

# Ames Tribune

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## Squaw Creek cleanup aims to promote statewide styrofoam ban

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After spending Memorial Day cleaning up Squaw Creek, Environment Iowa Director Erik Jung said that what was recovered surprised him, to say the least.

“It was actually more than I expected honestly,” Jung said. “Compared to other cleanups we’ve done, this one seemed to have a more dense amount of garbage than other rivers.”

Environment Iowa is a citizen-based environmental advocacy organization and a project of Environment America. Jung, along with 15 volunteers recovered nine bags of garbage filled with bottles, cans, plastic wrappers, Styrofoam packing peanuts, 7 tennis balls, 6 golf balls, a football, a basketball, two car tires, a traffic cone, a pool floaty and a bicycle, all within a one-mile section of Squaw Creek from Brookside Park to South Fourth Street.

The group spent their day off cleaning the creek in an effort to also promote its campaign to implement a statewide ban on polystyrene, or Styrofoam. According to Jung, Styrofoam never biodegrades and just breaks into smaller pieces that end up in our lakes and rivers, ultimately killing fish and birds.

“If you look at the amount of the rivers that there are in Iowa or around the country, unless there are people out there picking up the gunk, the plastic does not biodegrade and neither does the Styrofoam, so that’s out there,” Jung said.

So far Jung said that he and other Environment Iowa directors have spoken with at least 1,000 people each across the state and the response has been almost unanimous support. According to Jung, Environment Iowa is also in the process of introducing a bill in the Legislature banning Styrofoam, but have to decide which representative they want to reach out to.

“It’s not something that we think is going to happen this year, but it is something that we’ll put the work in on the ground to make them aware,” Jung said. “Right now it’s really about building up the grassroots movement.”

Jung said the organization is hoping to make the cleanups an annual event.

“This is something that we’ll definitely keep doing wherever we’re at,” Jung said.