

IOWATER

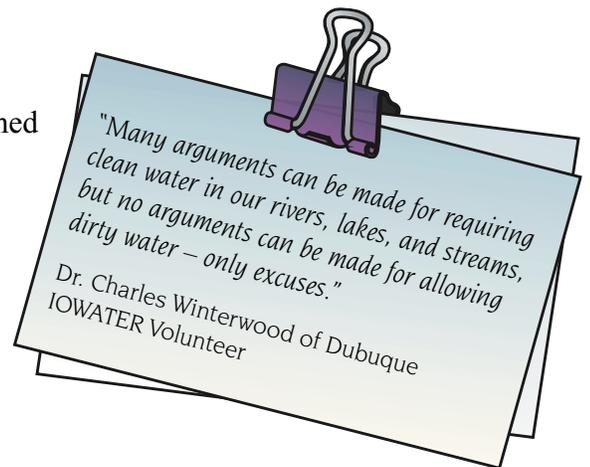
Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring

To Improve Iowa's Water Quality, First Set Standards

Reprinted with permission from the December 13, 2005 Des Moines Register

by Wayne Gieselman

Proposed rules to update Iowa's water-quality standards touched off some spirited discussions at public meetings held around the state this fall. We heard from people concerned that the proposed changes will cost money. They are correct. Others raised questions about whether the standards place too much emphasis on pollution coming from the end of pipes – point source – rather than pollution washed off the watershed by precipitation, known as nonpoint-source pollution. These people also raise a valid point.



The fact that so many people attended these meetings and provided written comments on the proposed changes is encouraging, showing there is a general agreement that protecting and improving water quality is important. It's also heartening to see that a majority of those attending understand that nonpoint-source pollution is a vital challenge for Iowa in improving water quality.

But missing in the criticism of the proposed changes is recognition of a basic truth: we cannot improve water quality until we properly define water quality. That, in a nutshell, is what water-quality standards are all about. Let's for a moment consider the current condition of Iowa's water. Following Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, widespread media coverage detailed the bacteria levels in the floodwaters of the city. Those bacteria levels prompted warnings from the Environmental Protection Agency that the water was unsafe for human contact. Iowans should know that at times during the summer, bacteria levels in the Raccoon River and some of its tributaries far exceed the levels in New Orleans that prompted that warning.

That fact should not be acceptable to Iowans. It should take us, as a state, beyond finger-pointing and into an open and frank discussion that will result in meaningful improvements to water quality. The purpose of water-quality standards is to establish goals that protect fish and other animals that live in the stream from pollution. Also, the standards are set to protect people who may play in or on the water. Many of our streams are not protected to the extent that they should be. In addition, some of our standards have become out of date and are no longer consistent with the Clean Water Act.

...from IOWATER's Coordinator

Data without comments are like watching lesser-known Olympic events – you can see what's going on, but you have no idea why. Over the years, IOWATER staff have spent many hours sifting through the database, pulling out numbers, and trying to answer that primitive yet fundamental question – What is the quality of Iowa's waters?

So what are we finding? For a simple question, this can have complicated answers. Most importantly, with the amount of data submitted, we're finding that our volunteer monitors are extremely dedicated. Additionally, we're finding out how to make the program better, which is what I'd like to focus on here.

While recent database modifications (see page 6) will help increase the quality and clarity of IOWATER data, I cannot stress enough the importance of comments. When submitting data, please consider providing comments.

Comments can include anything you'd like, from why you observed what you did, to how your site has changed over time. Comments help add another dimension to volunteer data. By providing a little more clarity and a sense of humanity, comments can help take us from just *seeing* what's going on to *understanding* what's going on.

From the home office in Sioux City, where the Big Sioux meets the Big Muddy, happy monitoring!

Brian Soenen

New Kid On The Block IOWATER Snapshot Coordinator

The IOWATER team has a new name on its roster. Katie Foreman assumed the role of Snapshot Coordinator last December.

Katie brings a wealth of experience to the program. She has worked with the Watershed Monitoring and Assessment Section as a part-time research assistant since 2000 and joined the section full-time in 2004. Katie received her water resources education at the University of Iowa, where she obtained her bachelor's degree in 2002 and her master's degree in 2004, both in geography. Her research includes analyzing pesticide trends in Iowa's surface waters as well as developing analytical tools for understanding trends in water quality data. Katie's interest in non-point source pollution aligns her with projects undertaken by many IOWATER volunteers.

Please join us in welcoming Katie to the IOWATER program – she's looking forward to working with you in 2006.



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Iowa's standards are in the beginning stages of major revisions. Quite simply, this discussion of improving standards will center not so much on the current state of water quality in Iowa, but more on what water quality could be if we make the commitment to improve our natural resources.

In Manchester, at one of the public meetings this fall, Dr. Charles Winterwood of Dubuque was quite possibly the most eloquent in speaking for the need to protect and improve water quality in Iowa. "Many arguments can be made for requiring clean water in our rivers, lakes and streams," he said, "but no arguments can be made for allowing dirty water – only excuses."

Updating standards is just one of several steps needed to improve water quality in our state. Iowans should expect that the water in our streams is safe for our children to play in, that our aquatic life has adequate protection, and that our surface drinking-water sources are protected for future generations.

WAYNE GIESELMAN is Environmental Services Division Administrator for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

Wanna' clean up your watershed?

Last November, IOWATER received a REAP CEP (Resource Enhancement And Protection - Conservation Education Program) grant to help Iowans enhance the aesthetic appearances of their environments. Through the CLEAR initiative, 15 - \$1,000 mini-grants will be made available to support local river cleanup efforts throughout the state.

Deadlines – The mini-grants will be disbursed in two cycles, with seven grants available in the first cycle and eight available in the second. Application postmark deadlines are May 1st and July 21st, 2006, respectively.

For more information on the CLEAR grant program, visit www.iowater.net.

IOWATER action!

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

- **Bremer County** – Paul Mugan and the Waverly-Shell Rock High-School advanced biology class monitored sites on Horton Creek and Baskins tributary.
- **Buena Vista, Calhoun, Carroll, Dallas, Greene, Pocahontas, and Sac counties** – Thanks to the North Raccoon River Watershed Association for their environmental impact studies and cleanup efforts on the North Raccoon River and its tributaries.
- **Cass County** – Cass County Naturalist Andria Cossolotto continued monitoring waterbodies throughout Cass County.
- **Dallas County** – Thanks to Dick Howard, Kerry Horner, and the members of the Central Iowa Paddlers for their efforts to clean up the Raccoon River.
- **Johnson County** – Dave Ratliff and Don Lund of the Johnson and Iowa County Watershed Coalition continued monitoring Clear Creek.

If we missed your happenings, call or email Jackie Gautsch with an update.



Volunteer viewpoints ... in their own words.



Let the River Flow

by Michelle Campbell

Before you can appreciate the depth of what I'm about to tell you, I need to tell you that I grew up in southern Arizona. I lived in the Sonoran Desert where 9 inches of annual rainfall has been normal and trees lose their leaves and branches in summer in response to drought. In this dry dusty, thorny space, I gardened. As a landscape designer I promoted the beauty of durable natives. I embraced the beauty of wild plants, animals, and insects able to adapt to baking summers and freezing winters.

*Let the River flow,
Let the Waters run free
May we be renewed
With the cleaning of our streams*

Living in Iowa, I have quickly come to love the rich beauty of her natural spaces and especially her waterways. What an amazing fluid land, rich with stately trees, shrubs, wildflowers, and animal and insect life. Wetlands and forests are rich with plants like the velvety leaf of the downy service berry which attract the melodious chirping of songbirds. Later in winter it is amazing to catch the silhouette of the bald eagle as he glides overhead.

*Let the River flow,
Let the Waters run clear
May I be renewed
With the cleaning of this stream*

I guess if you grew up here, fishing the waters, you might take for granted the loveliness. As a newcomer, I realize how precious these wild waterways are and how they are in need of protection. It is encouraging that so many others feel the same way. Now I'm thrilled to utilize swales and rain gardens in my designs similar to water harvesting in arid climates.

My family and I were lucky enough to have experienced the August Xstream cleanup. We had heard of Chad Pregracke's endeavors in *Outdoor* magazine and were thrilled to be a part of something so cool. While we participated, the mumblings of volunteers wondering how anyone could deliberately vandalize our lovely waterways could be heard amongst our group.

It was then I realized, we need to deflect that negative thinking with a realization of the benefits of what we are doing. Many traditions utilize mantras, or words, phrases repeated over and over again in order to counteract the drudgery of a repetitive chore. I composed such a song while cleaning up fishing lures and Gatorade bottles. I was asked by several to sing it aloud for them so they could learn it. Here it is, use it silently or aloud. Singing this will help keep the busy mind occupied on pleasant thoughts – or better yet compose your own. See you at the next Xstream cleanup!



Xstream Cleanup is a Quad City-wide cleanup of creeks, drainage ways, and sections of the Mississippi and Rock rivers. For more information on Xstream cleanup, visit their website at www.xstreamcleanup.org.

Catfish Creek Coalition – Caring For Clean Water

by Charles Winterwood

Photo courtesy of the Catfish Creek Coalition



I have been monitoring 2 sites on Catfish Creek in Dubuque as part of the Catfish Creek Coalition for several years. The site sponsored by the White Pine Group of the Sierra Club is on the North Fork of Catfish Creek in the city limits of Dubuque and, except in times of high flow, has storm water as its only source. On at least one statewide snapshot, this site had the highest chloride concentration in the state – 350ppm.

The site sponsored by Dubuque Audubon Society is on the main channel of Catfish Creek in the Mines of Spain Recreation Area. The first time I assayed for coliform bacteria and *E.coli*, I swam the channel to get accurate depth measurements

as the channel is up to 9 feet deep. Forty-eight hours later after I measured the colony forming units, I decided that would be the last time I would swim in that part of Catfish Creek – the *E.coli* was 8,800 colony forming units per 100 ml.



The Catfish Creek Coalition is an emerging association of property owners, educators, business people, environmental resource managers, and conservation-minded citizens. Originally formed in April 1999 by Regina Thibeau and other local citizens, our mission is to advocate for the Catfish Creek watershed. Our primary focus is to coordinate and facilitate the IOWATER volunteers who test at critical locations on the 3 forks and the main branch of Catfish Creek. As advocates of the watershed, we work to monitor, preserve, and restore the Catfish Creek waterways, to promote public understanding of the linkage between the watershed and the Mississippi River, and to explore opportunities for increased public access and use. The Coalition intends to network with other organizations to attain these goals. Our Board of Directors includes Tony Zelinskas, Tom Cuvelier, Tom Boland, and Dan and Jacque Call.

Kids don't look up which streams are general use and which are fishable/swimmable. Parents should not have to worry about their children bathing, fishing, or swimming in Iowa streams or lakes. Rivers, streams, and pools of water that support aquatic life deserve protection no matter how much water is flowing in them. Many arguments can be made for requiring clean water in our rivers, lakes, and streams, but no arguments can be made for allowing dirty water, only excuses.

This is why I feel that all of Iowa's waterways should meet a fishable/swimmable standard – and if you feel the same way, contact your legislator and express your opinion.

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

Upcoming events

... snapshot sampling & more.



Apr. 8, 2006 (Sat); O'Brien County Snapshot
Contact: Scott Osborn (712) 757-3835
Scott.Osborn@ia.usda.gov

Apr. 8 (Sat); Carter Lake Cleanup
Contact: Jeanne Eibes (712) 347-6455
carterlake@hotmail.com

Apr. 22 (Sat); Coldwater Snapshot
Contact: Steve Veysey (515) 294-5805
sveysey@iastate.edu

Apr. 29 (Sat); Beaver Creek Snapshot
Contact: Steve Witmer (515) 727-7765
switmer@ci.johnston.ia.us

May 8 (Mon); Cedar County Snapshot
Contact: Dave Meyer rockcrk@netins.net

May 13 (Sat); Johnson & Iowa County Snapshot
Contact: Dave Ratliff (319) 354-1397
oldmancreek@qwest.net

May 13 (Sat); Central Iowa River Watershed Snapshot
Contact: Dr. Dean Reynolds (641) 753-3997 [day];
(641) 753-0103 (eve.) dean@marshalltownwater.com

May 13 (Sat); IOWATER Spring Statewide Snapshot
Contact: Katie Foreman (319) 335-1571
kforeman@igsb.uiowa.edu

May 16 (Tues); Muscatine County Snapshot
Contact: Ellen Myers (563) 263-8933
emyers@ci.muscatine.ia.us

May 20 (Sat); Wapsipinicon Watershed
Contact: Katie Foreman (319) 335-1571
kforeman@igsb.uiowa.edu

May 21 (Sun); Scott County Snapshot
Contact: Sara Klindt (563) 326-6150
Sara.klindt@ia.nacdnet.net

May 24 (Wed); Polk County Snapshot
Contact: Susan Heathcote (515) 244-1194
Heathcote@earthweshare.org

June 3 (Sat); Whitebreast Creek Snapshot
Contact: Anne Hildebrand (515) 961-5246
Anne.hildebrand@ia.nacdnet.net

June 10 (Sat); Cedar River Watershed Snapshot
Contact: Roy Hesemann (319) 286-5972
royh@cedar-rapids.org

June 17-24 (Sat - Sat); Project AWARE
(A Watershed Awareness River Expedition) – Iowa River
Contact: Brandon Harland (515) 281-3150
Brandon.Harland@dnr.state.ia.us

WARNING – Database Under Construction!

If you've recently submitted data, you may have noticed that the datasheets no longer match up with the online data submission pages. We apologize for any inconvenience, but feel these changes are necessary to enhance the quality of the data and simplify the procedure for future volunteers. Some major modifications are outlined below.

Biological Assessment – Knowing if critters are present is important. Therefore, the "Microhabitats" list has been expanded, and fields have been added to better document biological conditions. These include: duration of collection, number of nets used in collection process, confidence in identification, and length of stream sampled.

Stream Habitat Assessment – "Microhabitats," "Stream Banks," "Adjacent Land Use" lists have been expanded, and two new lists – "Human Use Activities" and "Evidence of Human Use" – lists have been added.

Chemical/Physical Assessment – The "Water Odor" and "Water Color" lists have been expanded, and "Chalky" has been replaced by "Milky" in the latter. Reminders about expiration dates have also been added. Changes to the chemical parameters will also be reflected in the Standing Waters Assessment datasheet.

PDF files of the new and improved datasheets can be found online – www.iowater.net – under "Publications."

IOWATER 2006 Level I Workshop Schedule

Date & Time	Location	Contact	Phone	E-mail
Mar. 31 (5-9 PM) Apr. 1 (9 AM - 3 PM) @ Pammel Park Nature Center	Madison County	Jennifer Swerczek	(515) 462-3536	jswerczek@madisoncountyparks.org
Apr. 21, (5-9 PM) Apr. 22, (9 AM - 3 PM) @ Annett Nature Center	Warren County	Beth Waage 15565 118th Ave. Indianola, IA 50125	(515) 961-6169	bethwaage@mindspring.com
Apr. 28, (5-9 PM) Apr. 29, (8 AM - 2 PM) @ McFarland Park Conservation Center <i>This workshop will be followed by a Benthic Macroinvertebrate Indexing workshop (April 29, 2-6 PM). Contact Jerry for details.</i>	Story County	Jerry Keys 56461 180th St. Ames, IA 50010	(515) 232-2516	jkeys@storycounty.com
May 19, (5-9 PM) May 20, (9 AM - 3 PM) @ Cardinal High School	Wapello County	Terry Hamm 4045 Ashland Rd Eldon, IA 52554	(641) 652-7531	hammt@aea15.k12.ia.us
June 2 (5-9 PM) June 3 (9 AM - 3 PM) @ Sleep Inn & Suites Meeting Room	Emmet County	Bill Moreau 1820 Central Ave. Estherville, IA 51334	(712) 260-2507	DOnline@myclearwave.net
July 7, (5-9 PM) July 8, (9 AM - 3 PM) @ Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center	Woodbury County	Brian Soenen 3625 Nebraska St. Sioux City, IA 51104	(515) 205-8587	brian.soenen@dnr.state.ia.us
July 17, (5-10 PM) July 18, (5-10 PM) @ Jester Park Lodge	Polk County	Heidi Anderson 11407 NW Jester Park Dr. Granger, IA 50109	(515) 323-5360	handers@co.polk.ia.us
July 28, (5-9 PM) July 29, (9 AM - 3 PM) @ Gilbertson Nature Center	Fayette County	Dawn L. Amundson 22850 A Ave. Elgin, Iowa 52141	(563) 426-5740	gnfcfb@alpinecom.net
Aug. 18, (5-9 PM) Aug. 19, (9 AM - 3 PM) @ Starr's Cave Nature Center	Des Moines Co.	Kim Perlstein 11627 Starr's Cave Rd. Burlington, IA 52601	(319) 753-5808	starcave@co.des-moines.ia.us
Sep. 15, (5-9 PM) Sep. 16, (8 AM - 2 PM) @ Hurstville Interpretive Center <i>This workshop will be followed by a Bacteria Monitoring workshop (Sept 16, 2-6 pm). Contact Ann for details.</i>	Jackson County	Ann Burns 18670-63rd St. Maquoketa, Iowa 52060	(563) 652-3783	amburns29@jacksonccb.com

To register for a particular workshop, get in touch with the contact person listed.

IOWATER 2006 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
Mar. 18	Twin Ponds Nature Center (Chickasaw County)	Bacteria (9 AM - 12:30 PM) & Benthic (1-5 PM)
Mar. 25	Indian Creek Nature Center (Linn County)	Bacteria (9 AM - 12:30 PM) & Benthic (1-5 PM)
Apr. 1	Marr Park Education Center (Washington County)	Bacteria (9 AM - 12:30 PM) & Benthic (1-5 PM)
Apr. 29	McFarland Park Conservation Center (Story County)	Benthic (2-6 PM)
Sep. 16	Hurstville Interpretive Center (Jackson County)	Bacteria (2-6 PM)

To register, contact Jackie at (515) 281-4476 or jacklyn.gautsch@dnr.state.ia.us, or visit www.iowater.net.

IOWATER

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

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Poem by Michelle Campbell (see article, page 4)
Photo by Roger Hill

