

# ecoNews — Wire —

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

**Aug. 15, 2003**

For immediate release

1. **Beach remains posted at George Wyth; advisory posted at Rock Creek, removed at Beeds Lake**
2. **EPC consideration of air quality petitions delayed**
3. **DNR increases emphasis for open feedlots**
4. **City of Wyoming to discharge wastewater**
5. **Old septic systems may need replacement to adhere to code**

## **BEACH REMAINS POSTED AT GEORGE WYTH; ADVISORY POSTED AT ROCK CREEK, REMOVED AT BEEDS LAKE**

DES MOINES — A swimming advisory has been posted at Rock Creek Lake in Jasper County and an advisory remains in effect for the beach at George Wyth State Park in Black Hawk County.

There is no longer an advisory in effect at Beeds Lake in Franklin County. The beaches at Lake of Three Fires in Taylor County and Nine Eagles in Decatur County had E. coli counts of 330 and 340 respectively and will be re-sampled. Neither of those beaches have had significant bacteria problems in the past.

The beach at Rock Creek Lake had an E. coli bacteria reading of 340 which exceeds the standard for a one-time test of 235 that is being used this year. Because Rock Creek is one of eight lakes in Iowa that has had high bacteria levels in the past, a warning sign is posted immediately.

Although the level at George Wyth was only 40, it still slightly exceeded the geometric mean of 126 for at least five results taken over a 30-day period so an advisory will remain in effect there.

Bacteria levels at beaches typically rise as a result of runoff from rainfall and can return to normal in less than two days with sunny conditions. Samples are collected from the beaches on Monday and Tuesday. There was widespread rain over much of Iowa in the last week likely elevating bacteria levels at some locations.

Bacteria levels at Iowa's 37 other state park beaches are within acceptable levels.

The DNR is also advising normal precautions for contact with any surface water in Iowa:

- Avoid swallowing the water
- Avoid the water if you have open cuts or wounds that could become infected by contact with bacteria
- Swimming is not recommended for persons who are very young or very old and may have problems avoiding ingestion of water, and people who have weakened immune systems due to other medical conditions.

Weekly beach monitoring results are posted on the DNR's website every Friday afternoon at <http://www.iowadnr.com/news/beach.html>

**For more information, contact Kevin Baskins at (515) 281-8395 or Janice Boekhoff, 319-335-1574.**

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## **EPC CONSIDERATION OF AIR QUALITY PETITIONS DELAYED**

DES MOINES – Both parties with petitions for rulemaking on air quality around confinement feeding operations have asked for a 30-day extension, meaning commissioners will not be considering those petitions at the Aug. 18 meeting of the Environmental Protection Commission.

The AgriBusiness Association of Iowa, et al., and the Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement had submitted petitions asking the DNR to develop rules on how harmful levels of hydrogen sulfide, ammonia and odor levels are determined.

On the agenda are proposed changes in water quality standards that would add numerical criteria for chloride and replace the current numerical standard for total dissolved solids with an approach to establish discharge limits at specific sites.

A number of changes are proposed in the drinking water program, drinking water laboratory certification and operator certification program.

The EPC meeting will be held at 10 a.m., at the DNR office, 7900 Hickman Road, Suite 1 in Urbandale. Public participation is scheduled for 10:30 a.m. The meeting is open to the public.

The complete agenda is as follows:

- Approval of Agenda
- Approval of Minutes
- Director's Remarks

- Contract - Seneca Environmental Services - Iowa UST fields Project - City of Clinton
- Contract - University Hygienic Laboratory - Biological Stream Assessment Surveys including REMAP and Reference Site Projects
- Contract - University Hygienic Laboratory - 2003 Cooperative Groundwater Network
- Contract – Iowa State University Extension Service Manure Applicator Certification Training
- Proposed Rule - Amend IAC Chapter 567-111 Financial Assurance Requirements for Municipal Solid Waste Landfills
- Final Rule - Air Quality Program Rules Chapters 21, 22, 23, and 25 Updates, Revisions and Additions
- Notice of Intended Action - Chapter 22, Controlling Pollution (Air Construction Permitting Exemption for Small Units)
- Notice of Intended Action - Drinking water, Operator Certification and Laboratory Certification Programs - Chapters 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 81 and 83
- Proposed Rule - Chapter 61 Water Quality Standards
- Proposed Rule - To Amend IAC Chapter 65.7 (1)"b" – Modify construction permit requirements; requires an applicant to submit the master matrix to the department; expands the categories of persons determining ground water table elevations and modifies the requirements for ground water table determination.
- Denial of Petition for Rule Making - AgriBusiness Association of Iowa, et al.
- Denial of Petition for Rule Making – Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement
- Recommendations Regarding Air Quality Standards for Hydrogen Sulfide and Ammonia
- Referrals to the Attorney General
  - David Harper, dba Harper's Marina/Jolly Roger Campground (Johnson County) - drinking water
- Proposed Contested Case Decision – Cass County and Cass County Engineer
- Monthly Reports
- General Discussion

The members of the commission are Kathryn Murphy, Chair, LeMars; Terrance Townsend, Newton; Lisa Davis-Cook, West Des Moines; Darrell Hanson, Manchester; Lori Glanzman, Mt. Pleasant; Jerry Peckum, Jefferson; Heidi Vittetoe, Washington; Francis Thicke, Fairfield; and Donna Buell, Spirit Lake. The director of the DNR is Jeff Vonk.

**For more information, contact Karen Grimes, at (515) 281-5135.**

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## **DNR INCREASES EMPHASIS FOR OPEN FEEDLOTS**

DES MOINES – The DNR is committing resources to the open feedlot program to aid producers in meeting a five-year goal of having all open feedlots in compliance with state and federal regulations.

The DNR has doubled the number of staff assigned to the program. Open feedlots may differ from confinement feeding operations in the way manure is collected and stored. Because solid manure is removed, the liquid runoff collected does not have the odors generally associated with confinements and lagoons.

Geologist Deb Frundle has been updating engineering standards and the DNR rules to reflect industry input and the unique nature of open feedlots. As open feedlot planner, Frundle will continue to organize meetings and encourage consensus between commodity groups, Iowa State University Extension, the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the DNR.

Intern Claire Hruby was recently hired to conduct on-site evaluations of open feedlots and determine the environmental priority for the lots: high, medium or low.

Jeff Prier of Spencer replaces Ken Hessenius as the on-site inspector of large open feedlots registered with the DNR's state plan. Prier plans to increase the number of on-site visits and to follow up with facilities that are waiting to build run-off control basins or other structures.

"Some of the 1,576 producers who registered in the open feedlot plan are ready to put in the control structures that will keep runoff out of our streams," said Prier. "Although this runoff includes rainfall and is more dilute than manure from most confinement sites, it can still be harmful to aquatic life and water quality," he added. "That's why basins are necessary – to collect that runoff and thus protect the environment and aquatic life."

Federal and state laws require producers with more than 1,000 animal units to have an operating permit and to collect and hold all runoff in an earthen basin to be land applied. The basin must be large enough to hold all the rainfall runoff that would occur in 25-year, 24-hour storm or about five and one-half inches of rain in 24 hours.

Prier said that it's important to provide the services and to encourage producers with open feedlots to control the runoff.

Rick Martens, an environmental specialist in the Manchester DNR field office, will be making on-site visits to open feedlots with less than 1,000 animal units. Those operations are required to settle solids out of manure, but they may not have to build basins to hold the runoff.

Having a planner and three environmental specialists work with open feedlot producers should help producers reach the five-year goal of having everyone on the path to compliance by 2005, said Frundle.

**For more information, contact Jeff Prier, in the Spencer DNR field office, at 712-262-4177 or Deborah Frundle, Des Moines, 515-242-6849.**

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## **CITY OF WYOMING TO DISCHARGE WASTEWATER**

MANCHESTER – The city of Wyoming in Jones County plans to discharge partially treated wastewater to Bear Creek starting Aug. 18.

About 150,000 gallons per day will be discharged to protect the city's lagoon that has filled up recently due to improvements being done. The city anticipates discharging for about 24 days until approximately 3.52 million gallons have been discharged.

The DNR will be checking ammonia levels in the stream and monitoring it for stressed aquatic life.

The city will notify downstream livestock owners.

Big Bear Creek is a warm water stream that flows downstream about 20 miles and into the Maquoketa River

**For more information, contact Sue Miller, Manchester DNR field office, 563-927-2640.**

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## **OLD SEPTIC SYSTEMS MAY NEED REPLACEMENT TO ADHERE TO CODE**

DES MOINES — An estimated 100,000 septic systems in Iowa are at substandard levels. And many rural homeowners with those systems may not realize that their systems are breaking the law.

All septic systems, regardless of when they were installed, must have secondary wastewater treatment following the septic tank, according to Iowa law. Many old systems include only a septic tank that dumps untreated wastewater into a road ditch or subsurface tile.

“Old systems are not ‘grandfathered’ in,” said Steve Hopkins, an environmental specialist with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. “Many people have the perception that any system installed before 1968 — when the state septic system code was first adopted — is fine, but many of them contribute to the pollution of Iowa’s water and must be updated. In fact, many homeowners have no idea where their septic system is or where their wastewater goes.”

Of the 100,000 substandard septic systems in Iowa, the majority are inadequate, meaning that they do not have a secondary wastewater treatment component. Other substandard systems can be failing — properly permitted, but not working correctly. Without proper secondary wastewater treatment, untreated sewage can enter streams, creeks, rivers, lakes and groundwater, polluting those waters with bacteria and nitrates.

Homeowners who are unsure of the location and condition of their septic system should contact their county sanitarian. In Iowa, county sanitarians are responsible for inspecting existing septic systems and approving proposed replacement systems.

The DNR’s Onsite Wastewater Systems Assistance Program (OSWAP) can help homeowners replace their substandard septic systems. OSWAP participants receive interest rates of 3 percent or less on loans that range between \$2,000 and \$10,000, for a maximum repayment period of 10 years. After the participant’s loan is approved by a lender, and the new septic system is installed and approved by the county sanitarian, the

DNR transfers the loan deposit from the Onsite Wastewater Assistance Fund (OSWAF) to the local lender. The homeowner then repays the lender.

Replacing a substandard system now not only protects the environment, but can also protect a homeowner when a property is sold. Septic system inspections at the time of sale of a property are mandatory in 17 Iowa counties. These inspections ensure that inadequate or failing septic systems are brought into compliance at time of sale. OSWAP has helped finance the replacement of 100 inadequate systems across Iowa in the past year, at an average cost of \$5,500 per system.

**For more information, please contact your county sanitarian or Steve Hopkins, a DNR environmental specialist, at 515-725-0346. For information about participating OSWAP lenders and counties, visit the OSWAP Web page at: [www.onsiteiowa.com](http://www.onsiteiowa.com).**