

Iowa Environmental Council 2009 Water Priorities

The following initiatives will be priorities of the Iowa Environmental Council in 2009. 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. Water Resources Coordinating Council and State Water Plan

Establishment of the Water Resources Coordinating Council (WRCC) and development of a Comprehensive State Water Plan were top priorities for the Council in 2008. The WRCC was established by the legislature in 2008 as part of the Surface Water Protection Act (SWPA), but a State Water Plan was not a part of the final legislation. The legislature did not approve any funding for implementation of the program called for in the SWPA. Therefore, in 2009 we will:

- Work with WRCC, including key agencies such as IDALS and IDNR, to begin implementation of the Water Quality Planning Task Force Recommendations.
- Work to secure funding for a Comprehensive Water Plan, including continued funding of DNR groundwater and surface water quantity studies, but expanded to include hydrologic modeling and floodplain mapping and other priorities as determined by WRCC.
- Educate legislators and support legislation that charges the WRCC with responsibility for development of a comprehensive State Water Plan that deals with both surface water and groundwater and both quality and quantity.
- Work with our partners, legislators and the Governor's office to clarify how WRCC will interface with the Rebuild Iowa Office to develop long term strategies to reduce future flood impacts utilizing a watershed management approach.

2. Enforcement of point and nonpoint source regulations and policies

Many good environmental laws and programs exist but are not implemented and/or enforced in Iowa. In 2009 we will:

- Focus strategically on a review of Iowa's permit programs for point sources including wastewater discharge permits, storm water permits, wetland dredge and fill permits. We will comment on permits and work directly with the agencies charged with enforcement of these programs, and use permit challenges and other legal action only when necessary.
- Explore ways to improve implementation and enforcement of federal and state programs to reduce nonpoint source runoff pollution. Sediment continues to be one of the leading causes of water pollution in Iowa and soil loss from cropland is one of the major sources of this pollution. Iowa has a soil loss complaint process administered through the County Soil Conservation Districts to identify areas with excessive erosion and enforce corrective action. We also have a federal Conservation

Compliance program that requires soil conservation plans on highly erodible cropland for farmers to be eligible for federal farm subsidy programs. Both of these programs are underutilized and not consistently enforced in Iowa. In 2009 we will work with our partners to explore how we can better use these programs to address the worst soil erosion problems in the state.

3. Improve Water Quality Standards to comply with Clean Water Act

We will continue with our efforts to ensure compliance and enforcement of Clean Water Act regulations. In 2009 we will work with our partners to facilitate:

- Completion of the DNR's Use Attainability Analyses and implementation of new protections for recreational and aquatic life uses for all perennial rivers and streams in the state
- Establishment of new antidegradation rules and implementation procedures for lakes and rivers that assure that our highest quality waters will not be degraded and, where water quality exceeds the minimum state standards, that quality water will be maintained unless it is necessary to allow some degradation to support important economic and social development
- Development and implementation of numeric nutrient water quality criteria for lakes recommended by the Nutrient Science Advisory committee that will set goals for restoration activities for lakes impaired by frequent algae blooms that impair recreational uses. We will also work to begin the process of developing recommendations for numeric nutrient criteria to protect rivers and streams.

4. Flood Response

Following the devastating floods of 2008, the Iowa legislature will be considering new programs and funding priorities to reduce the impact of future flooding in Iowa. In 2009 we will:

- Monitor and respond to flood-related legislation to ensure that policies for long-term planning utilize a watershed framework to reduce risk of future flooding.