

## Sample LTEs

*Select from one of our sample LTEs for your message, then edit and adapt to make it personal. Include a specific water body or the name of a business, or tell a story about how you have been impacted by impaired water in Iowa.*

### **Algae bloom impacts on lake communities & tourism**

Our community benefits from local lake recreation and tourism every summer. Visitors from across Iowa come here to swim and boat on the lake. They spend money on food, lodging or camping, and retail in our town. But algae blooms threaten this source of revenue by making our lake unusable for days or even weeks at a time. This keeps people from coming to our lake, visiting our town, and supporting our local businesses.

State leadership needs to address the pollution that causes algae blooms that hurt our town and others like it across the state. They can do this by regulating the fertilizer pollution that leads to algae blooms. They can also create funding for the Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund to implement more conservation to prevent pollution from reaching our waters. The Iowa legislature must take action to protect Iowa business.

### **Health risks of algae blooms**

Serious health threats are lurking at Iowa beaches this summer. Too much nitrogen and phosphorus encourage algae to grow in slow-moving, warm water. Sometimes this algae can be dangerous to humans and animals. Harmful algae blooms (HABs) can often be easy to spot - bright turquoise or green colored water or muck, streaks on the top of the water. But not all harmful blooms exhibit these signs.

If you or your child swallow this water while swimming, playing near the shore, or when water- or jet-skiing, you can get very sick with vomiting and diarrhea. Swallow more water and you could end up with respiratory issues, liver damage, or neurological effects. The impacts are even more pronounced for animals: dogs can die within just a few hours of exposure.

Jumping in the lake was part of our childhood experience; today's kids and parents have to worry that their water is making them sick. We deserve better than to worry if our beaches, ponds, and reservoirs are safe. Tell your legislators you want to see more testing and strengthened criteria for runoff to protect Iowa's water and our health.

### **HABs and children and/or dogs**

When it comes to harmful algae blooms (HABs) this summer, children and our pets face the highest risk of coming into contact and getting sick from toxins. These vulnerable groups should be able to play in our lakes without causing worry. They need our protection and deserve better from Iowa's leaders.

HABs occur on Iowa lakes and beaches during the warm summer months as thick and often streaky blue or green muck. The blooms can produce toxins that can be especially harmful to children and companion animals. Children and dogs usually play along shorelines and in shallow areas where algae can build up. They are at higher risk of ingesting contaminated water. Dogs

can continue to be at risk even after they leave the beach if they lick the water off their fur. Every summer, headlines break about dog deaths due to contact with HABs and unsuspecting caretakers.

What's better than having to be on the lookout for these risks every summer? Preventing them from happening in the first place. Call your legislator and tell them to protect Iowa's children and companion animals by protecting our lakes from pollution.

### **Fertilizer pollution**

Iowa's landscape is unique in the world. What was once native prairie and expansive wetlands absorbing and holding rainfall is now primarily row cropped and lined with tile, draining and funneling rainwater directly into streams and rivers. That drainage is often loaded with precious topsoil and laced with fertilizers – nitrogen, phosphorus, and others – typically applied in overabundance.

These fertilizers are supposed to help crops and plants. Unfortunately, when overapplied, they have negative effects. Nitrogen and phosphorus cause aquatic plants to proliferate, creating gross and sometimes toxic algae blooms. The glut of plants also steal oxygen from the water, choking out animal life. That not only happens in Iowa lakes and ponds, but also in the Gulf of Mexico, where Iowa annually provides more than 50% of the nitrogen that causes the dead zone.

It is time to address the harm excess fertilizers are doing to our waterways. State leadership should regulate fertilizer application to limit pollution. The Iowa DNR must adopt numeric limits for these fertilizers in our waterbodies. Farmers need to utilize the Maximum Return to Nitrogen calculation to apply fertilizer in the appropriate amounts. The solutions are plentiful, just like fertilizer runoff in Iowa.