
BUDGET UNIT BRIEF – FY 2021

Fiscal Services Division

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Ground Floor, State Capitol Building

Des Moines, Iowa 50319

515.281.3566

Water Quality Monitoring

Purpose and History

Since 2001, the General Assembly has made an annual appropriation from the Environment First Fund to support the water quality monitoring stations operated by the Ambient Water Quality Monitoring Program in the Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

Appropriated dollars are allocated for the administration, research, and operation of water quality monitoring stations. In addition to Department expertise, the DNR contracts with experts from the U.S. Geological Survey and State universities for water quality research, analysis, and modeling. Water samples are collected to develop a baseline of information on Iowa streams, lakes, and wetlands. The DNR tracks water temperature, dissolved oxygen, pH, and many other physical conditions and chemicals. The DNR's Water Quality Monitoring and Assessment Section records fish kills and statewide water data and assesses the ability of water bodies to meet their intended uses (impaired waters) as defined by the federal Clean Water Act.

Monitoring Programs Supported

- Ambient Lake Monitoring: The DNR assesses the biological integrity of streams and rivers in Iowa.
- Beach Monitoring: The DNR regularly monitors State parks and several locally managed beaches during summer months. The DNR posts advisory signs when beaches exceed bacteria standards.
- Biological Monitoring: The DNR, in cooperation with the State Hygienic Laboratory at the University of Iowa, collects samples and assesses the ecological health of streams across Iowa.
- Water Quality Assessments: The DNR collects data to assess the water quality for a waterbody under the guidance of the federal Clean Water Act and the federal Environmental Protection Agency.
- Groundwater Monitoring: The DNR maintains a groundwater monitoring network across the State and uses this network to record water levels in major aquifers.
- Lake Monitoring: Since 2000, this program samples recreational lakes for chemical, physical, and biological conditions. The DNR contracts with the State Hygienic Laboratory and Iowa State University to collect samples.
- Stream Monitoring: Since 2000, the DNR has monitored about 80 stream sites for a variety of chemical and physical conditions. These efforts include monitoring 23 sites located both upstream and downstream of 10 major cities. Streams are monitored on a monthly basis, and data is available online. The DNR works with the State Hygienic Laboratory to collect samples at these sites.

More Information

Department of Natural Resources Water Monitoring: www.iowadnr.gov/Environmental-Protection/Water-Quality/Water-Monitoring

LSA Staff Contact: Debra Kozel (515.281.6767) deb.kozel@legis.iowa.gov

- **Wetland Monitoring:** Beginning in 2005, the DNR has monitored wetlands in north central Iowa. Monitoring efforts track physical, chemical, and biological threats to wetlands and record the positive benefits of wetlands.
- **Water Quality Certification:** The DNR certifies construction projects involving wetlands, rivers, or streams to ensure that State water quality standards are met. The DNR works with the federal Corps of Engineers in this process.

Funding History

Since 2001, the General Assembly has appropriated \$3.0 million annually to the DNR from the Environment First Fund for water quality monitoring.

Related Statutes and Administrative Rules

Iowa Code section [466.6](#)

Iowa Administrative Code [567.63](#)

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