

## Our Water #2 – Testing the Water

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Protecting water quality is a responsibility we all share – but how do we find out what is in the water? This is Prof. Neil Hamilton from Drake University with today's Our Water.

If you live near a stream you may be curious what is in it. This summer I set out to test the water flowing through our farm.

What I discovered was in Iowa we don't make it easy for citizens to test their water. My first stop was the county soil and water conservation district – someone said they could help. But they told me we don't do water testing and suggested contacting Extension. Their answer was the same.

So I did more checking and learned Iowa DNR has had a program called IOWAter to train people to test water quality. Unfortunately, the Legislature has cut DNR funding so much IOWAter is nearly defunct and DNR is now hoping private groups will take it over.

I finally got a nitrate test kit from a friend who manages farmland – the kit was created by the Conservation Districts of Iowa! When I asked CDI why my county didn't know about the test kits – the answer was each district sets its own programs.

I was finally able to test my stream – and the nitrate level was higher than expected - but the experience left me wondering – if water quality is an important issue – why do we make it so hard for people to find out what is in our water?

This has been Prof. Neil Hamilton for “Our Water,” a production of the Drake University Agricultural Law Center.