

## **Legislators: Strengthen Iowa's manure management laws from the Iowa Environment Quarterly (Winter 2001)**

Iowa legislators need to show leadership and take action on a difficult but solvable problem that is affecting Iowans' quality of life: Livestock manure pollution. Legislators have shown they can lead on making improvements to Iowa's environment; they did so the last two sessions when they funded water quality programs.

Livestock manure is reaching our drinking water sources as well as killing extensive numbers of fish and other species. It is causing a stench that is driving Iowans away from their farms. Our current laws do not adequately address the problems. Reasonable steps, which many Iowa farmers already follow, would protect Iowa. Large livestock facilities should not be located next to state parks, high quality water bodies, drinking water sources, and other valuable areas likely to be damaged by manure pollution.

In addition, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources needs more people to manage livestock programs and to enforce manure management requirements. The state needs to monitor the air quality near large confinement facilities and develop limits to protect neighbors' health. There is growing evidence that neighbors are getting sick living near these facilities.

The Iowa Environmental Council also supports local control over the siting of large animal confinement facilities. It is only reasonable to allow local governments to have a say in protecting their natural resources, property values, and citizens' health.

Other legislative priorities for the Council include clean water. The state should fund the cleanup of Iowa's polluted waters and to enhance Iowa's new water quality monitoring network.

The last two years, Governor Vilsack and Iowa legislators have shown leadership on water quality issues. The Council wants them to continue their support for the Iowa Water Initiative, including appropriating an additional one million dollars for water monitoring. With that money, the state will expand lake monitoring, better assess our drinking water resources (both private wells and surface water for public water supplies), and make other improvements.

Appropriations for the last two years have allowed the state to start a full-scale monitoring effort to assess the state's waters where one was virtually nonexistent before, and to establish a citizen monitoring program that is receiving national notice.

The state also needs monies to clean up the 157 waterways listed on the state's impaired waters list. Sediment and high nitrogen levels are the most common pollutants of those waters.