

Our Water #6 – the Iowa Water Quality Information System
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Have you ever crossed a bridge over an Iowa river and wondered about the quality of the water flowing below? This is Prof. Neil Hamilton from Drake University with today's Our Water.

Even with all the news about water quality, Iowans may not know there is an easy way to learn more about what is in our rivers. Just go to the Iowa Water Quality Information System on the web. The interactive map displays over 60 active water quality monitoring sites. Click on one and you can see in real time the quantity and quality of the water flowing past the monitor. Measurements, such as nitrates, are taken every 15 minutes year-round and past information can be viewed.

The Water Quality Information System is maintained by the staff at the Iowa Flood Center at the University of Iowa. They have installed monitors on many rivers and recently in wetlands constructed to improve water quality.

This is the same Iowa Flood Center the 2017 Legislature tried to kill by removing its funding. Thankfully wiser heads prevailed and the funding was restored – for now. The premise here is simple - Iowans need to have access to accurate information about what is happening to our water if we hope to make it better. The Center's brochure states "farmers need to what know what does and doesn't work, and the public needs to be assured that conservation efforts lead to improved water quality." This statement would make a great goal for Iowa's water quality policy.

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