



SOLVING DAM PROBLEMS:

Iowa's

2010 Plan for

Dam Mitigation

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Iowans have great and oftentimes competing expectations for our river systems. Our rivers must carry away excess waters from our developed places and fields, but without flooding. Rivers must carry away nutrients and industrial pollutants, but without affecting drinking water downstream. They must carry away bacteria, but without harming people drawn to them. Our riverways must be the last vestiges of our state's ecological lifeblood, but must also provide anchors for intense recreational use, from hunting grounds to bike trails, from angling to innertubing. "Systems thinking" provides a way forward that avoids unintended consequences and externalized costs.

Aging, failing dams provide challenges in identifying key needs and technologies, but also opportunities to re-think how local stakeholders and the broader interests of Iowans can be one in the same. Rivers are a shared public resource. Iowa's future dam reconstructions will be expected to solve a broader array of problems than were required in the past. Planning and leadership are needed to guide dam approaches. This results in stable projects that continue serving local needs, but also serve other multiple benefits. Often, this may come at less expense than "building it back." On balance, projects at dams can restore normal ecological and navigational functions to rivers statewide.

Remarkable improvements are unfolding on Iowa's lake systems today, a direct result of visions and plans initiated more than a decade ago. Those efforts would not have been successful without intrepid execution by Iowa DNR lake restoration program staff, and consistent funding by elected officials.

A 2009 survey by Iowa State University's Center for Agriculture and Rural Development found that nearly half of Iowans recreate along rivers. Linked with Iowa "Water Trails: Connecting People with Water and Resources," and the "Developing Water Trails in Iowa," this plan is the last of a new suite of documents providing planning relevant to the times, and to conditions for major river systems. While these three publications by no means comprise a comprehensive river restoration plan, these documents do offer promising early restorative elements. They also address important demands of stakeholders, including improved aquatic ecosystems, improved angling, better and safer navigation, and reduced flood frequency. They provide ways for regular Iowans to connect with their waterways. They provide entrepreneurs new opportunities for nature-based recreation and responsibly enhancing destination activities like innertubing, canoeing, and kayaking.

"Solving Dam Problems: Iowa's 2010 Plan for Dam Mitigation," provides a carefully balanced road map to address local infrastructure needs while avoiding as many of the side-effects of traditional dams as possible. Given a solid implementation over the course of years and decades, lasting improvements will be realized throughout Iowa as a result of the efforts put into developing this plan.

Sincerely,

Pat Boddy

Interim Director of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources



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