



IOWA CHAPTER

Soil Erosion Reduces Water Quality

Unfortunately, every year large amounts of soil wash off farmland and construction sites and enter Iowa's streams and lakes. The soil also carries other contaminants with it, including pesticides, fertilizer, bacteria and nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus. This results in destruction of fish spawning areas, the unpleasant growth of algae, destroyed wildlife habitat and poor water quality. And, it turns Iowa's water bodies brown and green instead of clear and clean.

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources funded a study conducted by Iowa State University scientist John Downing of soil loss. Downing reported that a foot of Iowa's topsoil washes off the landscape every 35 years. Prior to European settlement a foot of soil washed away every 431 years.¹

The Iowa Chapter supports the following public policy solutions:

- Funding should be made available for wetland restoration in farming areas, for restoring stream buffers and riparian areas, and for installing grass waterways.
- Federally funded crop insurance and other farm programs should include requirements to implement conservation practices that control soil erosion and the loss of nitrogen and phosphorus from agriculture lands. These solutions include planting cover crops and maintaining grass waterways.
- Ensuring that streams have buffers.
- Restoring destroyed wetlands. Wetlands retain storm water runoff and help to control the discharge of soil and nutrients such as phosphorus and nitrogen into water bodies.
- Increased planting of perennials, such as prairie plants, in ditches to collect and retain nitrogen.
- Efforts to reduce storm water runoff from both urban and rural areas.
- Requirements for installation of silt fences or sediment traps on construction sites to ensure sediment is not carried off the site by stormwater runoff.



Iowans want streams and lakes that are clean,
not brown and green!

¹ Associated Press, "Study finds many Iowa lakes getting dirtier, less healthy", Cedar Rapids Gazette, February 20, 2012