



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

# EcoNewsWire

## Environmental Services

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 18, 2020

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## DNR responds to fertilizer spill in Dubuque

**MEDIA CONTACT:** Joe Sanfilippo at 563-920-2696  
or [Joe.Sanfilippo@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:Joe.Sanfilippo@dnr.iowa.gov).

DUBUQUE—DNR staff are investigating a large fertilizer spill on the east side of Dubuque.

The spill was discovered about 6:30 a.m. when staff at the Gavilon Grain company found 32 percent liquid nitrogen fertilizer had overflowed from above-ground storage tanks near 1200 Kerper Boulevard.

The company reported the release occurred when a pump was left running as fertilizer was offloaded from a barge. They estimate as much as 1 million gallons of fertilizer may have spilled with most contained onsite. Some may have flowed into the 16<sup>th</sup> Street retention basin.

Some fertilizer ran across Kerper Boulevard near Purina Drive. Gavilon staff, the Dubuque Fire Department and Hazmat responded. The fire department closed the street and placed sand over spilled fertilizer to aid in cleanup.

DNR staff are on site, checking to ensure the leak is contained and looking for environmental impacts. As of 10:30 a.m. there was no sign of a fish kill. DNR will monitor the cleanup and consider appropriate enforcement action.

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## Public comment period for proposed rulemaking for aquatic life water quality criteria

**MEDIA CONTACT: Roger Bruner, DNR, at 515-310-0247**  
or [roger.bruner@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:roger.bruner@dnr.iowa.gov).

DES MOINES - A public comment period will be closing June 23, 2020 for a proposed amendment that updates the current aquatic life water quality criteria with the latest scientific information on metal toxicity.

While current criteria are expressed as total recoverable metals, research has established that dissolved metals, except for aluminum, more closely approximate the bioavailable fraction of metals in the water column. These new data indicate that the dissolved portion of metals in the water column is the portion that is most easily absorbed by aquatic life, and therefore is a better measure of toxicity. In light of the new data, measuring for total recoverable metals is an overly stringent approach.

Based on this research, the Environmental Protection Commission (EPC) is proposing to convert the aquatic life water quality criteria from total recoverable metals to dissolved metals based on available conversion factors for the following metals: arsenic (III), cadmium, chromium (VI), lead, mercury, nickel, silver, and zinc. In addition, the proposed aquatic life criteria for cadmium have been recalculated from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-published 2016 national criteria for Iowa waters based on the aquatic species residing in Iowa waters.

Unlike other metals, some non-dissolved forms of aluminum can be toxic to aquatic life. As a result, the EPC is proposing aluminum aquatic life water quality criteria in the form of bioavailable concentration values, which include both dissolved and some non-dissolved (colloidal) aluminum which can be toxic to aquatic life. The proposed aluminum criteria also incorporate new data which establish that aluminum bioavailability is dependent upon ambient levels of certain chemical parameters in the receiving stream, such as pH, dissolved organic carbon, and hardness. These criteria were developed using the EPA-published 2018 national criteria with associated toxicity data and site-specific water chemistry data for Iowa waters. The criteria also provide wastewater permittees the option of collecting data specific to the permittee's own receiving stream.

Any interested person may submit written comments concerning this proposed rulemaking. Written comments in response to this rule making must be received by the Department no later than 4:30 p.m. on June 23, 2020. Comments should be directed to:

Roger Bruner  
Department of Natural Resources  
Wallace State Office Building  
502 East Ninth Street  
Des Moines, Iowa 50319  
Email: [roger.bruner@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:roger.bruner@dnr.iowa.gov)

#### *Public Hearing*

A public hearing at which persons may present their views orally or in writing will be held via conference call June 23, 2020 from 3:00 pm to 4:00 pm. Persons who wish to attend the conference call should contact Roger Bruner via email at [roger.bruner@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:roger.bruner@dnr.iowa.gov). A conference call number will be provided prior to the

hearing. Persons who wish to make oral comments at the conference call public hearing must submit a request to Roger Bruner prior to the hearing to facilitate an orderly hearing.

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## Safety tips to enjoy fireworks, protect sensitive people

**NOTE: This is a joint press release from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and the Iowa Department of Public Health**

**MEDIA CONTACT: Brian Hutchins, DNR, at 515-725-9550 or [Brian.Hutchins@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:Brian.Hutchins@dnr.iowa.gov).**

As much as we love fireworks displays, drifting smoke can cause breathing problems for some and large crowds may pose a risk this year.

COVID-19 has caused some towns to cancel fireworks displays, while others have modified their events. Whether attending a display or celebrating in your backyard, keep these four safety tips in mind.

“First, if your family or friends suffer from asthma or respiratory difficulties, it’s important for them to stay upwind, a safe distance from fireworks smoke,” says Brian Hutchins, DNR air quality supervisor. “The elderly and children are also vulnerable to higher levels of smoke.”

Sensitive people are most likely to have trouble breathing when air is stagnant. With no breeze, fine particles can be trapped near the ground and build to unhealthy levels.

Smoke contains fine particles and gases, which can be hard on the lungs. Fine particles in fireworks’ smoke are produced from black powder used to shoot fireworks skyward along with the metals that produce brilliant colors.

Those unable to avoid areas of dense smoke should limit outdoor activity and contact their health care provider if they experience difficulty breathing.

Second, while fireworks and celebrations go together, remember fireworks can cause serious burns and eye injuries. The Iowa Department of Public Health encourages families to make sure an adult supervises fireworks and keeps young children from playing with or igniting them. Keep fireworks pointed away from you and others when igniting them, and back up quickly after lighting. If fireworks don’t ignite or burn fully, don’t try to relight them or pick them up. Keep a bucket of water or hose on hand to respond to a fire or mishap.

The Iowa Department of Public Health reports there were 13 inpatient hospitalizations and 121 outpatient hospitalizations related to fireworks injuries last year. Check for more safety tips from the [Consumer Product and Safety Commission](#). Check with local authorities for restrictions on shooting fireworks inside city limits.

Third, stay six feet away from others, gather in groups of 10 or less, cover your mouth and nose, and wash hands or use a hand sanitizer frequently. Stay home if you or

someone in your household is sick. Find guidelines to protect yourself and others under Coronavirus resources at [coronavirus.iowa.gov](https://coronavirus.iowa.gov) or at the [Center for Disease Control and Prevention](https://www.cdc.gov).

Finally, play it safe and [dispose of your unused fireworks](#) carefully. Safe storage and disposal protects you, your family and your waste haulers. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has [fireworks guidelines for businesses](#).

In 2017, Fourth of July fireworks in Des Moines gave rise to fine particle levels that exceeded national standards set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Learn more about [fine particles \(PM2.5\)](#) and how [fireworks displays](#) can affect sensitive populations.

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## DNR enforcement actions

**MEDIA CONTACT:** Tamara McIntosh, DNR, at 515-725-8242  
or [Tamara.McIntosh@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:Tamara.McIntosh@dnr.iowa.gov).

DES MOINES – DNR staff work with individuals, businesses and communities to help them protect our natural resources by complying with state and federal laws. This approach is very effective. In the few cases where compliance cannot be achieved, the DNR issues enforcement actions. The following list summarizes recent enforcement actions. Find the entire, original orders on DNR's website at [www.iowadnr.gov/EnforcementActions](http://www.iowadnr.gov/EnforcementActions)

### Consent Orders

A consent order is issued as an alternative to issuing an administrative order. A consent order indicates that the DNR has voluntarily entered into a legally enforceable agreement with the other party.

#### Buena Vista County

Brian Jackson

Operate feedlot and land apply manure consistent with applicable laws; develop a Plan of Action approved by the DNR that addresses the land application of settled solids to prevent manure from entering Storm Lake during future land applications; and pay a \$3,000 administrative penalty.

#### Ringgold County

Roger Dolecheck

Operate in compliance with applicable law, obtain proper certification prior to land applying manure, and pay a \$2,100 administrative penalty.

### Administrative Orders

Responsible parties have 60 days to appeal the order or 60 days to pay the penalty.

#### Scott County

Mike Giammetta

Remove berm in the floodway and reestablish original grade and submit a certification statement upon completion from an Iowa licensed engineer or surveyor; comply with all

Iowa floodway and floodplain regulations in the future; and pay a \$7,000 administrative penalty.

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## A note on Iowa DNR and COVID-19

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources is working with state and local officials to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and has transitioned employees to work remotely. DNR offices are closed to the public during this time and only available by appointment.

In another effort to further reduce the spread of COVID-19, the DNR is encouraging the use of the online services for submitting applications, payments and other daily tasks and interaction with DNR staff.

- [Full list of DNR's online services](#)
- [Up-to-date information on DNR services, facilities and events impacted by COVID-19](#)
- [Technical information for regulated businesses in regards to COVID-19](#)

We thank you for your patience and flexibility during this time. If you need to contact DNR staff you can reach them by email or phone or by calling 515-725-8200.