



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

EcoNewsWire

Environmental Services

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Grant allows organizations to expand food storage, reduce food waste

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Iowa families facing food insecurity have more options for their Thanksgiving tables with the help of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources' Food Storage Capacity Grant.

Created in March 2020 at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the grant assists with expanding food storage options for food banks, food pantries and other nonprofits to allow organizations to accept a wider variety of items.

In just the last two years, the DNR's Land Quality Bureau has distributed 118 awards totaling more than \$590,000. Nonprofits are able to put the funds toward ENERGY STAR rated refrigerators and freezers, walk-in coolers or freezers and shelving.

"Thousands of Iowans were facing food insecurity and when COVID hit, the need for food assistance greatly increased," said Thomas Anderson with the DNR's Land Quality Bureau. "This grant was a great opportunity to provide these funds at a time when it was clear that it was needed."

Faith Temple United Pentecostal Church in Dubuque used the funds to fill one of its refrigerators with cheese to distribute and has been able to accept other refrigerated items.

Along with increasing storage space, those tools extend the shelf life of certain items and help with a large part of the DNR's mission - to reduce food waste in Iowa.

According to the 2022 Statewide Materials Characterization Study, food waste is the most wasted material being landfilled by weight. Food waste accounts for about 19.2% of all material



being landfilled – 14.2% of that being loose food and 4.6% packaged.

The grant helps reduce waste by allowing food banks and other nonprofits to accept more meat, dairy, produce and shelf-stable foods and store them for longer. That could include holiday favorites like turkey and basic ingredients like butter and milk.

“We’re adding weeks to shelf life,” Anderson said.

Food waste is an issue that harms environmental, economic and social sustainability in the state and nationwide. Stakeholders with the DNR’s Sustainable Materials Management initiative have identified food

waste as a priority.

The Food Storage Capacity grants are distributed by the DNR’s Land Quality Bureau with funds set aside from the [Solid Waste Alternatives Program](#), which works to reduce the amount of solid waste generated and landfilled in Iowa.

Nonprofit organizations can apply at any time or learn more about the grant at iowadnr.gov under the Waste Planning and Recycling tab.

DNR hires new storm water program coordinator

MEDIA CONTACT: David Schelling, DNR, at 515-217-0875, or david.schelling@dnr.iowa.gov.

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources has a new storm water program coordinator.

David Schelling will start as the new storm water coordinator for the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System section Nov. 11.

Based in Polk City, Schelling has spent the past 17 years working for the state of Iowa - half with the department as an industrial NPDES permit writer and half with the State Hygienic Laboratory in the Limnology department. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree in animal ecology from Iowa State University.

With the hire, the department is looking to put an increased emphasis on outreach to communities and stakeholders. As storm water coordinator, Schelling hopes to increase engagement with Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) communities and improve individual permits to make them easier to understand and implement. Staff will also be working to improve the user experience of the online storm water permitting application.

“I want the role to evolve to a partner to the people utilizing the permits,” he said.

Top three ways to handle fall leaves

DES MOINES — Fall leaves are beautiful – until they pile up in your yard. Don’t send those precious nutrients up in smoke. Instead, put those nuisance leaf piles to good use. Leaves, small branches and other landscape materials can nourish your lawn, garden or community. It’s easy:

1. **Compost.** Composting leaves and food scraps is a great way to turn this waste into garden nutrients. A good compost mix needs both carbon (dead or dry leaves) and nitrogen (green materials like food scraps and grass clippings). Many types and sizes of compost containers are available. For tips on low-tech ways to compost, see a [DNR tutorial](#).
2. **Mulch.** Your lawn will love you if you chop up and leave your leaves in place. Leaves are a free, natural fertilizer that enriches your soil with organic matter. You can use your regular lawn mower. Or, use a mulching lawn mower to shred and mix leaves and grass into your yard.
3. **Bag it.** If you have too many leaves or branches to compost, check with your community to see if they collect yard waste or have a drop-off site. Sometimes there's a fee, but the upside is that anyone can pick up composted materials for their yards or gardens.

For some, burning leaves seems to capture the nostalgic smell of autumn. But breathing [leaf smoke](#) pulls pollutants such as carbon monoxide, soot and toxic chemicals into your lungs. While it may smell good, smoke is especially harmful to children, the elderly, and those with respiratory or heart problems. Turning leaves into nutrients is the healthy way to protect your and your neighbor's lungs.

Water Summary Update: October 2022 was 15th driest on record

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

DES MOINES — The month of October ended as the 15th driest on record, with a deficit of 1.80 inches of rainfall. This marks the seventh month in a row of below-normal rainfall for the state. A wet weekend in early November helped alleviate some drought, but most of the state is still designated as abnormally dry or in some form of drought. Northwest Iowa remains the driest and most challenging part of the state for water resources in 2022.

“The wet October of 2021 was not repeated this year, so unfortunately the state slipped further into drought during October 2022. Nine of the ten months this year have been below normal for rainfall, with only limited improvement seen in the last week,” said Tim Hall, Iowa Department of Natural Resources’ coordinator of hydrology resources. “Wetter conditions are needed to help replenish soil moisture, shallow groundwater, and surface water as we head into the winter months.”

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, IIHR—Hydroscience and Engineering, and the U.S. Geological Survey, in collaboration with Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management Department.

EPC to consider contracts with Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, review wastewater rules

MEDIA CONTACT: Alicia Plathe, DNR, at 515-313-8909 or Alicia.Plathe@dnr.iowa.gov.

DES MOINES— The Environmental Protection Commission will consider several contracts with the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, review reports from the 2022 Statewide Materials Characterization Study and the Environmental Management System Program and decide whether to approve amendments to certain wastewater rules at its Nov. 15 meeting.

The meeting starts at 10 a.m. in DNR's second floor north conference room, 502 E. Ninth St., Des Moines. The public can also attend via video conference or by phone. To join by video, connect with <https://meet.google.com/rzo-uidn-tvg>. To join by phone, call 631-618-4607, and enter the PIN code of 484 733 354 followed by the pound (#) sign. The meeting is open to the public. Written comments may be submitted up to one day before the meeting to Alicia Plathe at Alicia.Plathe@dnr.iowa.gov or to Alicia Plathe at DNR, 502 E. Ninth St., Des Moines, IA 50319.

Commissioners will be asked to approve several contracts with the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship to provide Section 319 funds for water quality-related projects.

In addition, commissioners will hear details of the 2022 Statewide Materials Characterization Study and the Environmental Management System Fiscal Year 2022 Annual Report. Commissioners will also be asked to approve a Notice of Intended Action to consolidate administrative rules related to solid waste and a Final Rule amending certain wastewater rules, including the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System general permits.

Commissioners will be asked to approve these contracts:

- Contract with the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship to support the Project Rathbun Lake Project to improve the watershed and water quality.
- Contract with the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship to support the Iowa Great Lakes Targeted Watershed Project and provide additional funding through Section 319 of the Clean Water Act.
- Contract with the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship to provide funding to support the Silver Creek Water Quality Project, which aims to reduce bacterial loading to the stream.
- An amendment to a contract with the Conservation Learning Group at Iowa State University to complete deliverables for the "Water Quality Matters to Us All: A Vision for the Future" project.
- Contract with Southern Iowa Resource, Conservation and Development Area, Inc., to provide funding for the Adams, Taylor and Union County Stream Sign Project.

Find the complete agenda and more information under [Environmental Protection Commission](#).

Commissioners include: Harold Hommes, chair, Windsor Heights; Stephanie Dykshorn, vice chair, Ireton; Amy Echard, secretary, Farmersburg; Brad Bleam, Rockwell City; Rebecca Dostal, Traer; Patricia Foley, Huxley; Lisa Gochenour, Logan; Ralph Lents, Menlo; and Mark Stutsman, Hills. Kayla Lyon is the DNR director.

Any person participating in the public meeting who has special requirements such as those related to mobility or hearing impairments should contact the DNR or ADA Coordinator at 515-725-8200, Relay Iowa TTY Service 800-735-7942, or Webmaster@dnr.iowa.gov, and advise of specific needs.

Air Quality permits under review

MEDIA CONTACT: Peter Zayudis, DNR, at 515-201-4596
or Peter.Zayudis@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.

Muscatine County

Union Tank Car Co., 2603 Dick Drake Way.

Muscatine Project No. 22-340. The project modifies the air construction permits for the existing Railcar Exterior Grit Booth (EP 1) and the Railcar Rubber Lining Shop (EP 7D). The ambient air assessment based on the proposed PM2.5 limit indicates predicted attainment of the 24-hour PM2.5 National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). The public comment period will run from November 11 – December 13, 2022.

DNR enforcement actions

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

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.

Dubuque County

John McDermott

Pay a \$2,000 administrative penalty.

Kossuth County

Cody Dornbier

Pay a \$3,000 administrative penalty.

Muscatine County

Northern Filter Media, Inc.

Submit air quality construction permit application(s); submit a complete list of equipment and

control equipment that emit to the outside atmosphere; comply with applicable air quality construction permit laws in the future; and pay a \$10,000 administrative penalty.