



WATER QUALITY MONITORING

Iowa must have a strong water quality monitoring network. \$2 million is requested for Fiscal Year 2000-2001 to continue implementing a comprehensive water monitoring network.

Last year's \$1 million appropriation for water monitoring was a very good start. We commend Iowa's legislators for recognizing that monitoring Iowa waters is crucial to our state's health.

We need increased funding, however, before Iowa's water quality monitoring program will be able to provide the most basic information about our most precious resource. With comprehensive water monitoring of both surface water and groundwater, we can better protect our citizens and environment, save money, and reduce public health concerns as we discover and address water quality problems early.

Because we fail to consistently monitor:

- **We pay far more than we should to treat our drinking water.**
- **We put at risk agricultural and manufacturing operations that rely on good quality water.**
- **We hurt our tourism industry and make Iowa a less desirable place to live.**
- **We damage our health and the health of our ecological communities.**

In order to maximize its effectiveness, Iowa's monitoring program needs sustained and uninterrupted funding. Only then will Iowa be able to meet the goals for the program, as defined by the state with input from many stakeholders:

- Define the condition of Iowa's water resources
- Characterize existing and emerging problems
- Provide information for solving those problems
- Measure changes and identify trends in water resource quality
- Provide information to evaluate the effectiveness of programs
- Report water quality information to Iowans in a way they can understand
- Involve Iowa citizens in monitoring to increase their appreciation and understanding of their water resources

Action requested

\$2 million should be appropriated for Fiscal Year 2000-2001, so that Iowa can continue the good start provided by the FY 1999-2000 appropriation of \$1 million.

With the \$2 million appropriation for FY 2000-2001, DNR would continue to implement its monitoring program, including:

- increasing the number of surface water monitoring sites and monitoring those sites monthly or more frequently (previously, most were monitored only quarterly);
- monitoring for common pesticides at all sites throughout the year (previously, pesticide monitoring was included at only seven sites);
- monitoring for all "priority pollutants," which include common pesticides and industrial pollutants, twice a year, at both high and low flows;
- monitoring urban areas for nutrients and priority pollutants;
- adding biological monitoring sites to the network (previously, biological monitoring was not included);
- monitoring Iowa's lakes, including frequent testing of public beach water during summer months;
- expanding and improving monitoring of our groundwater, which is the source of drinking water for 75 percent of Iowans;
- strengthening Iowa's citizen monitoring program.

Before the FY 1999-2000 appropriation, only 27 surface water sites were monitored a year. Yet Iowa has many thousands of miles of rivers, streams, and lakes. With this session's appropriation, DNR will be able to monitor more sites on major rivers, and add smaller streams that haven't been monitored before.

A comprehensive water quality monitoring network is fiscally responsible. It will help us deal with concerns before they cause harm to our communities and businesses.

— David Hurd, Emeritus Chairman, Principal Financial Group, and at-large director, Iowa Environmental Council

Immediate needs for water monitoring: Answers to common questions

Why \$2 million is needed in FY 2000-2001

Q: Why do we need a comprehensive water quality monitoring program?

A: Under Iowa's current program, there are major data gaps both in the number of sites monitored and their distribution across the state, and in the types of data collected and frequency of sample collection. In addition, there is not enough integration and analysis of the data collected.

Only a comprehensive surface water and ground-water monitoring network, carefully planned and conducted by highly qualified professionals, will regularly and consistently tell us what is in our water. With that information, we can protect citizens, our economy, our aquatic life — and our future.

Q: What is being done with the \$1 million the Legislature appropriated for FY 1999-2000?

A: Using last year's appropriation, DNR conducted the state's first-ever uniform, statewide monitoring for a wide range of water quality parameters.

Specifically, the appropriation allows DNR to:

- increase the number of sites monitored from 27 to 60 and to monitor those sites monthly (previously, some were monitored only quarterly);
- monitor for common pesticides at all sites throughout the year (previously, pesticide monitoring was included at only seven sites);
- monitor — for the first time — all “priority pollutants,” which include common pesticides and industrial pollutants, in both the spring and fall at high and low flows;
- monitor — also for the first time — 10 cities, both upstream and downstream and at both high and low flows, for nutrients and priority pollutants;
- conduct biological monitoring at 86 sites (previously, biological monitoring was not included). Biological monitoring, which evaluates biological

diversity as an indicator of water quality, often can identify problems that cannot be identified through chemical monitoring alone.

In addition, DNR is using the appropriation to establish a citizen monitoring program that encourages local activity and involvement in water issues. As this IOWATER program becomes established, Iowans throughout the state will better understand and protect their water resources.

Q: What would and would not be covered in this \$2 million appropriation?

A: This appropriation would fund Iowa's “ambient” water quality monitoring network. Such a network will be used to provide basic background information about our waters and determine changes in water quality throughout Iowa, as well as to identify existing and emerging issues. The money would not be used for research on specific problems, such as studies on the impacts of livestock

manure lagoons. In addition, the money would not be dedicated to specific programs, such as monitoring to address problems identified through Iowa's impaired waters list, which was required under the federal Clean Water Act. Funding for these programs must come from other sources.

Q: How can we assure that existing and new water quality data will be used?

A: The state will develop a centralized statewide database for information collected as part of Iowa's current and past monitoring program. This data will be readily accessible to the public.

Other agencies, businesses, universities, and water utilities also collect valuable water quality information. This data will be inventoried and, where mutually agreeable, included in the centralized database.

Polls show Iowans want our state government to commit to water quality:

- 87 percent express concern about pollution of their drinking water.
- 84 percent think surface water pollution is a “serious” problem.
- 77 percent think groundwater pollution is a “serious” problem.*

*Source: 1996 Iowa State University poll