



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

# EcoNewsWire

Environmental Services

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**September 2, 2021**

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## Water Summary Update: August rainfall brings improvement to drought conditions

**MEDIA CONTACT: Tim Hall, Iowa DNR, 515-452-6633 or [Tim.Hall@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:Tim.Hall@dnr.iowa.gov).**

DES MOINES — August was the first of the summer months to bring above-normal precipitation to the state, providing significant relief to the ongoing drought conditions, according to the latest Water Summary Update.

Average precipitation for August totaled 4.64 inches, or 0.51 inches above normal, with especially high precipitation occurring in northeast Iowa at the end of the month. Monthly precipitation totals ranged from 0.23 inches at Fairfield to 20.65 inches at Ionia, where 11.25 inches of Ionia's total monthly rain fell over a 24-hour period ending on Aug. 29. Despite the above normal rainfall for the month, statewide 2021 rainfall totals are more than four inches below normal for the year.

Streamflow and soil moisture levels have improved over most of the state as well. Drought conditions, as reflected in the U.S. Drought Monitor, have also improved. The area of extreme drought in Iowa has been eliminated, and the area of severe drought has been reduced to less than 13 percent. The total area of the state covered by drought conditions remains above 70 percent, but the severity of the drought conditions has been significantly reduced.

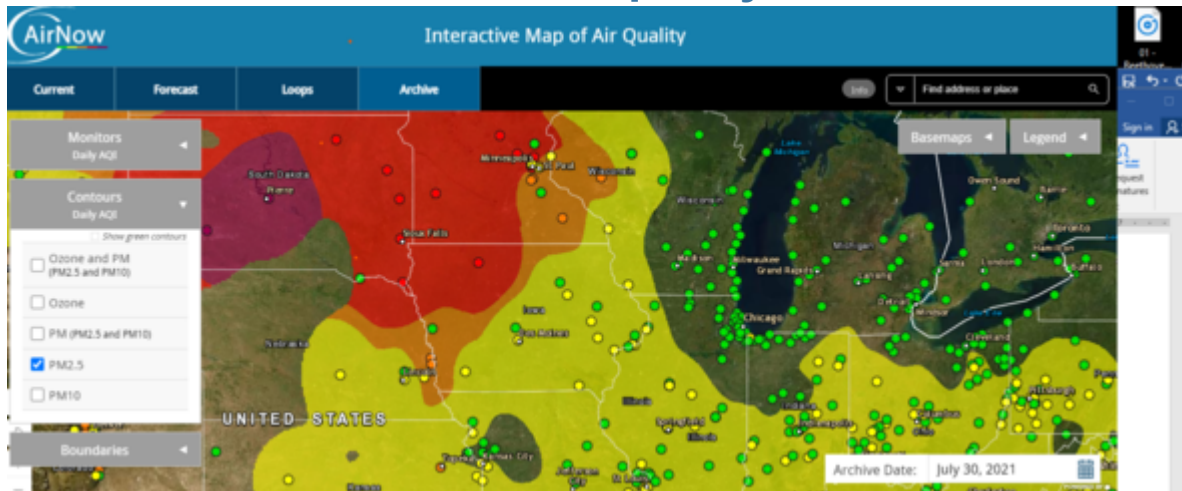
“The above-normal precipitation we received in much of Iowa is exactly what was needed,” according to Tim Hall, Hydrology Resources Coordinator for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. “As we move into the fall season, continued above normal monthly rainfall should continue to improve conditions across the state.”

For a thorough review of Iowa's water resource trends, go to [iowadnr.gov/WaterSummaryUpdate](http://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.

## Wildfire smoke caused air quality exceedances



*This AirNow Interactive map displays monitoring data from July 30 in the Midwest. While the readings are preliminary and unvalidated, AirNow helps people decide how much time to spend outside based on existing air quality. Recently validated data confirms that three cities in northwest Iowa exceeded national air quality standards on July 30.*

**MEDIA CONTACT: Todd Russell, Iowa DNR air quality ambient monitoring, 515-204-3728, [Todd.Russell@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:Todd.Russell@dnr.iowa.gov).**

DES MOINES– Several Iowa monitoring sites recorded exceedances of the National Ambient Air Quality Standard for fine particulate matter last month, including two measurements that were more than twice the national standard.

Smoke from wildfires in the western U.S. and Canada were evident across much of Iowa towards the end of July. While many news outlets reported on smoke, official data from regulatory monitors is only available after laboratory analysis.

Smoke levels were heaviest in northwest Iowa, where DNR monitors measured exceedances at three monitors on July 30, with another exceedance measured in Des Moines on Aug. 1. These exceedances were primarily due to wildfire smoke.

Emmetsburg, Sioux City and Council Bluffs sites recorded 24-hour fine particle levels of 76.5, 79.4 and 42.2 micrograms per cubic meter ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ ) respectively. The Des Moines site recorded a fine particulate concentration of 37.3  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  on Aug. 1. The national standard is 35  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  for a 24-hour average.

When 24-hour fine particulate averages are above the standard, air quality is considered unhealthy for sensitive groups. Averages greater than 55  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  are considered unhealthy, meaning more people may experience health effects. Asthmatics, those with respiratory difficulties or heart disease, the elderly, children and pregnant women are most likely to suffer adverse health effects from inhaling small particles. DNR encourages these groups to limit outdoor activity when air quality pollutants exceed the standard.

To determine particulate levels, Iowa's regulatory monitors collect air samples on filters over a 24-hour period. The State Hygienic Laboratory then processes the filters to determine final concentrations. Iowa's fine particulate matter levels exceeded the national standard twice in February this year.

Find current fire and smoke plumes on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's [National Fire and Smoke map](#). Check EPA's [AirNow](#) for current and predicted air quality in your area.

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## Meeting to discuss statewide bacteria water quality improvement plan

**MEDIA CONTACT: Jim Hallmark at 515-725-8398**  
or [James.Hallmark@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:James.Hallmark@dnr.iowa.gov).

DES MOINES – Iowans interested in the results of a DNR study to improve water quality in lake environments for bacteria can view a presentation on the Iowa DNR's YouTube channel.

Multiple lakes throughout the state are on the state's list of impaired waters for high levels of indicator bacteria. The current study, or DNR water quality improvement plan, builds on a 2020 plan that showed where the bacteria comes from and how these problems can be addressed in three initial study areas. This second phase of the document focuses on Brushy Creek Lake, Lake Ahquabi and Lake Macbride. More lakes will be added to the document as additional information is collected and analyzed.

The plan explores the amounts and contributing source areas of bacteria entering the lake systems and offers potential solutions to reduce those levels and work toward fixing the problem. The document functions as a guide for local resource agencies, partners, stakeholders and residents to improve the lakes and specifically the beach and swimming area.

The presentation is available now at [youtube.com/iowadnr](https://youtube.com/iowadnr) through Oct. 4. The full document can be downloaded on the Iowa DNR's website at the following: <http://www.iowadnr.gov/Environment/WaterQuality/WatershedImprovement/WatershedResearchData/WaterImprovementPlans/PublicMeetingsPlans.aspx>.

Public comments on the plan must be submitted by Oct. 4 via email to [james.hallmark@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:james.hallmark@dnr.iowa.gov).

After gathering Iowans' comments, the DNR will forward the final plan, also called by its technical name of Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL), to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for approval.

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## Air Quality permits under review

**MEDIA CONTACT: Marnie Stein, DNR, at 515-725-9525**  
or [Marnie.Stein@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:Marnie.Stein@dnr.iowa.gov) for Title V permits; or Sarah Piziali, DNR, at 515-725-9549 or [Sarah.Piziali@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto: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](http://www.iowadnr.gov/titlev-draft).

### **Black Hawk County**

John Deere Product Engineering Center – 6725 Cedar Heights Drive, Cedar Falls. The application was submitted to operate their existing farm machinery and equipment facility. The public comment period ends Oct. 2.

### **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](http://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 – 6725 Cedar Heights Drive, Cedar Falls. Project No. 21-235, Increase the maximum fuel amount allowed to be used in P and E Engine Test Cell and its crankcase ventilation. The public comment period starts Sept. 7 and ends Oct. 6.

### **Lee County**

Iowa Fertilizer Company – 3550 180th St., Wever. Project No. 20-126, Modification of the permit for equipment leaks. This project was to correct the calculation of potential emissions from equipment leaks and update Best Available Control Technology requirements. The operating limits and associated record keeping requirements in the permit were also updated. The public comment period ends Oct. 2.