

# Watershed Plan Revealed

*Karen Wilke, The Nature Conservancy*

Over the past two years, the Boone River Watershed Management Authority (WMA) has diligently worked to create a watershed plan that identifies and addresses the water quality and flooding concerns within the Boone River Watershed. The watershed plan will serve as a guidebook for addressing watershed concerns through voluntary cooperation between the WMA, landowners, farmers, and other watershed stakeholders. The three main goals of the watershed plan are to ensure water quality is adequate for all uses, both within the watershed and downstream; reduce flood risks and improve wildlife habitat within the watershed; and build an aware and engaged community that works towards improving the watershed. We all live in a watershed, and this plan lays out the activities we can all do to create a healthy landscape.

Join us for a chance to review the draft watershed plan and provide input at a free public open house hosted by the WMA on Wednesday February 2 at the Wright County Iowa State University Extension and Outreach office in Clarion, with options to join in person anytime between 11:00am-1:00pm or 5:00pm-7:00pm. Free lunch will be offered during the lunchtime meeting and cookies and coffee will be offered during the evening meeting. If you cannot attend or prefer to provide feedback virtually, please send comments to Adam Rupe with JEO Consulting Group at [arupe@jeo.com](mailto:arupe@jeo.com) by February 3. More information about the WMA and the draft watershed plan can be found at [www.BooneRiver.org](http://www.BooneRiver.org).

The WMA is a voluntary coalition of local counties, cities and soil and water conservation districts within the watershed. Their vision is to be a local voice in existing and new watershed efforts through community, county, state, federal, and private partnerships to improve water quality and increase flood resiliency across the watershed. This will be achieved through facilitation of education, outreach, and implementation of practices which are voluntary, compatible with agriculture, economically viable, environmentally sound, and that improve soil health, as well as enhance recreation and wildlife habitat.



BOONE RIVER  
WATERSHED  
MANAGEMENT  
AUTHORITY

Join the Boone River WMA to learn about the watershed management plan and provide your feedback on the draft plan.

**To view the draft plan and learn more about the WMA, visit [booneriver.org](http://booneriver.org).**

## OPEN HOUSE

**FEBRUARY 2, 2022 | 11 AM-1 PM or 5-7 PM**

ISU Extension and Outreach Wright County | 2302 Madison Ave Ste B | Clarion, IA

**RSVP to Alyssa Tenorio with JEO Consulting at [atenorio@jeo.com](mailto:atenorio@jeo.com).**



# Exploring Natural Beauty and Rich History

*Karen Wilke, The Nature Conservancy*

Throughout the long cold winter, it's fun to dream about what to do during the warm sunny summer. If you haven't done so already, a must-do during the summer is a paddle along the lower stretches of the Boone River. Grab your kayak, canoe, innertube, paddleboard, or other water vessel and enjoy one of the most scenic natural areas in the state. In fact, the southernmost 25 miles of the Boone River is designated by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) as only 1 of 5 Protected Water Areas in the state, because of its outstanding cultural and natural resources. During your time on the river, you will see abundant wildlife, steep limestone bluffs, and historic artifacts. Learn about the area's rich history by exploring old log cabins and grist wheels. Be on the lookout for eagle nests, river otters, and mussel shells.

The Boone River offers 9 sites for river access in Hamilton and Wright Counties. Make sure to plan for your trip on the river by checking out the Boone River Water Trail Guide on the IDNR website to learn more about the water trail: <https://www.iowadnr.gov/Things-to-Do/Canoeing-Kayaking/Water-Trail-Maps-Brochures>. The Trail Guide includes a map of all access points, details about what you'll see during each stretch of the river, fun facts about the area's history, and tips for being safe on the river. The guide also contains recommendations on the skill level required for each stretch of the river, since some stretches contain rapids or difficult portages. Be sure to stay safe on the water by checking river water levels, weather forecasts, and wearing a life jacket.



# Assessing Fish Passage

Julie Jarvey, Michigan State University, USFWS Directorate Fellow 2021

Intersections of streams and roadways can create barriers to fish passage and threaten fish populations. Crossings that are improperly designed or installed can alter streams, creating conditions that fish cannot pass. Common issues at crossings include sediment buildup and perched culverts. Perched culverts occur when culverts are undersized, which alters the stream flow and creates a pool at the culvert outlet eventually causing water to freefall from the culvert into the stream. As the perch becomes higher, fish cannot jump from the stream into the culvert and access habitat upstream. When these types of barriers exist, some fish can become isolated which can threaten the health of the fish community.



These types of barriers are a threat to small, and threatened fish including the Topeka shiner. The Topeka shiner (*Notropis topeka*) is a federally endangered minnow that lives in prairie streams throughout the central U.S. Much of the historic Topeka shiner habitat has been lost, fragmented, or degraded due to land use changes. The Boone River Watershed (BRW) contains federally designated critical habitat for the Topeka shiner and has ongoing habitat restoration work through collaborative work of federal, state, and private agencies and landowners. The work of these partnerships and farmer-led efforts, alternative farming practices, and oxbow restorations have contributed to successful Topeka shiner conservation in the watershed. Another critical component to habitat restoration work is restoring and maintaining habitat connectivity throughout the watershed by identifying and removing barriers to fish passage.

During summer 2021, stream-roadway crossings along Eagle Creek and Prairie Creek of the BWR were inventoried to identify and prioritize barriers for removal. This project contributed to the goals of the strategic habitat plan to improve habitat connectivity for Topeka Shiner and was part of the Directorate Resource Fellowship Program with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service working with the La Crosse Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office.

In total, 196 crossings were inventoried, and 36 crossings were identified as barriers or partial/potential barriers to fish passage. Crossing that had substantial perches, other significant damage, or were dammed were classified as complete barriers, and crossings that had minor perches or sediment and debris accumulation were considered partial or potential barriers that should be monitored. Of the complete barriers, three were classified as high priority due to the degree of the barrier, proximity to known Topeka shiner locations, oxbows or potential oxbow restorations, and critical habitat areas. Future barrier assessment work in the remaining subwatersheds of the BWR is planned for summer 2022. The next step will be for local counties and watershed partners to identify funding to remove the high priority fish passage barriers to ensure that healthy fish populations continue to flourish in the BRW.

## SAVE THE DATE

Red Shed Event Center  
908 2<sup>nd</sup> Street NW, Clarion  
February 11<sup>th</sup> 6:00pm

### What Are The Key Ingredients to Developing a Thriving Conservation Culture?

Want to learn how to be more profitable and less dependent on inputs? Join us for a free public event to learn the secrets of success for fostering a culture of conservation from local and regional collaborative projects.

Farmer Panelist:

- > Dean Sponheim – Mitchell County farmer and cover crop seed business start-up
- > Mitchell Hora – Washington County farmer, founder/CEO Continuum Ag, 2021 Forbes 30 under 30

Free supper will be served for those who RSVP. Walk-ins welcome.  
RSVP to Wright Co. SWCD at (515) 532-2165 x3 or colleen.trees@ia.nacdn.net or sean.mccoy@iowaagriculture.gov by February 3<sup>rd</sup>.  
This event is sponsored by Iowa Corn, Wright County Soil and Water Conservation District, and Boone River Nutrient Reduction Project.







Follow us at:  
[@nature\\_ia](https://www.instagram.com/nature_ia)



Follow us at:  
[@nature\\_IA](https://twitter.com/nature_IA)



Like us at:  
[facebook.com/TNCIowa](https://www.facebook.com/TNCIowa)

If you would like to receive this newsletter electronically or to unsubscribe, please email [kwilke@tnc.org](mailto:kwilke@tnc.org).  
BELOW: Rocky Bluff Photo Credit: Jorge Ribas

JANUARY 2022

# The Boone River REVIEW

MORE DETAILS AT [BOONERIVER.ORG](http://BOONERIVER.ORG).