

ecoNews — Wire —

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

October 23, 2003

For immediate release

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FORT DODGE ADDED TO REGIONAL WATER QUALITY MEETING SCHEDULE

DES MOINES — In response to public demand, the DNR has scheduled an additional regional water quality meeting Nov. 5 in Fort Dodge.

“We added the Fort Dodge meeting at the request of local people. We’re trying to cover the entire state,” said Bernie Hoyer, special assistant to the director of the DNR.

Remaining meetings also include Sioux City and Estherville. The meetings will address general water quality issues, nutrients and Iowa’s impaired waters and will include a presentation by DNR staff and an open public discussion. Each regional meeting will also highlight a local water quality project.

The public’s ideas and input at the regional meetings will be taken to the Iowa Water Summit Nov. 24 in Ames. The governor’s Iowa Water Summit is an unprecedented commitment to address impaired waters, and Governor Tom Vilsack has listed water quality as one of his top priorities.

“People have given us very sincere and open comments at every session so far. We’re really appreciative of that,” Hoyer said.

The Sioux City meeting will include a presentation focusing on the success of the ongoing Storm Lake Restoration Project. Presenter Gary Lalone is president of the Storm Lake Preservation Association, chairman of the Storm Lake Improvement Committee and director of the Storm Lake Area Development Corporation and Chamber of Commerce. John Call, Storm Lake City Administrator, is also presenting.

John Bird, Emmetsburg City Administrator, will present at the Estherville meeting on the Five Island Lake Restoration Project and its significance to the Emmetsburg area.

The remaining three meetings are scheduled from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. at the following locations and dates:

October 23, 2003

Western Iowa Technical College
4647 Stone Avenue
PO Box 5199
Sioux City IA 51106
Building A, Room 920, Large Lecture Hall

October 30, 2003

Iowa Lakes Community College
300 South 18th Street
Estherville, IA 51344
Auditorium

November 5, 2003

Webster County Extension Office
Bank of America Building, Second Floor
108 South 8th Street
Fort Dodge, IA 50501

The general agenda for each session:

6:30 p.m. Status of Water Quality and Water Quality Trends in Iowa
6:50 p.m. Iowa's Nutrient Budget and Nutrients in Iowa's Waters
7:10 p.m. Iowa's Impaired Waters
7:30 p.m. Break
7:40 p.m. Local Water Quality Program
8:00 p.m. Public Participation
9:00 p.m. Adjourn

Those unable to attend the meetings or with further comments or questions can contact water.summit@dnr.state.ia.us.

Questions on local project presentations can be directed to:

Sioux City: Gary Lalone, (712) 732-3780.

Estherville: John Bird, (712) 852-4030.

Media questions or comments should be directed to Bernie Hoyer (515) 281-7247 or Bernie.Hoyer@dnr.state.ia.us.

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APPROACHING DEADLINE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL AWARDS

DES MOINES — The deadline is quickly approaching for the 2003 Governor's Iowa Environmental Excellence Awards. This premier environmental awards program, sponsored by Governor Vilsack and the State of Iowa, recognizes leadership and innovation in the protection of Iowa's water, land and air.

Awards will be given for overall environmental excellence and special recognition in water quality, waste management, energy efficiency/renewable energy, air quality and habitat restoration/development.

Categories for the awards include:

- ◆ Agriculture (operation, farm or other ag-related business or organization)
- ◆ Community/Local Government
- ◆ Small Business or Industry (up to 200 employees)
- ◆ Large Business or Industry (more than 200 employees)
- ◆ Institution/Public Sector Facility (hospital, college, school, etc.)
- ◆ Service/Civic/Nonprofit Organization (Kiwanis, Lions Club, Pheasants Forever, etc.)

The awards are sponsored by the Governor's Office, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, the Iowa Department of Economic Development, the Iowa Department of Education, the Iowa Department of Public Health and the Iowa Waste Reduction Center.

The application deadline is November 10, 2003. To obtain an application, go to the Web site www.iowadnr.com/other/ee/index.html, or contact: Jill Cornell, Department of Natural Resources (515) 281-0879; e-mail: Jill.Cornell@dnr.state.ia.us.

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DAILY AIR QUALITY INFORMATION AVAILABLE YEAR-ROUND

DES MONIES — October marks the first month that daily air pollution levels are available year round not only in Iowa, but nationally, with 141 cities including Des Moines providing pollution forecasts as part of an enhanced pollution reporting effort.

While daily and hourly summertime smog levels have been reported for several years, similar real time monitoring technology now reports hourly particulate pollution levels, which can become high any time of year.

Particle pollution – made up of airborne microscopic soot, carbon and aerosols – cause 15,000 premature deaths annually and contribute to other serious health complications in the United States.

High levels of particle pollution can affect everyone, but those with heart and lung disease, children and the elderly and active adults are most at risk of symptoms. Particle pollution has been linked to asthma attack, chronic bronchitis, changes in heart rate, arrhythmia and heart attack among other problems.

Widespread areas of Iowa experienced unhealthy particulate pollution levels several days last August. Particle pollution is often more severe and common elsewhere in the nation.

“This is unprecedented environmental monitoring data that allows particularly sensitive persons to make choices about outdoor activities based on health risks,” said Brian Button, DNR air information specialist. “It took extraordinary efforts from staff at Polk and Linn County air pollution control agencies and the University Hygienic Laboratory to work out technical difficulties in order for Iowa data to be included in this national effort.”

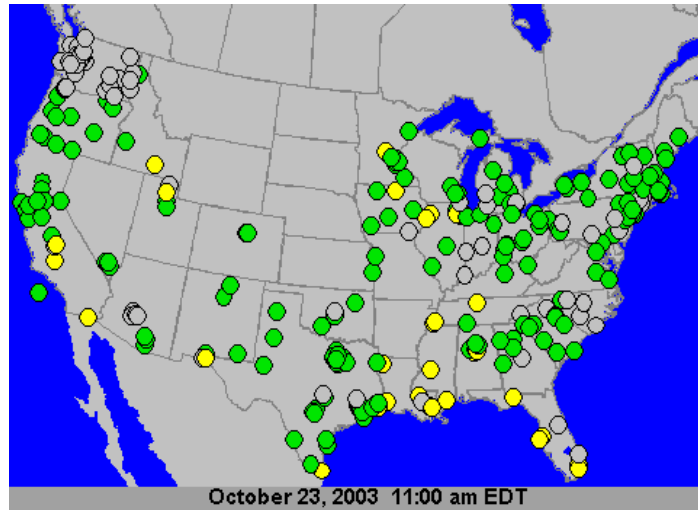
He said the maps and forecasts are especially useful when traveling to states frequented by high pollution levels. “Fortunately in Iowa, widespread air pollution is not routine,” said Button.

The monitoring and reporting focuses on microscopic sized particles roughly 40 times smaller than a grain of salt or about 2.5 microns in size. These microscopic particles can bypass respiratory defenses and become lodged in lung tissue, interfere with heart rhythms and decrease lung function.

Sources of particulate emissions include diesel tailpipe exhaust, smokestack emissions, forest fires, open burning of debris and trash, fine windblown dusts and particles formed in the atmosphere by reactions of ammonia, sulfur and nitrogen oxide gases.

Daily pollution levels and forecasts are available on the Internet at www.epa.gov/airnow with color maps that show current particulate pollution levels using the Air Quality Index (AQI). The information can also be viewed from the DNR web page, www.iowacleanair.com or viewed on television at The Weather Channel.

For more information contact Brian Button at 515-281-7832.



Good to moderate air quality nationwide at 10 a.m. Iowa time on October 23 for particulate air pollution. Green represents good air quality, yellow is moderate. If detected, various levels of unhealthy air are represented by orange, red and purple colors. Maps and pollution forecasts are available at www.epa.gov/airnow.

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APPLICATIONS SOUGHT FOR FEDERAL WATERSHED FUNDS

DES OINES — Governor Tom Vilsack and DNR Director Jeff Vonk announced today that eligible watersheds in the Iowa may qualify for federal funds under the second round of EPA's Watershed Initiative and that the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will administer the program.

This program is designed to encourage successful community-based approaches and techniques to protect water resources throughout the country. Under the FY2004 *Watershed Initiative*, EPA will conduct a national competition to select up to 20 watersheds for grants to advance the successes of watershed coalitions that have already performed watershed assessments and are ready to carry out on-the-ground clean up and restoration projects. In addition, emphasis will be placed on market-based approaches and projects dealing with the hypoxia issue facing the Gulf of Mexico.

Governor Vilsack can nominate up to two intra-state watershed projects and an unlimited number of inter-state projects for funding consideration by EPA. Successful applicants will be eligible for funding of from \$300,000 to \$1,300,000.

The Rathbun Land and Water Alliance was awarded \$600,000 as one of the 20 national recipients of the previous, FY2003 Watershed Initiative. The project proposed using Geographic Information System (GIS) technology to assess what changes can be made on the landscape to have the most positive impact on improving water quality.

“I am pleased this program will provide funding for those watershed projects that involve strong local support and collaboration. This program emphasizes my approach to local problem solving,” Vilsack.

“Coalition building and community-based approaches help to assure long-term success in developing and implementing efforts to protect and restore our watersheds,” Vonk said.

DNR will solicit applications for the program and provide recommendations to the Governor regarding projects that should be submitted for funding consideration. In accordance with EPA guidance, applications will be evaluated upon their anticipated water quality benefits, their breadth of local support, their level of innovative environmental problem-solving, and their compatibility with other federal and state efforts. A minimum non-federal match of 25% of the total budget is required.

To be considered, applications must be received by the DNR no later than **December 12, 2003**. Governor Vilsack will submit Iowa’s nominations to EPA, with final selections being announced by EPA early next year.

Additional details on how to apply for a *Watershed Initiative* grant, including eligibility requirements and where to send your application, can be found at www.state.ia.us/epd/wtrq/npsource/epatwi.htm. Questions can also be directed to: Ubbo Agena, Nonpoint Program Coordinator, Iowa Department of Natural Resources (phone 515-281-6402, email: ubbo.agena@dnr.state.ia.us) or Becky Schwiete, Environmental Specialist Sr. Iowa Department of Natural Resources (phone 515-242-6196, email: rebecca.schwiete@dnr.state.ia.us).