



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Read all DNR news releases at: www.iowadnr.gov/news/

May 28, 2009

For immediate release

- 1. EPA approves water quality standards for 83 Iowa waters**
- 2. Come one, come all – a Cedar River experience awaits**
- 3. Tama County residents asked to collaborate on Union Grove Lake improvement plan**

EPA APPROVES WATER QUALITY STANDARDS FOR 83 IOWA WATERS

MEDIA CONTACTS: Chuck Corell, Water Quality Bureau Chief, at (515) 281-4582 or Lori McDaniel, Supervisor Water Resources, at (515) 281-8094.

DES MOINES – The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency approved revisions to Iowa water quality standards on 83 water bodies Friday.

“The DNR has been working on the standards, doing comprehensive on-site assessments of streams, to make sure each stream has the proper level of protection according to how it can be used for recreation and what aquatic animals could live there,” said Chuck Corell, DNR’s chief of the water quality bureau. “This is good news for Iowa’s waters.”

The assessment process included visual inspections, public interviews and collecting field data. Once collected, DNR staff used the data to determine the biological and physical potentials of the stream and to document how people were actually using the stream – swimming, fishing, seining, trapping or wading.

Based on the results, the DNR sent recommendations to reclassify about 300 water bodies to EPA in August of 2008. The 83 water bodies EPA approved are in the first group out of this batch.

“Although this is an ongoing process, the DNR’s priority are the streams that currently have a known point source of pollution, such as a city or industrial wastewater discharge,” said Richard Leopold, the director of DNR. “We expect to submit two more large packages, first to the state Environmental Protection Commission, then to the EPA.”

Once EPA approves the reclassifications, the DNR can renew National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits to facilities that discharge to those streams. By state law, the permits are on hold until the stream assessments are completed and approved.

The DNR has actively been working with facilities such as municipal wastewater treatment plants so that they understand the potential impacts of the reclassification. Some plants will need upgrades to better protect downstream water quality for people’s recreational use or to support aquatic life.

More information on EPA’s May 22, 2009, decision can be found in the letter to DNR available at http://www.epa.gov/region07/news_events/legal.

###

COME ONE, COME ALL – A CEDAR RIVER EXPERIENCE AWAITS

MEDIA CONTACT: Brian Soenen at Brian.Soenen@dnr.iowa.gov or (515) 205-8587.

DES MOINES – Whether you wish to volunteer or simply stop in to learn something new, the DNR invites you to the seventh annual Project AWARE (A Watershed Awareness River Expedition) river cleanup event. This year’s expedition, scheduled for June 20-27, combines river cleanup, recreation and education into a meaningful and rewarding experience for all.

Volunteers can officially join the river cleanup by paddling the river or by assisting with land-based recycling initiatives, but there are opportunities for others to experience Project AWARE as well. “Infotainment” programs, for example, are held each evening and are open to the public. A complete schedule for these programs can be found on the Project AWARE Web site – www.iowaprojectaware.com.

In the six-year history of Project AWARE, the expedition has sported an impressive track record, enlisting 1,231 participants who have cleaned up more than 480 river miles and removed more than 1,500 cubic yards of trash, of which 81 percent has been recycled. Volunteers have also restored native prairie, renovated trails and enhanced recreational areas.

This year's event is expected to bring hundreds of volunteers to the Cedar River and focus on an 86-mile stretch from Wildcat Bluff near Urbana to Saulsbury Bridge Recreation Area near Muscatine. While the expedition lasts an entire week, volunteers may stay and help for as little or as long as they like.

While the work can be tough and dirty, the expedition is really one of a kind.

“Project AWARE is my RAGBRAI ... my vacation,” says Cindy Watson, a four-year Project AWARE veteran. “It’s a chance to come together with a bunch of other Iowans who want to make a difference and clean up our Iowa waters.”

Registration is not required for the general public to attend evening programs, but it is required for those who wish to volunteer for the river cleanup itself. To avoid a late registration fee, volunteers are asked to have their registration forms postmarked by Friday, June 5.

For more information on this event or to download the registration materials, please visit www.iowaprojectaware.com or contact Brian Soenen at Brian.Soenen@dnr.iowa.gov or (515) 205-8587.

###

TAMA COUNTY RESIDENTS ASKED TO COLLABORATE ON UNION GROVE LAKE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

MEDIA CONTACT: Jeff Berckes at (515) 281-4791 or jeff.berckes@dnr.iowa.gov

GLADBROOK – Iowans interested in improving Union Grove Lake in Tama County can attend a meeting June 15 to review and discuss a water quality improvement plan and its suggestions for improving the lake.

Union Grove Lake is on the state's impaired waters list because of poor water clarity, high levels of pH, and excessive levels of algae, which affect recreational activities such as swimming and boating. Too much phosphorus in the lake primarily causes these issues. The excess phosphorus comes from sources such as soil erosion, synthetic fertilizer loss, livestock manure, non-functioning septic tanks and the recycling of phosphorus already in the lake.

Union Grove Lake also experiences high levels of E. coli bacteria, due primarily to cattle with direct access to tributary streams, poorly functioning septic systems and geese on the beach. The DNR water quality improvement plan looks at potential causes of and solutions for water quality problems in Union Grove Lake. When completed, it will provide local resource agencies, partners, stakeholders and residents with guidance to improve the lake.

“We are excited to work with the citizens that live, work and play in the watershed,” said

Jeff Berckes, DNR water quality improvement plan coordinator. “Union Grove Lake is a great resource for the area and we know a lot of people want to see improvements in the lake. This meeting will present the results from our study, but more importantly, this meeting will serve as a launching pad for active community collaboration and start the process of improving water quality together.”

The DNR will ask Iowans for their input at a June 15 meeting at Union Grove State Park. The meeting will begin at 7:00 p.m. at the Youth Shelter on the east shore of the Union Grove Lake, located off of C Avenue in rural Gladbrook.

Staff from the DNR’s Lake Restoration program, Watershed Improvement program and Fisheries bureau will also be on hand to answer questions.

Those not able to attend the public meeting can receive more information at www.iowadnr.gov/water/watershed/tmdl/publicnotice.html or www.iowadnr.gov/water/watershed/uniongrove/ and submit comments on the plan by June 29, 2009 via the following ways:

E-mail: jeff.berckes@dnr.iowa.gov

Telephone: Jeff Berckes at (515) 281-4791

Mail: Jeff Berckes, care of Iowa DNR, Wallace State Office Building, 502 E. Ninth St., Des Moines, Iowa 50319

After gathering Iowans’ comments, the DNR will forward the final plan, also called by its technical name of Total Maximum Daily Load, to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for approval. Local groups interested in helping Union Grove Lake can then use the plan to assist their improvement efforts.