewis

