



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Iowa DNR News

Environmental Services

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Heavy rainfall causes wastewater runoff; some city wells could be affected

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SPENCER—Excessive rains over the last few days are causing wastewater to runoff from some cities and livestock facilities in northwest and north central Iowa.

“So far, cities are able to meet the demand for safe drinking water,” said Ken Hessenius, supervisor of the Spencer field office. “So there is no cause for alarm.”

However, flooding is causing many cities to watch flood water levels and prepare to shut down some of their wells if needed. The city of Sheldon has taken four drinking water wells offline because of flooding, but the city is still able to supply residents with water from the unaffected wells.

The DNR is also receiving reports that cities can’t keep up with the inflow of water into wastewater treatment plants, so the cities are discharging untreated or partially treated wastewater.

A series of livestock facilities with National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits have also reported discharges or potential discharges, as allowed under their permits.

“Our northern field offices are assisting the cities in trying to protect drinking water supplies, and providing advice on cleaning and disinfecting wells that become inundated,” said Hessenius.

“We’re also helping feedlot producers, providing advice on how best to handle the discharges,” he said.

“Bottom line, aside from the physical dangers of raging floodwaters, it’s best to keep out of streams right after storms because the heavy rainfall washes all kinds of things off the land, along with diluted wastes from cities and livestock operations that don’t have the storage capacity to handle the rainfall from these massive storms.”