

# Conservation Corner

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March Madness is upon us. Tournament season is an exciting time for sports fans, especially if your hometown team or alma mater makes it to the Well or the Big Dance. Whatever the final outcome, it's always fun and rewarding to see young people develop their talents and skills on the wrestling mat and hardwood.

Perhaps you've caught girls state basketball fever this winter or in years past. During my playing days as a Pomeroy Cyclone we didn't have a winning season, much less make it to state, but we still had fun playing Iowa's popular six-on-six version of hoops. At the time Battle Creek, Crestland of Early, Galva, Lake View, Lohrville, Newell, Pomeroy, Schaller, and Wall Lake comprised the Bo-Coon Athletic Conference. However, it wasn't until I was compiling some trivia questions for our 15<sup>th</sup> class reunion that I finally realized what Bo-Coon stood for – the Boyer and Raccoon Rivers that flowed through and inter-connected the conference schools and towns.

Recently I've had the chance to visit two county conservation parks located along those two rivers. On February 15, Kyle, Aaron and I drove to the IACCB District 3 meeting being held at the Crawford County Conservation headquarters located in Yellow Smoke Park along the East Boyer River. Two branches of the Boyer converge at Denison to continue their journey to the Missouri River. The Boyer River is named after a member of the Boyer Family of Pennsylvania who hunted and trapped with area Indians.

Yellow Smoke Park is located on 358 acres of land that was once part of the Omaha Indian's tribal hunting grounds. The park is named for Chief Yellow Smoke, the last keeper of the *a-kon-da-bpa* or "sacred pole." Carved from cottonwood and featuring the namesake yellow smoke stain, the pole symbolized the Omaha's well-being and was featured in renewal ceremonies and sacred songs. Today the park features a 40-acre lake, cabins, campgrounds, and walking trails and is home to their conservation headquarters and the Neal Moeller EE Center.

Last week I attended the Western Iowa Swap Meet at the Sac County Conservation Center in Hagge Park located just south of Sac City. This park lies along the North Raccoon River, one of three branches that eventually join together and empty into the Des Moines River just south of the capital city's downtown.

The Raccoon River, of course, has seen its fair share of headlines lately. Unfortunately, they're not on the sports page. I'm sure many of you have been closely monitoring the muddy waters of the Des Moines Waterworks lawsuit filed against three counties in the Raccoon Watershed. Unfortunately, while the Raccoon River used to be known for canoeing, kayaking, and fishing, it's now probably best known for its high nitrate levels and the resulting controversy over who should pay to clean up the water.

Both meetings were filled with good ideas, good reports, and good people. We ended the Swap Meet with a nature walk along Snail Trail. Good luck on the tournament trail!



Wheels to Heels Trail at Yellow Smoke Park