



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Water Summary Update: drought in Iowa largely unchanged in a warmer November

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DES MOINES — With slightly lower than normal precipitation in November, northwest and west central Iowa continue to show signs of significant dryness and drought, according to the latest Water Summary Update.

Precipitation totaled 1.88 inches or 0.17 inch below normal statewide in November. The next three months are the lowest moisture months of the year, averaging a total of only 4.3 inches of precipitation. This average dryness, combined with frozen ground, makes it more difficult to overcome dry conditions during winter.

"We are heading into the driest three months of the year in Iowa, so improvement of hydrologic conditions is less likely," said Tim Hall, DNR's coordinator of hydrology resources. "This means that we may see groundwater conditions in spring 2021 in about the same place we are now."

Drought conditions continued to cover western Iowa through November. At the beginning of the month, severe drought conditions covered 28 percent of western Iowa with a small region of extreme drought in the northwest corner. Overall, 64 percent of Iowa was in some form of drought or dryness. Wetter conditions across southern and eastern Iowa removed most of the abnormally dry conditions in that part of the state, with only a small area in extreme southeast Iowa remaining in dry conditions. As of this report, some form of drought covers 62 percent of the state.

Temperatures were unseasonably warm across Iowa during November, with a statewide average temperature of 53.6 degrees, 7.4 degrees above normal. Shenandoah in Page County reported the month's high temperature of 81 degrees on Nov. 3, 24 degrees above normal. Estherville Municipal Airport in Emmet County reported the month's low temperature of 2 degrees on Nov. 13, 23 degrees below normal.

Streamflow conditions across most of the state remain normal. Flows in the Skunk, Des Moines and Raccoon River basins continue as partially below normal. The Maquoketa River flow remains above normal.

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

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

EASY Air—a success in its first year

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DES MOINES—"Best system in the country," says one EASY Air user, a consultant from Cumming.

As EASY Air, DNR's Environmental Application System, passed its first anniversary Dec. 5, DNR staff looked to evaluate the success of the new online system for submitting air quality permits.

As with any new system, there have been issues to surmount, but DNR focused on listening to users' feedback, meeting customer needs, enhancing the system to meet those needs, and providing training and outreach. The outcome has been inspiring.

"We've been impressed by industry's quick adoption of EASY Air showing that our staff's efforts to educate and meet customer needs has paid off," said Marnie Stein, project manager. In November, 74 percent of construction permits came in using EASY Air's online process. Another 63 percent of Title V permit applications moved from paper to online submittals.

Starting out, about 95 percent of construction permits came in on paper, with a mere 5 percent submitted online.

DNR staff worked to inform permit applicants about the new system, providing six webinar trainings, presentations at industry meetings, tester training and updates at air quality Client Contact meetings—directly reaching more than 500 people. Staff prepared 16 fact sheets, forms or other guidance documents, and informed more than 2,967 subscribers in each of 25 Air Quality Technical newsletters.

As training and information about EASY Air spread, so did its usage. Six months after start up, usage had climbed with 50 percent of all construction permits submitted online.

DNR continued to improve the system, rolling out new features:

- the ability to rescind a construction permit when equipment is taken out of service,
- the ability to submit start of operation and start of construction notices, and
- reducing the information required to request a Title V modification.

With these enhancements in place, by mid-November 2020, Mike Freese, a consultant from Cumming, reached out to Stein, looking for help to meet a looming permit deadline for a client.

At the end of the project, Freese said, “We have found Easy Air to be great ... and very easy to use. Wish other states that we have done recent permitting would transition. Best system in the country.”

DNR’s air quality staff continue working to enhance EASY Air—hoping to make the system better and more comprehensive for those permit applicants using EASY Air and those who haven’t yet tried the online system.

Iowa companies achieve economic and environmental results

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DES MOINES — Project requests are currently being accepted from companies interested in participating in the 2021 Pollution Prevention Intern Program which will run from June 1 to Aug. 13, 2021.

The DNR’s Pollution Prevention (P2) Services program seeks facilities looking for cost-effective ways to cut or eliminate waste from their operations to improve environmental performance and save money. The P2 Intern Program places top engineering students in Iowa businesses to analyze current systems or processes, research alternative technologies and process improvements, and develop strategies to improve efficiency and save money.

“P2, or source reduction, is the first step in achieving true sustainability,” said Jeff Fiagle, the P2 Services Team Lead. “The intern program provides an extra set of hands and eyes to work directly with the company and focus on the process or system, find the inefficiencies, do the research and recommend cost-effective solutions.”

P2 is the process of identifying sources of waste or inefficiencies and stop the cause to avoid excess operating costs, quality control issues and waste disposal.

“This program is an excellent resource to employers in the state of Iowa. Each year, our assigned intern has provided us with results that have helped us improve our sustainability programs and environmental management,” said Brian Herbst, Plant Safety Manager for Smithfield Foods in Sioux City.

Since 2001, Iowa companies have saved more than \$109 million as a result of implementing environmental improvements recommended by interns with the DNR’s

Pollution Prevention Intern Program. Environmental savings associated with these cost savings include:

- 95 billion gallons of water
- 9,965 tons of hazardous waste
- 255,929 tons of solid waste
- 98 million kWh
- 76 million therms
- 385,502.62 MTCO₂e

In addition to the intern program, the P2 Services team provides targeted assessments and technical resources at no cost and delivers two annual environmental workshop series.

Contact the team at P2Services@dnr.iowa.gov to discuss potential projects or request assistance. Project Request forms are available at <http://www.iowap2interns.com>.

Water quality dominates Environmental Protection Commission meeting

MEDIA CONTACT: Jerah Sheets at 515-313-8909 or Jerah.Sheets@dnr.iowa.gov.

DES MOINES— The Environmental Protection Commission will address water quality and solid waste achievements at its Dec. 15 teleconference meeting.

Commissioners will meet by video conference at 9:30 a.m. To join by video, connect with <https://meet.google.com/rqw-nksu-aak>. To join by phone, call 216-505-9946, and enter the conference code of 208540651 followed by the pound (#) sign. The meeting is open to the public. There is no scheduled public participation. Written comments may be submitted up to one day before the meeting to Jerah Sheets at Jerah.Sheets@dnr.iowa.gov or to DNR, 502 E. Ninth St., Des Moines, IA 50319.

At the top of the agenda, intended use plans for the third quarter of the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Fund are up for the commission's approval.

Then DNR staff will present highlights from 10 years of the Environmental Management System's achievements in reducing environmental risks from solid waste management. Commissioners will also receive the EMS annual report, due on Jan. 1.

In other action, commissioners will be asked to approve a contract for groundwater monitoring with the University of Iowa's State Hygienic Laboratory. The contract focuses on groundwater quality at 55 wells in the Dakota Aquifer, which is the primary source of drinking water for farms and municipalities in northwest Iowa. The contract calls for another 54 wells to be monitored for statewide trends in water quality.

Lake water quality monitoring is also up for approval, under a proposed contract with Iowa State University. The contract will fulfill requirements of the federal Clean Water Act, collecting and analyzing water samples from 132 publicly owned lakes. The lakes

are sampled for water chemistry, nutrients, plankton composition, algal toxins and clarity three times during the year.

Find the complete agenda at <http://www.iowadnr.gov/About-DNR/Boards-Commissions>.

Commissioners include: Ralph Lents, Menlo, chair; Harold Hommes, Windsor Heights, vice chair; Bob Sinclair, Sigourney, Secretary; Rebecca Dostal, Traer; Stephanie Dykshorn, Ireton; Amy Echard, Farmersburg; Lisa Gochenour, Logan; Rebecca Guinn, Bettendorf; and Howard Hill, Cambridge. Kayla Lyon is the DNR director.

DNR enforcement actions

MEDIA CONTACT: Tamara McIntosh, DNR, at 515-725-8242
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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.

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

Kris Ehlers

Operate and maintain all structures in compliance with law; develop and implement a Plan of Action for regular inspections of manure storage structures at the facility to avoid future manure releases; and pay a \$2,500 administrative penalty.

Cass, Hamilton, and Jasper Counties

Global Fiberglass Solutions, Inc.

Submit for DNR's approval a binding compliance schedule for the grinding and recycling of stored wind turbine blades (blades); submit to DNR for approval a financial assurance mechanism sufficient to cover the entire cost of removal and proper disposal of the blades currently stored; store no more than 40 additional blades in Iowa until after blade grinding and recycling has begun; and establish no new blade storage sites without DNR's approval.

Dallas County

K and N Holdings, LLC

Comply with all conditions of its National Pollution Discharge Elimination System permit, including its Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan; and pay a \$8,000 administrative penalty.

O'Brien County

Rausch Feedlot Co.

Pay a \$3,000 administrative penalty.

Story County

Larry and Joyce Egemo

Cease illegal disposal of solid waste and illegal open burning of solid waste; properly reuse, recycle, or dispose of solid waste; and pay a \$2,000 administrative penalty.

Air Quality permits under review

MEDIA CONTACT: 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.

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.

Black Hawk County

John Deere Product Engineering Center (PEC) – 3725 Cedar Heights Drive, Cedar Falls. Project No. 20-280.

The current project is to increase the maximum rated fuel capacity descriptions in 18 Liter (L) displacement test cells to reflect the maximum fuel consumption during planned engine testing programs in various test cell permits at the facility. In addition, the use of larger 18 Liter (L) engines was removed from Emission Unit (EU) 2A02 permits, as this unit is not increasing the fuel consumption rate. Finally, EU 2A02 was removed from multiple permits and the nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions bubble limit was lowered to remove NOx lb./hr. emissions of EU 2A02 from the bubble limit. The compliance testing requirements were maintained in the permits since the company has not completed the testing on these units to demonstrate compliance. Comments during the public comment period are limited to these proposed permit amendments. The public comment period ends Jan. 8, 2021.

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.