



## Water Quality Legislation

Iowans expect that the water we drink is free of harmful pollutants. We expect to fish, paddle and wade in our streams and lakes without getting sick. The following legislation will greatly improve Iowa's water quality.

### **Increasing funding for water quality**

Most important, it is time to fund water quality. The best way to do this is to implement the 3/8 cent sales tax that Iowans approved in 2010 by 63 percent of the voters.

Article VII Section 10 of the Iowa Constitution created a Natural Resources & Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund (Trust) that is to be supported by a sales tax of 3/8 of one cent. This trust fund is to be used "for the purposes of protecting and enhancing water quality and natural areas in this State including parks, trails, and fish and wildlife habitat, and conserving agricultural soils in this State."

All that is needed is for the sales tax to be approved. Implementation of this tax should not be revenue neutral. Improving water quality should not be at the expense of other important needs. Further, the funding formulas for how the money is to be allocated should not be changed.

What's more, improving water quality will improve fish and wildlife habitat. Likewise, efforts to conserve agricultural soils in the state will also improve water quality.

### **Nutrient reduction legislation**

Now that Iowa has a nutrient reduction strategy and has begun to fund projects to improve water quality in Iowa, the next order of business should be working on establishing numerical standards for nutrients for Iowa's lakes, rivers and streams, including a reasonable date for each water body to meet the standards. Finally, each of the major watersheds and lakes should be regularly monitored for nutrients, with the results posted online by GPS coordinates but not recording the names of neighboring landowners. The nutrient monitoring system should involve regularly testing the water throughout the year.

Taxpayers expect that their taxes will be wisely spent on projects to reduce nutrients. Farmers need to be able to identify practices that effectively reduce those nutrients. The way to accomplish this is through measurable numerical targets.

Numerical standards provide a target to meet. If you don't have a measurable target, you don't know if you are hitting the target or if you need to continue working on improvements.

An oversight board should be established to determine projects to fund and to review the effectiveness of those expenditures in reducing nutrient pollution. The members of this oversight board should represent a broad range of interests supporting improvement of water quality. The oversight board can set priority watersheds for funding. A watershed approach to funding nutrient reduction will result in multiple benefits, including improved fish habitat and improved recreation opportunities due to cleaner water, all of which improve the quality of life in Iowa.

High levels of nutrients in drinking water can cause serious health problems. Nutrients also encourage the growth of algae which causes green, stinky water. Nutrients encourage the growth of toxic bacteria which leads to beach closures. Furthermore reducing the nutrients entering the water in Iowa will help reduce the dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico, an area that is so polluted that fish and other marine animals are unable to survive.

A side benefit in nutrient reduction is less sediment in the water which means less erosion from farm fields which is a benefit to the landowner.

### **Restoring funding to the Leopold Center**

The Leopold Center has been a leader in researching sustainable farming techniques that protect Iowa's water quality.

Funding should be restored to the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture so that it can continue pursuing research in farming techniques, a benefit for all Iowans.