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## Water Initiatives - 2008

*The following initiatives will be priorities of the Iowa Environmental Council in 2008. They are expected to require a significant amount of effort, our coalition is in a position to lead, the initiative has statewide significance, and there is a good chance for success.*

**1. State Water Plan.** We will work with the Governor and legislature on authorizing legislation to adopt and implement a comprehensive State Water Plan to address both water quality and quantity issues for surface and groundwater resources. The last comprehensive State Water Plan was completed in 1978, with an update in 1985 to address water quantity issues following several years of drought. Maintaining and protecting our state water resources has become more challenging as water demands increase and funding for water monitoring is endangered. We advocate a proactive plan for water use decisions and conservation provisions to assure sustainable water resources for both environmental and economic benefits. The plan also needs to address nonpoint source pollution issues which require a locally led watershed approach to be effective. To develop and manage the state water plan, we suggest that the water plan legislation incorporate a Water Resources Coordinating Council with representation from state and federal agencies responsible for water management, as recommended by the Watershed Quality Planning Task Force. This Coordinating Council's mission should be expanded from the Watershed Taskforce recommendation to include groundwater as well as surface water issues.

**2. Watershed Quality Planning Taskforce.** The Iowa Environmental Council is a member of this taskforce and we support the consensus recommendations outlined in the November 2007 report. The Council supports the Taskforce's request for \$13.5 million annually to implement the following new water quality programs:

- Creation of a Water Resource Coordinating Council made up of state and federal agencies with responsibilities to develop and implement a state water management plan
- Develop a Water Quality Research and Marketing Campaign to rekindle the conservation ethic in all Iowans
- Conduct a Regional Watershed Assessment in all large (HUC 8) watersheds across the state to facilitate watershed planning and prioritization
- Conduct small watershed assessments, planning and implementation in priority sub-watersheds (HUC 12 or smaller) including an evaluation to measure results

- Provide technical and financial support for watershed monitoring and measurement for local watershed projects to better target limited resources to priority areas
- Evaluate wastewater and stormwater treatment infrastructure needs on a watershed basis and prioritize funding for communities that present the greatest water quality and health risks within the watershed

**3. Water Resource Study.** The Council supports \$1.2 million in new funding (\$1.684 total) to support the ongoing study of Iowa's surface and groundwater resources begun last year to characterize the availability, quality, use and sustainability of Iowa's valuable water resources. This study is necessary to provide essential information for management of these resources through an improved water resource permitting system.

**4. Septic Tank Legislation.** The Iowa Environmental Council will work cooperatively with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and other partners to support legislation that provides more tools for identifying existing septic tank problems and preventing future problems from new homes built without adequate sewage treatment. Legislation could include requiring time of sale inspections of septic tanks for existing homes and prior approval of sewage treatment plans from the County Board of Health before developers can start new construction in areas without public sewers.

**5. Water Quality Standards.** The Iowa Environmental Council and partners have been working for several years to bring Iowa's water quality standards into compliance with the federal Clean Water Act (CWA.) In 2004, we identified three top priorities for action: 1) Revise Iowa's water quality standards to meet the minimum CWA requirements for protection of recreation and aquatic life uses, 2) remove special provisions in Iowa's water quality standards for wastewater discharges such as "Protected Flows" that exempt wastewater discharges from the minimum CWA requirements, and 3) develop antidegradation rules and implementation procedures to limit new pollution to Iowa rivers and streams and keep Iowa's clean water clean. In January 2006, new water quality standards were approved that made significant progress on our first two priorities. In 2008, we will focus our efforts on the adoption of new antidegradation rules and procedures, and implementation of the 2006 rules protecting aquatic life and recreation uses.

**6. Compliance and Enforcement.** We will continue with our efforts to ensure compliance and enforcement of Clean Water Act regulations. We will also focus strategically on a review of Iowa's wastewater discharge permit program (NPDES) for cities and industries and implementation of NPDES permits for Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations. We will research and evaluate wetland regulations, the Army Corp of Engineers "dredge and fill" permit program and other regulatory enforcement actions to assure existing water quality regulations are being enforced.

**7. Agricultural Drainage Wells (ADW).** We will work to evaluate priorities and strategies to get as many ADWs closed as possible in an environmentally-friendly manner. Closure of all ADWs has been a long-standing priority for the Council, since 1997.