

# IOWATER

Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring

## IOWATER Meanderings Updates & Information

### IOWATER Rewards Program

Effective immediately, IOWATER volunteers who submit data that meet minimum criteria will receive well-deserved rewards at the end of the year. If you meet the requirements for 2004, you will receive a postcard next spring and be

provided with the opportunity to choose your reward. Reward items may include Bug ID flashcards (shown left), IOWATER apparel, or water quality related textbooks and activity books (shown right). Minimum requirements for the rewards program are listed below. Individuals and groups are encouraged to participate in this program.

- 12 Chemical assessments per year (at intervals of no closer than 1 week between samples) – preferably 1 per month, but **safety is top priority** in winter months.
- 1 Habitat Assessment – preferably in July.
- 1 Biological Assessment – preferably in July.



### Expired?

The foundation of the IOWATER program was built on solid principles of sound science. Since data obtained from out-of-date equipment may not be accurate, it is not acceptable. As a citizen-scientist and IOWATER volunteer, please take the time to check your expiration dates every time you monitor your site. Expiration dates for IOWATER chemical kits can be found in the following places:

#### Dissolved Oxygen

- Color comparator in the lid
- Ampoules do not expire as long as they are kept out of direct sunlight

#### Phosphate

- Color comparator in the lid
- Round color comparator tube
- Activator Solution
- Ampoules do not expire as long as they are kept out of direct sunlight

#### Nitrite-N/Nitrate-N, pH, Chloride

- All have expiration dates printed on the bottom of the bottles

#### Bacteria Monitoring Supplies

- Bacteria Media
- Petri dishes do not expire – reseal open packages after use

**If your water monitoring equipment has expired, please contact IOWATER so we can update your kit.**

## ...from IOWATER's Coordinator

As the IOWATER Coordinator, I am often given the opportunity to nominate exemplary individuals and groups for several different awards including our own IOWATER awards, the Governor's *Volunteer* and *Above and Beyond* awards, and other local, state, and national awards. Frequent problems we encounter with nomination procedures range from short or past-due deadlines to having so many qualified and deserving individuals that it's hard to nominate everyone.

Take, for example, this year's Iowa Governor's Volunteer Awards, which recognize people who volunteer for a state agency or an Iowa nonprofit organization. During one of the ceremonies, a total of eight Iowa DNR-affiliated volunteers received awards for their service – five of the eight were IOWATER volunteers. I have no doubt that countless others could have been nominated and selected for these awards if we only had their information during the nominating period.

***Please consider nominating your projects, groups, peers, and yourselves for awards and recognition.*** Nomination forms are accepted year-round, and can be found online at [www.iowater.net](http://www.iowater.net). Nominations will be held on file and submitted for all appropriate awards.

You are all doing wonderful work – I am excited, amazed, and unbelievably lucky to have the opportunity to work with all of you. THANK YOU!

*Brian Soenen*

## Congratulations

The Governor's Volunteer Award program was established in 1982 to honor and recognize the commitment, service and time that hundreds of volunteers contribute each year to Iowa's state agencies. Please join us in congratulating the following five IOWATER volunteers and groups who received the awards on October 4<sup>th</sup>.

Ed Askew – Davenport  
Dave Ratliff – Iowa City  
Vicki Wilson – Jesup  
Sue Behrns & Maquoketa River Water Quality Team – Delhi  
Sharon Bender & Prairie High School – Cedar Rapids

## Brandon Harland

*A new face in the IOWATER crowd*

As the new Program Assistant, I am very excited about the opportunities IOWATER has to offer. Growing up in Iowa, much of my spare time was spent hunting, fishing, and trapping, which ultimately led me to Iowa State University, where I enrolled in the Fisheries Science program. Love for the outdoors, coupled with a thirst for knowledge, eventually led me to South Dakota State University, where I earned a Master's degree in 2004. I am anxious and excited to work with, and for, all the volunteers who fuel the ever-expanding IOWATER program. I hope to meet you all soon!



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## Recommended Monitoring Frequency - Monthly

Many of us take time out of our hectic schedules to routinely monitor our IOWATER sites. When asked the question, "Why do we monitor?" we all have our own reasons. Some of us monitor to satisfy our curiosity, others want to find out what's in the water that our children play in, and others want to help the state of Iowa better understand our water resources. There are no wrong answers to this important question, and for all reasons we'd like to say a heartfelt, "Thank you!" and "Keep up the good work!"

For volunteers who want the State to use their data, there has been some confusion about how often you should monitor your site. Infrequent and irregular monitoring provides limited information, which makes it difficult to interpret. Understanding water quality data is like reading a book. If you only read the title of the book (infrequent and irregular monitoring), you have very limited information about the story – you may not even know what the story is about! If you read the title, chapter headings, and introduction (quarterly monitoring), the overall story line might take shape, but the details are not clear until you actually read the words in the chapters themselves. With every passing word, the plot thickens and the picture gains clarity. As sites are monitored more frequently and regularly, the story of Iowa's water quality becomes clearer. If your goal is to provide the State of Iowa with data that can be used in planning and decision-making processes, please consider monitoring on a *monthly* basis.

## Partnering/Sharing IOWATER Sites? PLEASE TELL US!

Can two or more people monitor the same site? Whether monitoring as an individual or as a member of a group, the answer is YES, but there's a "but" involved. Basically, *you will need to tell us so we can set up the database for you*. If you're a member of a team, you need to send us the names of every member on your team so we can give you all equal access to the monitoring sites. If you're an individual who would like to monitor a site another individual has already registered, you need to let us know so we can first contact that individual, and then give you access to that site (ultimately creating a partnership). All sites, be they partnership or individual, will receive IOWATER Rewards Program benefits if they meet adequate requirements.

## Who's Who in IOWATER

**Would you like to find out if there are other IOWATER volunteers in your area?** Certified, IOWATER Level 1 monitors can now search for other volunteers by visiting the IOWATER website and searching the volunteer roster, which can be found under the database portion of the menu bar.

**Have you moved, deactivated your e-mail, or changed any other personal information?**

If so, you can now update your personal information by simply logging on to the data submission portion of the website. Keeping your personal information up to date can help you stay on top of new developments, and keep you in the IOWATER loop.

## IOWATER Slogan Contest

**Another Iowan for Clean Water** – When I first saw this phrase printed on a Sierra Club bumper sticker, I knew I had to have one. Its meaning is clear, its message is simple, and the combination of these five common words serves as a beacon for all Iowans. It's not critical, negative, or boisterous. Rather, it paints a positive picture about the future of our state and an issue that affects us all – working together, we can protect and improve the integrity of our state's aquatic resources.

This spring, IOWATER will print and distribute some bumper stickers of our own, and we'd like your help in this process – if you provide the slogan, we'll provide the stickers. The individual who submits the chosen slogan will receive a prize deemed appropriate for a contest such as this. If you have a phrase that embodies the spirit of the IOWATER program, please e-mail it to [iowater@iowater.net](mailto:iowater@iowater.net).

# Volunteer viewpoints ... in their own words.



## Commenting on "Comments" by George Schrimper

My interest in stream environments was first piqued when my mother, like the Pied Piper, would gather up the children in our neighborhood each Spring and lead us on nature hikes along the shaded, wild-flower-sprinkled banks of Indian Creek near Cedar Rapids. How that watershed has changed in the intervening 50-plus years! Sadly, the woodlands and pastures that I knew so well as a child have largely been consumed by the concrete sprawl of shopping malls and urban development.

I've now served for three years as an IOWATER stream monitor on North Bear Creek in Winneshiek County, and I find it both enlightening and enjoyable to make regular observations of "my" stream and then enter the test site information into the IOWATER database. I also enjoy scanning registered site data provided by other IOWATER volunteers. Some of these sites are on cold water trout streams in NE Iowa and have data that I can readily compare to my test results on North Bear Creek. Some are test sites on tributary streams to larger rivers in Iowa that I have experienced over the years as an avid angler and canoeist. Some, like Indian Creek, are now urban streams flowing through major metropolitan areas.

Comparing the test parameter-specific "X's" and "O's" of our data reports is certainly interesting and useful. However, what I find missing in most of the site reports that I access is anecdotal information in the "Comments" section. It is this unstructured, more responsive type of information from the monitor that can be vital to understanding the stream environment within a larger context.

Perhaps this "comment-gap" reflects an understandable reluctance we have as volunteers to stick our necks out with observations, much less extrapolations, which could stray into the rightful purview of professionals, the various "ologists" and specialists who also monitor Iowa streams. On the other hand, perhaps the scarcity of comments suggests that we are not looking hard enough or far enough beyond the narrow corridors of our registered stream site transects to see what might be the bigger picture.

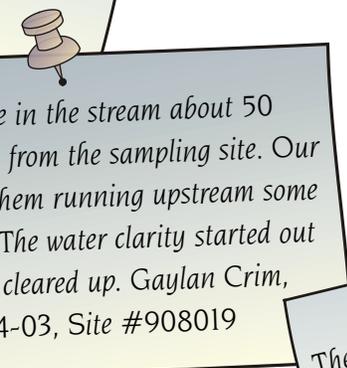
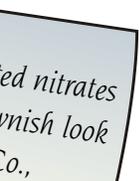
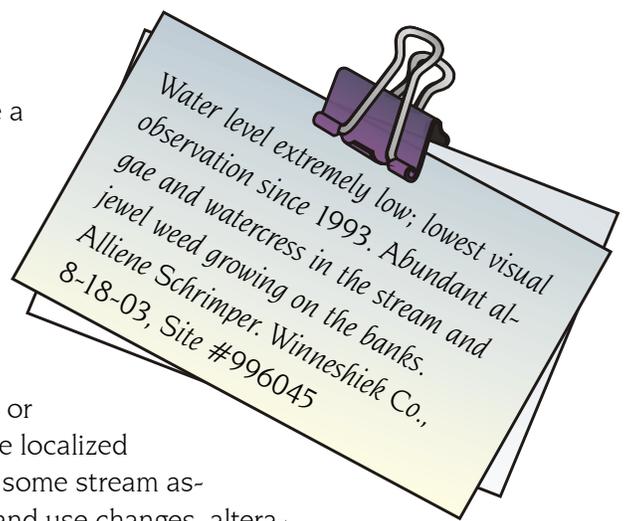
When I browse data reports on the IOWATER website and see test results that seem quite different from my testing experience, the question that immediately comes to mind is whether this is normal for this particular stream or is "something" happening. It's hard to tell if there is nothing in the "Comments" section.

No minnows viewed. Suspect elevations come from wastewater lagoons. Brown water to water. Vicki Wilson, Black Hawk Co. 3-31-04, Site #907012

There were cattle yards upstream approach sent thru the water. at 48 but soon Boone Co., 5-2-

Stream was noticeably wider, deeper and slower than normal. Beavers have constructed a dam out of view about 50 meters downstream and around the meander. Tom Cuvelelier, Dubuque Co., 11-04-00, Site #931001

If we have been regularly monitoring a stream and observe a benchmark condition such as the lowest stream flow that we have ever seen, I think this merits comment. Likewise when the stream floods. We don't have to do the tennis-ball-on-the-tether test to recognize either of these stream conditions! A significant deviation, or "spike" in a Chemical/Physical test result certainly should be noted in the "Comments" section. Some of these "benchmark" findings can be descriptively associated with or attributed to obvious weather events. Some may have more localized or even point-source associations or causes. The basis for some stream assessment "Comments" may be connected to longer term land use changes, alterations, or trends happening within the greater watershed. These are the kind of events reminiscent of my life-long experience with Indian Creek. Even when all of our stream assessment parameters seem "normal" or at least consistent with earlier findings – stream flow, chemical readings, etc. – a brief comment to that effect seems appropriate. And, if we are at a complete loss for words to describe our creek, we can always say that we heard some pleasant bird calls!



Having stuck my neck out with this Volunteer Viewpoint, perhaps I should mention several of the "benchmark events" and "changes, alterations, or trends" specific of my watershed that I've commented on. Well, fellow volunteers, I've commented on erosion on DNR-managed land bordering "my" creek. I've noted the impact from the conversion of CRP grassland acreage to crop fields (State-wide, much more land may be coming out of the Conservation Reserve Program in 2007). I've noted the counter-balancing good works of buffer strips, retention basins, and other landowner-enacted conservation practices in the watershed. I've made a number of comments about very low water when we had three consecutive years of below normal precipitation. And what about my skimpy Biological Reports

when it seems like the only "critters" I can find are Mayflies and caddisflies? I've tried to explain that my test site has a steep gradient, a boulder/cobble substrate, and is in deep shade for most of the year. Now, beavers have just built a dam upstream from my test site. What are the implications of that...?

Remember Los Angeles police sergeant Joe Friday's terse interjection when he would interrogate a "wandering" witness on the old TV series, *Dragnet*? "Just the facts, Ma'am, nothing but the facts." Joe Friday had it mostly right. The hard data "facts" on our stream assessment forms are the important bottom line of our work as IOWATER volunteers. However, our more expansive anecdotal comments can shed valuable light on our facts, providing background and context... and interest.

We'd like to hear from you, so **send us a note...** about your IOWATER activities, thoughts, and ideas **...in your own words.**

# IOWATER action!

*Press releases, events, & news articles involving IOWATER monitors – Many thanks to all of you for your continued efforts.*



- **Sac County** – Thanks to Jim and Madeline Meyer for testing streams and using best management practices on their Odebolt farm.
- **Scott County** – Thanks to all the coordinators and volunteers with the Xstream Cleanup who recovered nearly 40 tons of debris from Quad City area streams.
- **Statewide** – Thanks to all those who organized and participated in the summer/fall snapshots, which included Scott, Polk, Muscatine, Jefferson, and Cedar counties, Old Mans Creek, Clear Creek, Cedar River, Beaver Creek, Whitebreast Creek, Wapsipinicon River, Coldwater streams in northeast Iowa, and the IOWATER Fall snapshot.
- **Statewide** – Thanks to Gaylan and Lloyd Crim, Vicki Wilson, Ed Askew, and Marty St. Clair and the Coe College students for participating in the Midwest Bacteria Project.
- **Story County** – Thanks to Jim Colbert and the Skunk River Navy for monitoring water quality and hauling trash out of the Skunk River and Squaw Creek.
- **Tama County** – Thanks to Mark Mason for sharing his experience on Project AWARE through a daily journal published in the Traer Star-Clipper.

*If we missed your happenings, please call or email Jackie Neely with an update.*

## IOWATER Mini-Grants Awarded

IOWATER Mini-Grants were awarded to the following IOWATER monitors and partnering organizations:

**Arbor Lake Monitoring Team and Judie Krebsbach** were awarded a \$1,000 grant for monitoring equipment and promotion of their monitoring efforts within the community of Grinnell. They also hope to sponsor new team members at IOWATER workshops.

**East Pottawattamie SWCD, Kevin Severs and Rachel Hack** were awarded a \$550 grant for chest and hip-waders for the students and staff of Oakland school district's 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Science class, who adopted one of the project's monitoring sites.

**Winterset High School and Annette Purdy** were awarded a \$658 grant for flow meters and waders for students to monitor wetlands in Madison County and the Middle River.

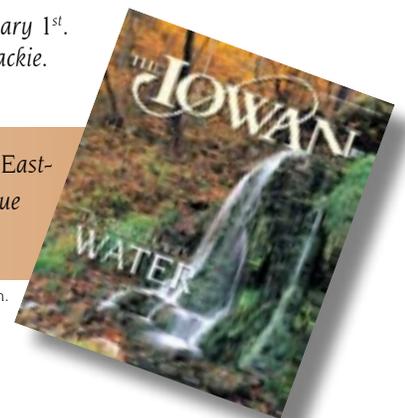
**City of Knoxville and Charlie Stevens** were awarded a \$1,000 grant for testing supplies for their monitoring efforts on Competine Creek.

**Winterset Jr. & Sr. High School and Cindy Watson** were awarded a \$1,000 grant for transportation costs of water monitoring field trips within the Cedar Lake watershed, to the Mississippi and Maquoketa rivers, and to Dolliver State Park.

*Grant applications are accepted year-round and are awarded two times a year, September 1<sup>st</sup> and February 1<sup>st</sup>. The next deadline for submissions is December 31<sup>st</sup>. Applications are available online or by contacting Jackie.*

**S**pecial thanks go to IOWATER volunteers Nate Hoogeveen, Scott Gritters, Vicki Wilson, Jack Eastman, Jane Shuttleworth, and Jim Colbert for their contributions to the September/October issue of the IOWAN magazine, which focuses on "The State of Iowa's Water."

Magazine cover reprinted with permission.



# Upcoming events

... snapshot sampling & more.



**Oct. 23** (Sat); Wapsi River Watershed. Contact Vicki Wilson at (319) 827-1690 or e-mail at [mvw@jtt.net](mailto:mvw@jtt.net).

Visit [wqm.igsb.uiowa.edu](http://wqm.igsb.uiowa.edu) for conference details as they become available.

**Nov. 13** (Sat); 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Volunteers in Natural Resources Banquet. Contact Jacklyn Neely at (515)281-4476 or email at [iowater@iowater.net](mailto:iowater@iowater.net). Visit the conference website at [www.iowadnr.com/volunteer/04banquet.html](http://www.iowadnr.com/volunteer/04banquet.html)

**Feb 28 – Mar 1, 2005.** Agriculture and the Environment Conference. Scheman Building, ISU, Ames, IA. For more information, contact Jerry Miller ([soil@iastate.edu](mailto:soil@iastate.edu)), Brent Pringnitz ([bpring@iastate.edu](mailto:bpring@iastate.edu)), or the Agribusiness Education Program at (515)294-6429.

**Jan. 13 – 14, 2005** (Thu-Fri); 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Water Monitoring Conference. Scheman Building, ISU, Ames, IA. Contact Mary Skopec at (319)335-1575 or email at [miskopec@igsb.uiowa.edu](mailto:miskopec@igsb.uiowa.edu).

**June 18 – 25, 2005.** Project Aware. Little Sioux River. For more information, visit [www.iowaprojectaware.com](http://www.iowaprojectaware.com).

## IOWATER Level I Workshop Schedule

Date	Location	Contact	Phone	E-mail
Oct 22-23	Ida County	Steve Hummel	(712)364-3300	<a href="mailto:mshummel@netins.net">mshummel@netins.net</a> or <a href="mailto:idacsb@pionet.net">idacsb@pionet.net</a>
Nov 5-6	Runnells	Teresa Breuer Lauterbach	(515)963-8654	<a href="mailto:Teresa.Lauterbach@ia.usda.gov">Teresa.Lauterbach@ia.usda.gov</a>

## IOWATER Advanced Workshops\*

*\*You must have attended a Level 1 workshop to participate in an advanced workshop.*

### Benthic Macroinvertebrate Indexing and Bacteria Monitoring Workshops:

Date	Location	Topic & Time
Dec 11, 2004	Atlantic	Bacteria (8 AM - 12 PM), Benthic (1 - 5 PM)
Jan 22, 2005	Mason City	Benthic (8 AM - 12 PM), Bacteria (1 - 5 PM)
Feb 25	Coralville	Bacteria (5 - 9 PM)
Feb 26	Coralville	Benthic (8 AM - 12 PM)
Mar 4	Oelwein	Benthic (5 - 9 PM)
Mar 5	Oelwein	Bacteria (8 AM - 12 PM)
March 19	Des Moines	Benthic (8 AM - 12 PM), Bacteria (1 - 5 PM)

To register, contact Jackie at (515) 281-4476 or [Jacklyn.Neely@dnr.state.ia.us](mailto:Jacklyn.Neely@dnr.state.ia.us), or visit [www.iowater.net](http://www.iowater.net).

**IOWATER**

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502 E. 9th St.  
Des Moines, IA 50319

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Iowa City IA

*Mark your Calendars!*

# 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Water Monitoring Conference

Scheman Building, Iowa State University, Ames, IA



Photo from 4th Annual Water Monitoring Conference

**January 13-14, 2005**

Conference will include examples of volunteer projects statewide & recognition of IOWATER Award Recipients

For more information, contact Mary Skopec at (319)335-1575 or email at [mskopec@igsb.uiowa.edu](mailto:mskopec@igsb.uiowa.edu).

Visit [wqm.igsb.uiowa.edu](http://wqm.igsb.uiowa.edu) for conference details as they become available.