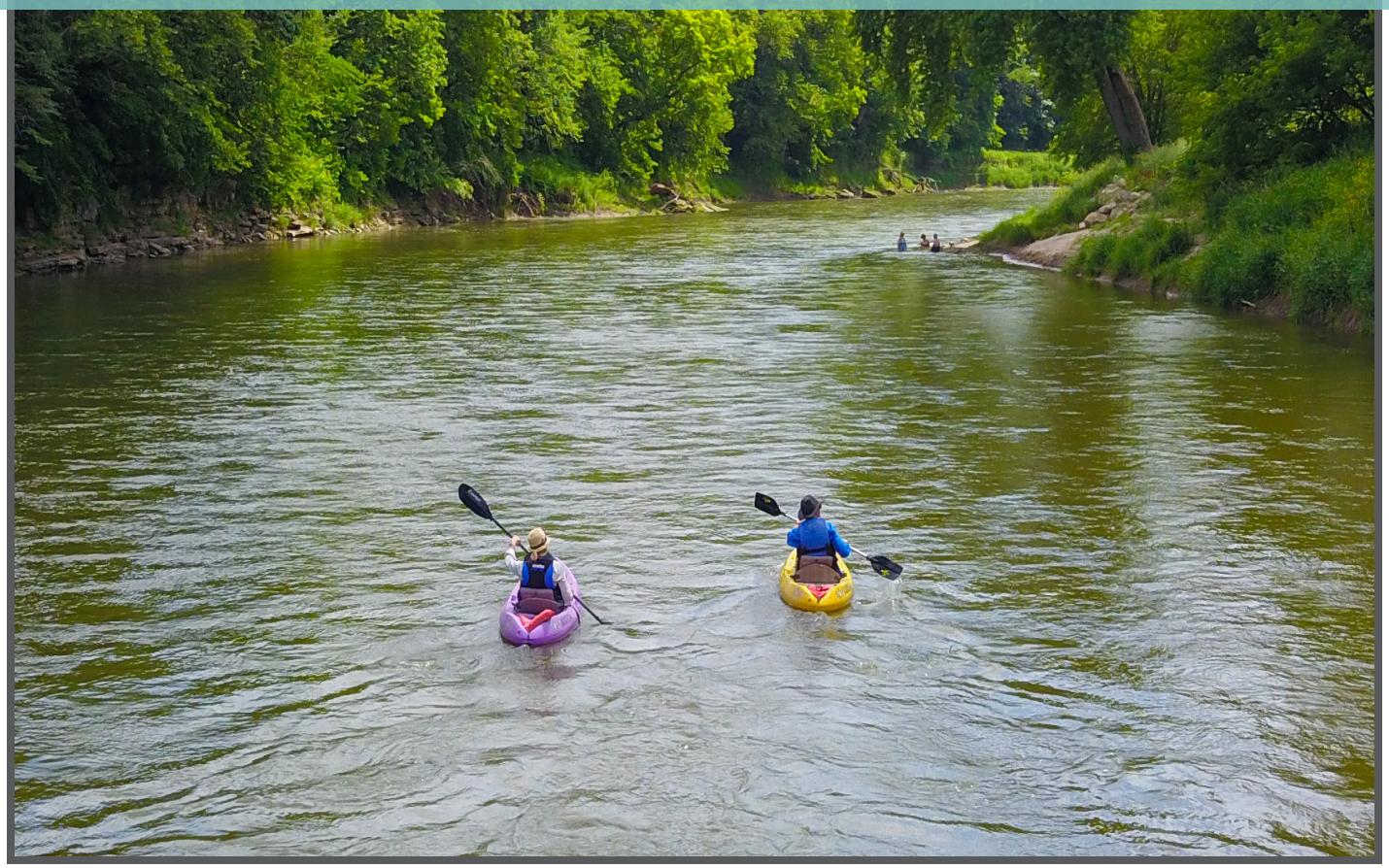
TURKEY RIVER RECREATIONAL CORRIDOR

2026 Annual Report



Since its formation in 2010, the Turkey River Recreational Corridor has been built around the idea that communities can accomplish more by working together. The Corridor was established through a 28E agreement between Clayton and Fayette Counties and the cities of Clermont, Elgin, and Elkader, with a shared goal of connecting communities, enhancing natural resources, and using recreation as a catalyst for economic growth and quality of life.

The TRRC has documented over $13.7 million in grants and private funds leveraged since 2010, supporting major trail, park, historic preservation, community enhancement, marketing, public art, and programming efforts. The 2026 work continued that broader legacy by concentrating on projects that connect recreation with community development and regional tourism.

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR



Mallory with Fayette County Fair Queen Candidates at the 2026 Fayette County Fair

Dear Supporters and Friends,

On behalf of the Turkey River Recreational Corridor (TRRC) Board and our partner organizations, I am pleased to share this 2026 Annual Report. The report highlights the work completed from January through September 2026 and reflects another year of collaboration, community support, recreation promotion, and project development across Clayton and Fayette Counties.

The Corridor's strength continues to come from partnerships. Throughout the year, TRRC supported community projects, advanced trail and infrastructure planning and construction, promoted the region's land and water recreation opportunities, and helped connect local organizations with funding and technical resources. These efforts ranged from public art and trail amenities to wayfinding, event coordination, marketing, and long-term trail expansion.

Several efforts moved from planning into implementation in 2026. The Coneflowers in the Corridor project continued to take shape, the Pedal Paddle Rack project was completed, the 2026 Turkey River Safari was prepared and promoted, and seven infrared trail counters were installed and maintained throughout the Corridor. TRRC also continued sustained coordination with Fayette County Conservation and the Fayette County Engineer's office on the Clermont Trail expansion project and provided support to Clayton County Conservation for their Pony Hollow Trail extension project in Elkader.

Regional visibility remained an important part of the Corridor's work. TRRC participated in the Iowa Bike Expo and Canoecopia, supported tourism promotion at the Iowa State Fair and Fayette County Fair, distributed maps and guides, and provided information and photography for statewide and regional travel promotion. These activities help introduce new visitors to the Corridor while keeping recreation opportunities visible to residents.

As we look toward the remainder of 2026 and beyond, TRRC remains focused on strengthening connections between communities, trails, natural resources, historic sites, and local economic opportunities. Thank you to the communities, conservation boards, organizations, volunteers, and individuals who continue to make this shared vision possible.

Warm Regards,

Mallory Hanson, TRRC Director

2026 ANNUAL OVERVIEW

Through September 2026, the Turkey River Recreational Corridor continued its role as a regional partner for recreation, conservation, tourism, and community development. Monthly activities centered on eight core areas of work: small project grant writing and facilitation; marketing and advertising promotion; program and event partnership; online content development; trail counting and economic data; board management and community support; vision planning and sustainability; and large infrastructure grant writing. A major focus was advancing projects that improve the experience of residents and visitors.

TRRC continued work on the Coneflowers in the Corridor public art initiative, completed payments associated with the Pedal Paddle Rack project, and began planning for updated trail wayfinding signage in Clermont and Elgin. The organization also supported partner applications and projects, including pickleball courts in Clermont, bandstand rehabilitation in Elgin, a bike repair station at Motor Mill, and preservation work at the Larrabee School.

MAJOR 2026 HIGHLIGHTS

- $327,500+ in grants leveraged for Corridor projects.
- Seven infrared trail counters managed throughout the Corridor to continue tracking trail use.
- 260 participants registered for the 2026 Turkey River Safari, with registrations extending beyond the immediate region.
- 665 tourism and recreation publications distributed at the January Iowa Bike Expo.
- 662 publications distributed at Canoecopia in partnership with Visit Decorah.
- Ongoing development and implementation of the Coneflowers in the Corridor public art project.
- Pedal Paddle Rack project finalized, with promotional development continuing into summer.
- Grant applications submitted for Clermont pickleball courts.
- Continued grant planning and submissions for the Clermont Trail expansion project.
- Trail wayfinding replacement and update planning initiated for Clermont and Elgin.
- Regional tourism promotion supported through the Iowa Group Travel Guide, Iowa Bike Expo, Canoecopia, Iowa State Fair, Fayette County Fair, maps, guides, website content, and social media.
- Partner and community support provided for projects involving Motor Mill, Osborne, the Larrabee School, Dover School Number Six, Gilbertson Conservation Education Area, and other Corridor sites.
- Regional visibility strengthened through tours with Iowa Economic Development Authority and Travel Iowa leadership.





Pedal Paddle Racks

SUMMARY OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Trail Development and Infrastructure

TRRC maintained ongoing coordination with Fayette County Conservation and the Fayette County Engineer's office as planning and grant submissions continued for the Clermont Trail expansion project. The organization facilitated a June 17th tour of the project site and Corridor area with Iowa Economic Development Authority Director, Debi Durham and a June 26th tour with Travel Iowa State Tourism Manager and Team Lead Amy Zeigler. Support was also provided to Clayton County Conservation for the Pony Hollow Trail extension in Elkader. Trail-related planning also included potential replacement and updates to wayfinding signage in Clermont and Elgin TRRC attended both city council meetings in August to discuss the proposed improvements, obtained fresh maps for community kiosks, and began drafting a Fayette County Community Foundation grant application to support the signage work.

Grant Support and Community Projects

TRRC continued to provide grant-writing and facilitation support to Corridor communities and partner organizations. In addition to ongoing public art work, the organization submitted grant applications for the City of Clermont's Pickleball Court Project and assisted the City of Elgin with a potential funding plan for a Bandstand Rehabilitation Project. TRRC also assisted Dover School Number Six with nonprofit and 501(c)(3) filing information and provided support to the Larrabee Foundation for a grant application related to cornice repairs on the Larrabee Building.

Marketing and Regional Visibility

TRRC continued to promote the Corridor through maps, guides, events, websites, social media, and statewide travel opportunities. At the Iowa Bike Expo in January, 665 publications were distributed, including Northeast Iowa Bike Maps, Turkey River Water Trail Maps, and Clayton and Fayette County Trout Fishing Guides. At Canoecopia in March, 662 publications were distributed in partnership with Visit Decorah. TRRC also provided site information and photographs for the 2026 Iowa Group Travel Guide, assisted with updates to the Gilbertson Conservation Education Area brochure and map, staffed the Fayette County Tourism Booth at the Fayette County Fair, and participated in the Iowa State Fair Travel Iowa Booth in partnership with Fayette County Tourism.



Turkey River Safari Participant

Programs and Events

The Turkey River Safari remained a major focus of TRRC's programming. Planning began early in the year with site permissions, guidebook development, bag and sticker orders, and preparation of the 20 Safari locations. Guidebooks were printed and distributed, 20 Safari posts were installed, and promotional efforts continued throughout the summer. By August, 260 participants had registered. Registrants ranged in age from newborn through 64, with the majority coming from northeast and eastern Iowa. The furthest-away registration was from Spring Hill, Tennessee. TRRC also supported other regional events, including the Gilbertson Winter Festival and the Motor Motor 5K/10K, which had 88 participants on March 21st. Additional event coordination included planning support for the Driftless Adventure Race, Project A.W.A.R.E., and Osborne Days.

Data Collection and Trail Use

In March, TRRC installed seven infrared trail counters throughout the Corridor to continue collecting information about land trail use. Data was pulled from the counters regularly throughout the year. Continued collection and compilation of trail-use data will help provide a stronger picture of recreation activity and support future planning and funding efforts. From March until August, an average of 35 users per day were recorded throughout the Corridor, with over 89,000 total land trail users recorded.



Rod at the 2026 Iowa Bike Expo

Board and Community Support

TRRC continued monthly Board coordination, with Board meetings facilitated throughout the year. The Director also participated in regional planning and transportation discussions, including RPA-1 Enhancement Committee activities, an annual REAP assembly, an Iowa DOT public involvement focus group, and planning for a presentation to the Iowa DOT Commissioners featuring trail projects across a five-county region in October. The Corridor also remained engaged in local community conversations, including Osborne Heritage Days listening sessions, city council discussions in Clermont and Elgin, and coordination with conservation, economic development, tourism, and historic preservation partners.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE LONG-TERM VISION

Transformative Projects and Partnerships

Since 2010, TRRC partners have leveraged more than $13.7 million in grants and private funds, distributed almost equally between Clayton and Fayette Counties. These investments have supported over a dozen major projects and countless smaller initiatives that have improved access, conservation, tourism, and community pride. 2026 highlights related to the current TRRC vision plan include:

- **Recreational Opportunity Expansion:** Continued work on trail expansion, trail amenities, maps, and wayfinding.
- **Economic Development and Tourism:** Promoted recreation assets through regional and statewide tourism channels and supported projects that enhance visitor experiences.
- **Natural Resource Conservation:** Continued collaboration with conservation partners and support for projects connected to the Corridor's natural assets.
- **Historic and Cultural Preservation:** Supported Motor Mill stabilization planning, Larrabee School preservation efforts, and the continued interpretation of Corridor heritage resources.
- **Marketing and Promotion:** Maintained a positive online presence and expanded print, event, and tourism promotion efforts.
- **Community and Regional Development:** Provided technical assistance, grant facilitation, event support, and regional coordination for Corridor communities.
- **Art and Cultural Support:** Continued implementation of Coneflowers in the Corridor and support for creative placemaking throughout the region.

LOOKING AHEAD: 2027 AND BEYOND



Pony Hollow Trail: Before and During Construction



Clermont Trail: Graded Portion

The work documented through September 2026 provides a foundation for continued progress during the remainder of the year and into 2027. Several initiatives are positioned for continued development, including the Clermont Trail expansion, trail wayfinding improvements in Clermont and Elgin, Coneflowers in the Corridor, Pedal Paddle Rack promotion, and continued marketing of the Corridor's land and water trail opportunities.

- Continue grant planning and submissions for the Clermont Trail expansion project.
- Continue support for the Pony Hollow Trail extension project.
- Pursue funding for updated trail wayfinding signage in Clermont and Elgin.
- Complete and promote the Coneflowers in the Corridor public art installations.
- Provide support for Motor Mill stabilization project and HRDP grant administration
- Continue promotion and development of the Pedal Paddle Rack project.
- Maintain and expand marketing of the Turkey River Water Trail, land trails, parks, historic sites, and recreational opportunities.
- Continue collecting and compiling trail counter data to support future economic and recreation planning.
- Support partner projects involving conservation, historic preservation, community amenities, and recreation.
- Continue regional representation through tourism events, transportation planning, and partner meetings.
- Build on the Corridor's digital presence, website content, and social media outreach.

TRRC's future success will continue to depend on the same qualities that have shaped the Corridor since its formation: collaboration, shared investment, creative partnerships, and a commitment to connecting people with Northeast Iowa's natural, recreational, and cultural resources.

BOARD LEADERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION

TRRC Board members meet regularly to receive updates from the TRRC Director and to make decisions regarding funding priorities, programming, advertising, and partner support. The Director also participates in partner and regional meetings, as appropriate.

Executive Committee

Chair, Rod Marlatt
Vice-Chair, Chris Schoen
Secretary/Treasurer, Mallory Hanson

At-Large Representation

Rod Marlatt (Fayette Co. Conservation)
Heather Gamm (Fayette Co. Conservation Alt.)
Ean Popenhagen (Clayton Co. Conservation)
Jenna Van Meeteren (Clayton Co. Conservation Alt.)
Troy Schott (Fayette County)
Kelly Shaffer (Clayton County)
Chris Schoen (Motor Mill Foundation)
Brian Balster (Motor Mill Foundation Alt.)

County Representation

Bruce Lehmann (Fayette Co. Supervisor)
Larry Popenhagen (Fayette Co. Supervisor Alt.)
Steve Doeppke (Clayton Co. Supervisor)
Ray Peterson (Clayton Co. Supervisor Alt.)

City Representation

Roger Buchholz (Elkader City Council)
Jennifer Cowsert (Elkader City Council Alt.)
Kayleen Schrader (Clermont City Council)
Greg Larson (Clermont City Council Alternate)
Chris Wachal (Elgin City Council)
Barb Wenger (Elgin City Council Alternate)



Rod Marlatt, TRRC Chair and Jennifer Shekleton, Fayette County Conservation Environmental Education Coordinator pose at the Fayette County Tourism booth during the Fayette County Fair.



www.northeastiowarcd.org

The TRRC Board procures Mallory Hanson's coordination services through an annual contract with Northeast Iowa RC&D

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