

# CHAPTER 1

## Welcome and Introduction

### Contact IOWATER

#### **IOWATER**

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### A Brief IOWATER History Lesson

The idea for a statewide volunteer citizen water monitoring program for Iowa surfaced in 1998. Growing concerns over water quality issues led to a cooperative effort among the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Iowa Division of the Izaak Walton League, Iowa Environmental Council, Iowa Farm Bureau, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the University of Iowa Hygienic Laboratory to focus on protecting and improving Iowa's water quality by establishing and supporting a statewide volunteer water monitoring program. This original partnership sparked the creation and evolution of the program known today as IOWATER.

### The IOWATER Mission

“To protect and improve Iowa's water quality by raising citizen awareness about Iowa's watersheds, supporting and encouraging the growth and networking of Iowa's volunteer water monitoring communities, and promoting water monitoring activities as a means of assessing and understanding Iowa's aquatic resources.”

### The IOWATER Tenets

- IOWATER is a **citizen-based** program directed by citizen monitors within local communities.
- IOWATER focuses on **solutions**, not documenting problems.
- IOWATER focuses on **results, not regulation**.
- IOWATER is **flexible**, allowing local groups to design their own monitoring and action plans.

- IOWATER promotes **partnership** development and the sharing of information and resources throughout all levels in both public and private sectors.
- IOWATER focuses on a **watershed approach**, integrating land use, stakeholders, and the water bodies involved.

## IOWATER's Plan For Action

### **On-Site Training Workshops**

Workshops are scheduled upon request throughout the state every year. To request a workshop, please e-mail [iowater@iowater.net](mailto:iowater@iowater.net) or contact IOWATER staff listed on Chapter 1, Page 1.

### **Testing Equipment**

IOWATER supplies trained individuals and groups with testing equipment necessary to do the monitoring. IOWATER also re-supplies existing volunteers with equipment throughout their involvement with the program.

### **Written support materials**

IOWATER supplies each trained monitor with a manual, which contains background information about water quality and monitoring, as well as step-by-step instructions on how to do the monitoring. The IOWATER newsletter, which is published quarterly, keeps volunteers up to date on the most current water quality topics.

### **Public Database**

Citizens have the ability to input and view data via the Internet. While only trained monitors can submit data to the online database, anyone can access and use the data collected by IOWATER monitors.

### **Ongoing Technical Assistance**

IOWATER provides ongoing technical assistance and statewide networking through additional training workshops, a quarterly newsletter, and annual conferences.

## IOWATER Code Of Ethics

### *IOWATER Volunteers Carry Out Monitoring With Integrity*

- IOWATER volunteers use proper scientific methodology.
- IOWATER volunteers fully document our technical observations.
- IOWATER volunteers accept the responsibility to report our data, our interpretations, and our conclusions, if we choose, so they can be reviewed.
- IOWATER volunteers truthfully answer questions about sampling techniques, frequency, and location.
- IOWATER volunteers make a good faith effort to include individuals with as many different interests and perspectives in our monitoring programs as possible.

### *IOWATER volunteers Develop Good Relations with Private Landowners*

- IOWATER volunteers request written permission from the landowner if access to private property is necessary in our monitoring plan.
- In contacting the landowner, IOWATER volunteers offer explanations about who they are, the purpose of their project, and the intended use of the data they collect.

- After receiving written permission, IOWATER volunteers contact the landowners in advance to let them know the exact date(s) of sampling.
- IOWATER volunteers do not harm private property.
- IOWATER volunteers take complete responsibility for their personal safety while on private property.
- IOWATER volunteers contact landowners after sampling to share the results.

## IOWATER Safety

The golden rule of water safety is to use common sense and ALWAYS consider your well-being as first priority. Here are a few safety pointers:

- Always do monitoring with a "buddy" or team member, never alone.
- Always let someone know where you are going and how long you will be gone.
- Use caution when entering a stream, making sure you can get out, the current is not too strong, and the bottom will support you safely.
- Do not attempt to enter water if stream flow is too high (as a general rule, above your knees is probably too high).
- Always conduct monitoring during daylight hours.
- Wear waders or "river shoes" (old tennis shoes) to avoid cutting your feet on submerged glass, metal, or sharp rocks.
- Be aware of possible dangers, such as poison ivy, ticks, and nettles.
- Dress appropriately for the weather. Know how to both recognize the signs and symptoms of heat stroke and hypothermia and how to treat them, but most importantly, know how to prevent them.
- Wash up thoroughly with hot water and soap when you get home.

## An IOWATER Workshop

**IOWATER workshops**  
**...to learn, share and prepare**  
**...for ACTION!**

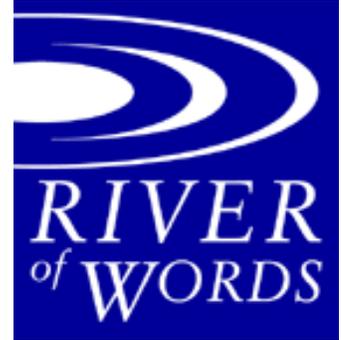
What goes on at an IOWATER workshop? A variety of sessions, held both indoors and outdoors, will cover topics such as starting a monitoring plan, networking with others in your area concerned with water quality, and some in-the-water fun! Agenda items include **watershed** investigations, the whys and hows of monitoring, hands-on field experience, and other topics related to water quality monitoring.

Workshops are held throughout the state and are open to any individual or group that is interested. Upon completion of your first eight-hour workshop, you will be certified as an IOWATER citizen monitor. If you wish to continue your monitoring skills development, additional workshops are available. These workshops will be offered during each training season and will include biological monitoring, benthic **macroinvertebrate** indexing, and bacteria monitoring.

## Other IOWATER Projects

### River of Words (ROW)

*River of Words*® (ROW) conducts an environmental poetry and art contest for youth aged 5 to 19 in grades K-12 every year. The contest is designed to help youth explore the natural and cultural history of their own watershed, and to express what they discover through poetry and art. Each year, eight U.S. winners, one international winner, and a “ROW Teacher of the Year” are selected to be honored during National Poetry Month (April) at an Award Ceremony at The Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. (ROW is affiliated with The Library of Congress Center for the Book.)



*River of Words* also publishes an annual poetry book of winning submissions, selected by Robert Hass, and exhibits the children’s paintings at museums, libraries, conferences, and other venues around the world. The contest is free, and every child is acknowledged with a personalized “Watershed Explorer” certificate. Children may enter on their own or through schools, nature centers, libraries, youth clubs, and other organizations.

*River of Words* is coordinated in Iowa by IOWATER. Entries not chosen as finalists or grand prize winners in the international contest are returned to IOWATER, where they are judged in an Iowa annual statewide *River of Words* contest. For more information, go to [www.iowater.net](http://www.iowater.net).

### Project AWARE

Project AWARE (A Watershed Awareness River Expedition) is a week-long canoe trip and river clean-up event. Participants remove trash from an Iowa river each year as they paddle. The objectives of Project AWARE are to:

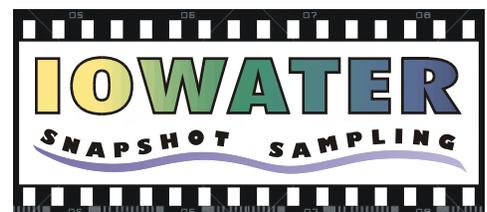
- Increase awareness about water quality issues that threaten the health of Iowa's water resources and promote advocacy and action towards their improvement and protection.
- Engage Iowa's citizen volunteers in a project that challenges them to become stewards of the river and produces a tangible, quantitative result (numbers of citizens involved and quantity of trash removed, recycled, reused, or properly disposed).
- Demonstrate the commitment of Iowa's citizens by giving of themselves and their valuable time to make a difference - one stretch of river, one piece of trash at a time.
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For more information, go to [www.iowaprojectaware.com](http://www.iowaprojectaware.com).

### Snapshot Sampling

Since 2002, a variety of snapshot samplings have been conducted across Iowa to assess water quality in selected areas. A snapshot sampling is when multiple sites throughout a geographic area, such as a watershed or county, are sampled within a short period of time (e.g., three hours). A snapshot provides a picture of water quality at one point in



time. Snapshot samplings can be completed:

1. To increase public awareness and involve the local community in water quality issues;
2. To collect baseline data for a geographic area;
3. As a screening tool for identifying “hot spots”;
4. Using a variety of testing methods, including both field and lab methods;
5. For parameters of interest (i.e., sediment, nutrients);
6. Using a combination of physical, chemical, and biological parameters, as well as observations about stream condition;
7. During different times of the year or different flow conditions;
8. AND are successful when locally initiated and involving partnerships.

For more information on currently scheduled snapshots, go to [www.iowater.net](http://www.iowater.net).



