



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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Water Summary Update: Overall drought conditions trending downward in April

MEDIA CONTACT: Tim Hall, Iowa DNR, 515-452-6633 or Tim.Hall@dnr.iowa.gov.

DES MOINES — Statewide average precipitation totaled 1.61 inches in April, or 1.9 inches below normal, ranking last month as one of the top 20 driest Aprils in 149 years of statewide records, according to the latest Water Summary Update.

As a result, stream flows are below normal in much of the state, and shallow groundwater supplies are of concern in northern and northwestern Iowa. In addition, 78 percent of the state is rated as experiencing abnormally dry to severe drought conditions, the highest extent since September 2020.

"All of the indicators used in the Water Summary Update are trending drier," said Tim Hall, DNR's coordinator of hydrology resources. "April was very dry across much of the state, leading to lower stream flows, and concerns about shallow groundwater supplies in parts of the state. This time of the year the state should be receiving more than an inch per week of rain, so we are falling farther behind."

In a normal year, April begins the important stretch of significant rainfall for Iowa. From April through August, Iowa receives nearly two-thirds of its annual rainfall. April 2021 precipitation ranked as nearly the driest on record for much of the state, with the north-central, northeast and central regions ranked nearly the driest Aprils on record.

While there were periods of cooler than average temperatures and warmer, windy days, the statewide average temperature was 49.3 degrees, slightly warmer than normal. Desoto reported the month's high temperature of 93 degrees on April 26, 26 degrees above average. Estherville Municipal Airport and Battle Creek reported the month's low temperature of 11 degrees on April 1, 19 degrees below normal.

In the last month, streamflow conditions across approximately one-third of the state have moved into below normal conditions. The Skunk, Des Moines, Raccoon and West Fork Cedar rivers, and a portion of the Cedar River basin, have moved into below normal conditions.

For a thorough review of Iowa's water resource trends, go to iowadnr.gov/WaterSummaryUpdate.

The report is prepared by technical staff from Iowa DNR, the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, IIHR—Hydroscience and Engineering, and the U.S. Geological Survey, in collaboration with Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management Department.

Low cost air sensors—adding to our knowledge

MEDIA CONTACT: Brian Hutchins at 515-681-3136
or Brian.Hutchins@dnr.iowa.gov.

DES MOINES—As part of a nationwide effort involving 16 states, DNR and other Iowa air agencies collected data used to improve results from popular personal air quality sensors.

Working with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Iowa DNR placed low-cost air quality sensors near existing and highly accurate, regulatory-grade monitors.

“This study makes an important contribution to understanding the limitations and potential uses of air quality sensors,” said Brian Hutchins, DNR air quality supervisor. “By comparing regulatory data with PurpleAir sensors, EPA came up with a method to make sensor results more reliable.”

With these improvements, EPA added thousands of low-cost sensors to [AirNow's](#) national fire and smoke maps--to help track the impacts of western wildfires. The maps now include concentrations of small particulate matter (PM2.5) collected from regulatory monitors, satellite data and low-cost sensors.

Short and long-term exposure to small [particulate matter](#) (think smoke or tiny dust particles) poses significant health risks, including asthma and heart attacks, strokes and early death.

“We don't have regulatory monitors everywhere. Citizen science sensors can provide a better understanding of local trends in air pollution, which can also help protect human health,” Hutchins added.

While air quality in Iowa is usually good, check the [Air Quality Index](#) when planning outdoor activities. If the AQI is green, air quality is good. A yellow color indicates acceptable air quality, but there may be a risk for people who are sensitive to air pollution. Risks may be higher for people with heart or lung disease, and for children, athletes and older adults.

May 3 – 7 is national Clean Air Week. Check EPA's website to learn more about [personal sensors](#) and the [EPA study](#). Iowa DNR can help you learn more about [air](#)

[monitoring](#) in Iowa and ways you can [improve air quality](#).

Volunteers needed for sustainable materials management subcommittees

MEDIA CONTACT: Tom Anderson, 515-240-6059 or tom.anderson@dnr.iowa.gov

DES MOINES--The DNR is looking for Iowans and organizations to serve on subcommittees that will assist with the next phase of the Sustainable Materials Management Vision for Iowa project.

The project centers on a vision to conserve natural resources and protect the environment throughout a product's life. Known as sustainable materials management (SMM), this approach emphasizes waste prevention throughout the lifecycle of manufacturing and distributing products.

Serving on a subcommittee will require attending three meetings over three months, with each meeting lasting a few hours. If interested in being considered for serving on a subcommittee, please complete the survey at https://www.research.net/r/SMM_Iowa.

DNR has worked with residents, businesses and institutions to craft the Iowa vision for SMM since 2019. These subcommittees will continue the process of engaging with stakeholders to create specific SMM strategies through integrating technology, infrastructure, policies, funding and performance metrics.

Iowa's existing solid waste management system focuses primarily on waste discards and how to manage a material at the end of its useful life. This approach includes many positive attributes, such as recycling and composting waste discards into new products. However, it does not emphasize waste prevention or environmental impacts associated with the product's lifecycle.

The Iowa SMM vision promotes finding new opportunities to reduce environmental impacts, conserve resources and reduce costs associated with managing materials throughout their life cycle.

For additional information, visit iowadnr.gov/SMM.

Deadline to nominate conservation leaders for the Iowa Farm Environmental Leader Award is May 24

MEDIA CONTACT: Keely Coppess, IDALS, 515-281-3375
or keely.coppess@iowaagriculture.gov.

DES MOINES – Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds, Secretary of Agriculture Mike Naig and Department of Natural Resources Director Kayla Lyon are reminding Iowans to nominate individuals or families in their communities for the 2021 Farm Environmental Leader Award.

Nominations will be accepted until Monday, May 24, to be considered for the 2021 awards ceremony held at the Iowa State Fair.

Farmers and landowners who invest in conservation practices, like cover crops or wetlands, and incorporate best management practices into their operations to improve and protect the state's natural resources are eligible for the award. They must also actively serve as leaders in the agriculture community.

An appointed committee representing both conservation and agricultural groups will review the nominations and select the winners. The recipients will be recognized on Wednesday, Aug. 18, at the Iowa State Fair. Gov. Reynolds, Secretary Naig and Director Lyon will present the winners with an Iowa Farm Environmental Leader Award and a yard sign donated by Bayer.

Since the creation of the award in 2012, more than 650 farm families have been recognized.

The nomination form and a list of previous awardees can be found at iowaagriculture.gov/farm-environmental-leader-awards.

Air Quality permits under review

MEDIA CONTACT: Marnie Stein, DNR, at 515-725-9525 or Marnie.Stein@dnr.iowa.gov for Title V permits; or Sarah Piziali, DNR, at 515-725-9549 or Sarah.Piziali@dnr.iowa.gov for construction permits.

DES MOINES – The DNR Air Quality Bureau has the following draft permits up for review. The permits help protect Iowans' health and air quality. DNR's permitting staff review each permit application to ensure facilities comply with state and federal air quality requirements. We encourage public comments on draft permits, providing help on how to [make effective comments](#). Submit written comments to the assigned permit writer before 4:30 p.m. on the last day of the comment period. DNR considers public comments before finalizing the permits.

Title V Operating Permits

Title V Operating permits are reviewed and re-issued every five years. Facilities with a Title V permit have the potential to emit large amounts of air pollutants compared to other facilities. The five-year reviews are a federal requirement and ensure adequate monitoring is included in the permit. The DNR plans to issue Title V Operating Permits for the following facilities. Find permit details at www.iowadnr.gov/titlev-draft.

Jasper County

Arcosa Wind Towers, Inc. – 801 N 19th Ave. E., Newton.

The application was submitted to operate their existing Fabricated Structural Metal Manufacturing facility. The public comment period ends June 5.

Construction Permits

DNR engineers review and issue construction permits to facilities before they build new or modify existing sources of air pollution. The public may review the following air quality construction permits available online at www.iowadnr.gov/airpermitsearch OR through the [EASY Air Public Inquiry Portal](#) and then click the Public Notice tab.

Webster County

Koch Fertilizer – 3162 200th St., Duncombe.

Project No. 21-077, Modify primary reformer, increase throughput. The public comment period ends June 7.