



**2010 RIVER TOWN OF THE YEAR  
CEDAR FALLS, IOWA**

Cedar Falls lies along the banks of the Cedar River in Black Hawk County. The City of Cedar Falls and its local residents have made significant efforts to foster river and stream stewardship and to 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 cleanup.

The implementation of best management practices throughout Cedar Falls has largely been focused on treating the impairments of the Dry Run Creek Watershed, which drains 85% of the city before out letting into the Cedar River. Infiltration practices including bioretention cells, raingardens, permeable pavement and bioswales have been implemented in cooperation with the City of Cedar Falls and the University of Northern Iowa. Other work has been conducted to stabilize eroding streambanks in urban and rural areas that contribute large amounts of sediment, which in turn destroys habitat and limits recreation. A local group operating out of the Black Hawk Soil and Water Conservation District has brought nearly \$1,000,000 worth of grant funding into the community through grants received from the Iowa Watershed Improvement Review Board, the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. These funds have been used to assist the City of Cedar Falls and the University of Northern Iowa in their efforts, but have also aided in the construction of both agricultural and urban best management practices on private lands. The Soil and Water Conservation District also works with its partners around Cedar Falls to conduct an outreach program which seeks to educate local residents about watershed concerns. An annual workshop is held at the University of Northern Iowa's Center for Energy and Environmental Education, educational signage is placed at bridge crossings and best management practice sites, informational mailings are used, and presentations are given to local interest groups.



Infiltration tree grates installed as part of the College Hill Streetscape



Bioretention Cell at UNI's Business Communications Center

Recent legislative action taken by the City of Cedar Falls includes the passage of a new Floodplain Ordinance which expands zoning restrictions from the 100 year floodplain to the 500 year floodplain. This will help to lessen the damage

brought on by future flooding in the community and also discourages further use of fill material, which forces water into other areas. Legislative action has also taken effect at construction sites, where new regulations require the site inspector to immediately cease the inspection should a SWPPP (stormwater pollution prevention plan) violation be noted. The inspection cannot continue until the SWPPP violation is corrected. This will help to reduce construction site sediment delivery into local rivers and streams.

The City of Cedar Falls and its local partners have also sought to bring people to the waters through its recreational opportunities. These opportunities include an extensive network of biking and walking trails along the rivers and streams totaling nearly 30 miles. The city was recently named a bike friendly community by the American League of Bicyclist in part due to these efforts. It is the first city in the state of Iowa to receive this honor. The Cedar Valley is also home to the Cedar Valley Water Trail, the first water trail in the state, which consists of 8.4 miles of water trail and 1.6 miles of portage, and runs through 4 different lakes. Iowa Northland Regional Council of Governments (INRCOG) is currently awaiting word on a grant that would create another water trail using the Black Hawk Creek.



The community has also created some opportunities for people who enjoy fishing; the Prairie Lakes retention area is on the East Branch of Dry Run Creek and is stocked regularly with trout. The usage hours of this lake are estimated to be between 7,600 and 10,500 trips per year, with average trip length estimated at 3 hours per trip by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. Boat launches are also being installed in the city parks to allow for more recreational boating, these are being installed in Gateway Park, Island Park, and Washington Park. There is an active paddling community in the Cedar Falls area, as part of the Cedar Trails Festival, Hartman



Reserve Nature Center hosts an eco-triathlon which features trail running, paddling, and bicycling. Prairie Rapids Paddlers are an active canoeing and kayaking group in town that practices in the clay hole, as well as in the Cedar River.

Volunteer efforts throughout the watershed, including IOWATER monitoring SNAPSHOTS to assess the condition of local streams and river cleanups, are also a key part of local watershed management activities. The

Cedar River Festival, orchestrated by the Cedar River Environmental Group, has been ongoing for over 20 years and is the longest running river cleanup group in the state of Iowa. Over the years, the group has had thousands of volunteers, and has removed over 100 tons of trash from the Cedar River. The river cleanup is an annual event in the Cedar Valley; this year's cleanup is currently scheduled to occur July 31<sup>st</sup>.

As an MS4 community the City of Cedar Falls does hold permits for stormwater outlets. Few permit violations have occurred over the last 3 years, most of which center around illicit dumping incidents, detail of these violations and the corrective actions take can be found below.

3-4-08. City Public Works Dept. and Fire Dept cooperated in cleaning up a gas spill into a storm sewer on the Parkade. Offending party was charged with the \$1300 in cleanup costs, but was determined to be an accident and not an intentional illicit discharge.

4-13-09. Rec'd a call from a local retailer that noticed oil coming out a storm sewer discharge pipe. Assisted retailer in tracking down source to a storm intake in the far side of their parking lot. A transient trucker apparently did a "late night" oil change in the parking lot, dumped all the old oil, filters, oil bottles down into a storm intake. City assisted the retailer in making the proper notifications to DNR and followed up on cleanup efforts instituted by the retailer.

3-26-10. A call was received at 6:29 PM on the city's 24 hour emergency response line for storm sewer problems. A concerned citizen walking her dog noticed something black around a city storm sewer intake in front of 1510 Starbeck Circle. A response crew arrived at the scene at approximately 7:00 PM and found what appeared to be waste oil that had been dumped into a storm intake. The intake is only about 250 feet from the storm pipe's discharge to the west branch of Dry Run Creek and some of the oil could be observed near the storm sewer's outlet. Cedar Falls Fire/Rescue was called immediately and by approx. 7:30 PM two oil absorbent booms were put in place spanning the storm pipe outlet channel to capture any additional oil.