

# QUENCH

- news by the glassful



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The IRWA Mission: To provide the highest leadership in the support of lowa's water and wastewater industries through the provision of technical assistance, training and education, legislative, regulatory and public affairs, and financing activities.

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## NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING

Dear Member:

Please take notice that the annual meeting of the general membership of the Rathbun Regional Water Association, Inc. will be held at the RRWA Administrative Office and Treatment Plant located at 16166 Hwy J29, Centerville, Iowa. The meeting will be held on February 27, 2025, and called to order at 7:00 p.m.

The purpose of the meeting will be for the regular election of Directors whose terms expire in 2025. Those names and the names of those nominated to fill the vacancies are listed below. No nominations by petition were received in any of these districts.

A report of the financial condition of the Association and the primary activities of the Association during 2024 will be presented.

Members then may consider the transaction of any other business which may come before the annual meeting.

Each member present at the annual meeting will be entitled to cast one vote for each directorship to be voted upon, and one vote for any other issue that may come before the members.

Those board members whose terms expire in 2025 are: Randy Eddy and Ken Wuthrich.

Those nominated to fill the position of Directors whose terms expire are:

District 1: Randy Eddy – 23246 500th Street, Centerville, IA 52544

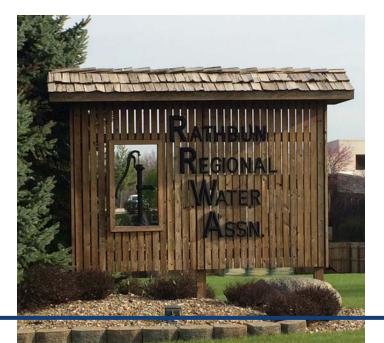
Dollen

District 4: Ken Wuthrich – 21177 Mallard Avenue, Bloomfield, IA 52537

The nominees receiving the most votes in each district where vacancies exist will be declared to have been elected.

Doug Goben

Secretary/Treasurer Rathbun Regional Water Association, Inc.



#### RRWA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Randy Eddy CHAIRPERSON
Denny Amoss VICE CHAIRPERSON
Doug Goben SECRETARY & TREAS.

Curt Frank Garry Schiller Charla Warner Ken Wuthrich

#### BIOGRAPHY OF NOMINEES

#### **DISTRICT 1**

Randy Eddy was nominated and is listed on the ballot for the Board of Directors position in District 1 of Rathbun Regional Water Association (RRWA). Randy, along with his wife Denise, reside at 23246 500th Street, Centerville, Iowa. Randy and Denise have two daughters, Shannon and Rachel. Shannon, her husband Jon Piche, and their sons, Whitt (4) and Archer (1½) live in Rochester, Minnesota. Rachel and her husband, Ethan Moorman, live in Iowa City and are expecting their first child in January. Randy is a lifelong farmer and, in the past, enjoyed being involved as a member of the Appanoose County 4-H Committee, Appanoose County Fair Board, Iowa Cattlemen's Association, and Centerville United Methodist Church. Randy and Denise were recipients of the Iowa Cattlemen's Association 2018 Environmental Stewardship Award and were also the 2012 recipients of the Wallace's Farmer Master Farmer Award. Randy has been on the Board of Directors at RRWA for close to 20 years and states his involvement has been a great learning experience as well as rewarding.

#### **DISTRICT 4**

Ken Wuthrich was born and raised in Bloomfield, Iowa and graduated from Davis County High School in 1974. He currently lives in Bloomfield where he has owned/operated a farm for the past 43 years raising organic corn, soybeans, and wheat as well as non-organic crops and cattle. Ken and his wife, Lora, have three children: Kristin Wettstein (Phil) of Eureka, Illinois; Eric (Katie) of Burlington, Iowa; and Kari of Peoria, Illinois and six grandchildren. He currently serves as the vice president of the Davis County School Support Foundation, and he is an active member of the Apostolic Christian Church. Ken has served on the Davis County Hospital Board (President), Davis County School Board (President), Davis County Public Health Board, Davis County Assessors Board, and the Iowa State University Southeast Iowa Research Board (President). He has always enjoyed helping others and worked as an EMT for more than 30 years before retiring in 2015. Ken also enjoys reading, fishing and volunteering with the Midwest Food Bank (Florida Division) where he spends a few months during the winter. He firmly believes in honesty, integrity and always going the extra mile for his community and service to others. Ken greatly enjoys being involved with RRWA and has served on the Board of Directors since 2018.



#### RRWA's Extensive Service Territory

Rathbun Regional Water Association (RRWA) is the largest rural water system in Iowa and one of the largest systems in the United States. RRWA's service territory includes all or parts of 18 counties and 56 communities in Iowa and Missouri. The Association's distribution system has 7,000 miles of water mains, 38 water towers, 42 pump stations, and 26,000 service connections. RRWA serves drinking water to 100,000 people across its service territory.

#### RRWA's Team of Area Representatives

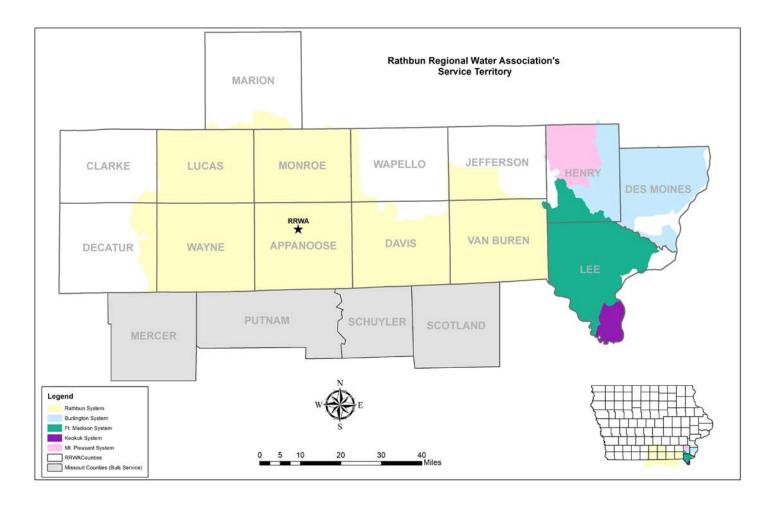
RRWA's area representatives are the frontline field staff when it comes to maintaining the Association's distribution system and addressing customers' water service needs. Area representatives are licensed water distribution operators certified by the lowa Department of Natural Resources. RRWA's team of 11 area representatives and the counties they primarily serve are identified below.

RRWA Area Representatives	Primary Counties Served
Andrew Hunold	Lee
Andy Weldon	Henry
Austin Green	Lucas, Marion, Wayne
Cody West	Appanoose, Davis, Wapello
Cody Heidenwith	Appanoose, Marion, Monroe, Wapello
Justin Knapp	Appanoose
Kolton Horn	Jefferson, Van Buren
Sam Banks	Clarke, Decatur, Lucas, Wayne
Taylor Haynes	Des Moines
Thad Gaylord	Des Moines, Lee
TJ Campbell	Davis, Van Buren









#### Area Representatives Wear Many Hats for RRWA

Every day, RRWA's area representatives are responsible for completing a variety of essential activities. These activities include:

- Meeting with customers to design and provide cost estimates for the installation of new water services.
- Locating and marking water mains to prevent damage during excavation activities.
- · Installing, repairing, and replacing water meters and remotes.
- Monitoring water towers and pump stations to ensure proper operation.
- $\boldsymbol{\cdot}$  Responding to customers' questions about water quality, leaks, and high usage.
- · Collecting water samples and flushing mains to ensure water safety and quality.
- $\boldsymbol{\cdot}$  Disconnecting and reconnecting water service for idle accounts, transfers, and nonpayment.
- Assisting construction crews to install and repair water mains, valves, and other system components.
- Collecting digital location information of newly installed mains and services for system mapping.

In addition, RRWA's area representatives are on call at any time, all year round for emergencies to ensure the Association is a reliable supplier of drinking water.

#### Area Representatives are Key to RRWA's Success

The work ethic of RRWA's area representatives reflects the Association's commitment to our customers. Area representatives make it a daily priority to answer customers' questions, address their needs, and resolve any issues with their water service. At the same time, area representatives take immense pride in ensuring RRWA's water distribution system mains, towers, pump stations, and service connections are well-maintained and operating properly. Whenever you see RRWA's area representatives, you can be certain they are doing everything possible to deliver quality, reliable, and affordable drinking water and to provide outstanding service to all the Association's customers.





In 1968, farm and community leaders from Appanoose, Lucas, Monroe, and Wayne Counties came together to address the need for a reliable supply of quality drinking water in southeast lowa. Joe Hollinrake, a lifelong resident of Monroe County, was one of those leaders. As a farmer and livestock producer, Joe understood the importance of a dependable source of water for the future of rural lowa. Four years later, the dedication and hard work of Joe and his colleagues led to the organization of Rathbun Regional Water Association (RRWA). At that time in 1972, Joe began his many years of service on the RRWA Board of Directors.

RRWA's success can be attributed in a large part to the vision and wisdom of individuals who serve on the Association's Board of Directors. Joe was a steadfast leader on the RRWA Board guiding the Association as it developed into the largest rural water system in Iowa. During Joe's tenure, RRWA expanded its service territory from four counties to all or parts of 18 counties in Iowa and Missouri. Joe and his fellow board members oversaw the construction of two water treatment plants, dozens of water towers and pump stations, and thousands of miles of water mains that now serve drinking water to 100,000 people.

In 2014, Joe retired from the RRWA Board of Directors having provided 42 years of leadership, serving 20 of those years as Chairman. Joe was inducted into the lowa Rural Water Association Hall of Fame in 2014 in recognition of the instrumental role he played in ensuring the

availability of rural water to improve the lives of lowans. John Glenn, former longtime Chief Executive Officer of RRWA recalls that Joe was a very thoughtful and steady leader who was extremely proud of everything the Association accomplished. John also remembers that Joe was very appreciative of receiving water service from RRWA on his properties in 1977. Joe passed away at his home on September 11, 2024, following a brief illness. The RRWA Board, staff, and customers owe an enormous debt of gratitude to Joe for his decades of service.



Joe Hollinrake (standing, 3<sup>rd</sup> from left) with other early leaders of RRWA in 1972.

# ATTENTION Landowners in the Rathbun Lake Watershed

#### New source of assistance to protect Rathbun Lake

Landowners in the Rathbun Lake watershed now have a new source of assistance to help them install conservation practices on their land. This assistance is available through NRCS's Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). The RCPP combines local, state, and federal funds to help landowners pay for conservation practices such as terraces, ponds, cover crops, grassed waterways, and pasture and hay planting. Landowners who install these practices will help protect water quality in Rathbun Lake by reducing the sediment and phosphorus carried in runoff from land in the watershed.

#### Landowners should sign up now for assistance

Hundreds of landowners have already installed conservation practices on their

land in the watershed to help protect Rathbun Lake. Landowner demand is high for assistance from the RCPP and other programs. Strong landowner participation in these programs helps to ensure their continued funding. Landowners in the Rathbun Lake watershed area of Appanoose, Clarke, Decatur, Lucas, Monroe, and Wayne

Counties who are interested in applying for assistance to install conservation practices should contact their local Soil and Water Conservation District office.

Learn more about the Protect Rathbun Lake RCPP Project on the Iowa NRCS website at https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/iowa/RCPP.



# RRWA SHOWS APPRECIATION TO STAFF

In September, employees and their families enjoyed the annual company picnic, with a delicious lunch, fun activities for all ages, and exciting giveaways and prize drawings. Also at the picnic, employees were recognized for their years of service to the Association. In 2024, 14 employees were honored for a combined 185 years of service. The successful growth of RRWA

depends a great deal on the hard work and commitment of our employees.

#### 5 Years of Service

Kolton Horn, Field Area Representative Justin Green, Equipment Operator Jared Brown, Control Systems Specialist Curt Frank, Board of Director Charla Warner, Board of Director

#### 10 Years of Service

James Brown, Treatment Plant Operator Chad Butler, Treatment Plant Operator Chad Krull, Treatment Plant Operator Denny Amoss, Board of Director Doug Goben, Board of Director

#### 20 Years of Service

leff Shultz, Water Distribution Support

#### 25 Years of Service

Thad Gaylord, Field Area Representative

#### 30 Years of Service

Kelly Roberts, Construction Foreman

#### 35 Years of Service

Owen Rossman, Field Area Representative After 35 years of dedicated service, Owen retired in the fall of 2024 to embark on a well-deserved next chapter of life. Congratulations to Owen! Owen's RRWA family misses him greatly!





Commercial: When the woman enters the frame, she is wearing a bright-red dress. She stares at the camera (there is a camera), then at the travelers at an airport, then at the camera again. And then she speaks. "It looks like some folks have had it," she says. Bottled water contents and costs are "ridiculous," she says. "I know, so frustrating," she says.

Luckily, there's a cure: Tap Water

You'd be "a lot happier" with it, she says. "It's so easy! Just go to any sink or water fountain and drink as much as you want," she says. "Now that's more like it," she states after she takes a sip from a beautiful, crystal clear glass of water. The people instantly throw their bottled water in the recycle bins and line up to fill their refillable water bottles at a water fountain. While standing in line they start envisioning the money they will save. Before leaving, the woman smiles — then gives the camera one last look. "What's in your water?" she asks. And then she is gone.



Bottled water holds the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest share of the beverage market in the U.S., ahead of milk and beer. The only thing Americans drink more than bottled water is soda (including energy drinks, sparkling waters, etc.), which is consumed about twice as often. But do we really know what's contained in that convenient plastic bottle? Is it truly the best option for water drinking enthusiasts?

#### Bottled Water vs Tap Water

It's common knowledge that drinking water offers plenty of health benefits, but if you prefer the kind that comes in plastic bottles, you might not be choosing the best option for your body — not to mention the negative bottled water costs might have on your wallet. Drinking bottled water is estimated to be 2,000 times more expensive than drinking it straight from the tap. As of July 2024, a gallon of bottled water averaged \$9.47 while tap water holds steady at just under one cent per gallon. Keep in mind that figure does not include add-ons such as wastewater costs and trash collection which are often seen on a utility bill.

Many factors lead to the high cost of bottled water. There is the cost of treatment, production, materials, and packaging. Many bottled water companies use a filtration process known as reverse osmosis, as well as enhancing their water products with minerals and flavors. And while, yes, they sometimes taste good, is bottled water the safer, healthier option?

You should know that water utilities in Iowa are required to follow strict sampling and testing procedures. Tap water is regulated by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The EPA is responsible for identifying and setting legal limits for contaminants in drinking water under the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA). Currently, the EPA has set legal limits on over 90 contaminants, including heavy metals such as lead and copper, and microbes such as E. coli. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources oversees all aspects of utilities' processes and requires systems to license their operators and ensures they attend continuing education classes to stay up to date on industry changes. The Iowa Rural Water Association is one of the top continuing education issuing agencies in the state for Water Distribution, Water Treatment and Wastewater operator licensing.

There are a few regulations put upon bottled water companies by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), but utility regulations from the EPA are much more stringent and are updated more frequently in response to emerging contaminants. Bottled water may also harbor very small pieces of plastic called microplastics. Research suggests that microplastics act as endocrine-disrupting chemicals, promoting inflammation in the body which results in various negative health effects. Microplastics can accumulate over time in vital organs such as the liver, kidneys, and intestines resulting in the disruption of your organs' proper functions.

#### **Environmental Impact**

One more thing to consider when purchasing bottled water is the environmental impact. Do we really want all those plastic bottles in our landfill? It's estimated that it takes as long as 450 years for a single plastic bottle to biodegrade. It has been reported many times over that plastic bottles are rarely recycled and that most actually end up in the landfill.



Some say up to 80% of plastic bottle purchases in America are thrown in the trash. Bottled water production also takes a toll on the world's oil supply, with one study estimating that it takes as much as 50 million barrels of oil to produce plastic water bottles each year. Reusable water bottles can cut down on the environmental strain with the added benefit of helping your wallet. You'll be helping Mother Earth in the process of saving your pennies.

#### Filtration

If you're a diehard water-drinker but still have concerns about tap water taste and/or quality, investing in a quality filtration system is an option. In home options such as a carbon filter or a reverse osmosis system can help remove some contaminants, and smaller filters such as fridge filters help primarily with taste–although it's important to remember that taste is largely subjective. If you do add filtration, it's likely to be cheaper than bottled water in the long run.

#### It's Personal

The Iowa Rural Water Association holds many training events throughout the year for water and wastewater operators including three large technical and trade conferences. IRWA also works alongside operators at their own utilities offering technical assistance and problem solving. Utilities around the state implement source water protection plans and look to protect and preserve the water in lowa's aquifers and surface water sources every single day. There are grants and programs that encourage lowa farmers to think outside the box when it comes to their farm ground. From creating runoff solutions, no till farming, and new ways to view weed and pest control options, lowans are looking to protect our aquifers, lakes, rivers, and streams.

We are passionate about water quality in lowa and there is a reason for that. Drinking water produced in lowa goes out to our family and friends and there is no greater cause than "Quality on Tap" for those we love. What's in YOUR water? You can confidently have faith in your faucet. Drink local—Get it From the Tap!

#### References:

https://waterfilterguru.com/cost-of-bottled-water/

https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/tap-water-vs-bottled-water#bottled

# So, You Wanna Be a Source Water Protection Specialist IRWA Water Protection Specialist IRWA Source Water Protection Specialist IRWA Water Protection Specialist IRWA

So, you wanna be a water operator? — Or maybe you don't, or maybe you have no idea what a water operator does — or even is. Wanting to be a water operator isn't a popular career path for young people; More popular choices seem to be electrician, welder, chemist, plumber, mechanic, public health professional, etc. But what if I told you there's an occupation that lets you be all those things — you guessed it, water operator. Perhaps first, the more important question is "what exactly is a water operator?"

A water or wastewater "operator" is an individual who is responsible for maintaining day-to-day operations of water and wastewater treatment facilities, as well as distribution and collection systems. In short, they ensure that when a faucet is turned on the water is safe to drink. In many ways, water and wastewater operators are the individuals at the forefront of public health; operating water treatment plants, troubleshooting and making repairs, and ensuring water and wastewater meets public health and environmental compliance standards. Being an operator requires certification and licensure, but there is no formal education or experience requirement for many positions. So maybe now you're wondering — how do I become a water operator?

I'll start with a bit about how I entered the industry. While studying at the University of Northern Iowa, I took a summer job with the City of Fort Atkinson, my hometown. I mowed lawns, cleaned buildings, and, among numerous other things, helped with water and wastewater duties. Before my position with the city, I never really considered how my degree in Earth Science could connect to a career in the water industry. A few years and a few courses in hydrogeology later, I started here at IRWA as Source Water Protection Specialist, and I have since obtained my water distribution and water treatment operator licenses.

My position at IRWA has afforded me the opportunity to meet operators from all over lowa, where I've learned that much like myself, many in the industry didn't set out to be water operators. Often, they enter the field mid-career, transitioning from one of the trades mentioned earlier. Whether it be locating and fixing water leaks, wiring in a new pump, or general plant repair, backgrounds in fields such as plumbing, electrical work, and construction have direct applications in the industry. Take for example, Matt Bullerman with the City of Calmar who I interviewed for this article. Matt entered the water industry in his late twenties. Before working as an operator, Matt was an electrician. When asked what specifically appealed to him about being an operator, Matt responded, "working for the city allows me some flexibility in my hours, which gives me the opportunity to spend more time farming and with my family, while still being able to use my background as an

electrician." Matt has now been with the city of Calmar for 14 years. He cites those factors, along with "the excellent benefits of being a city employee" for his longevity in the field.

Don't take a later entry into the field as a negative thing, as many individuals who become water and wastewater operators stay in the industry until retirement. In fact, we're currently experiencing what we call the "gray wave" as many licensed operators are approaching retirement and there is an urgent need for new people to enter the field. The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics projects over 10,000 yearly vacancies nationwide in the water and wastewater industry for the next 10-years. In response to the need for skilled water and wastewater operators, many community colleges in lowa now offer technical programs to train new operators, and many water and wastewater systems will support new hires as they work toward getting their licenses.

While the role of a water and wastewater operator might not be the first career choice that comes to mind, it is an incredibly important and rewarding profession. Water and wastewater operators are essential to ensuring safe, clean water and wastewater — protecting both public health and the environment. Whether they're early in their career or transitioning from trades such as plumbing, electrical work, or construction, many individuals find long-term satisfaction in the water industry. Factoring this plus good benefits, flexibility, and an industry-wide need for new operators makes it a great field to consider. So, whatever your background and skillset, there's a place in the water industry for you.



Matt Bullerman and Aaron Schroeder

# RRWA Customer Reminders

- "Like" and "Follow" RRWA on Facebook "Rathbun Regional Water Association – RRWA" where you can find important information regarding your water utility.
- Make sure the frost lid inside your meter pit and the lid on top of your meter pit fit properly to **prevent the water lines and meter from freezing.**
- Help keep the meter pit area clean and free of debris so RRWA can perform routine maintenance checks.
- Want to know **how to determine if water is going through the meter?** Traditional self-read meters have a red dial that turns, and smart meters display the word "FORWARD".
- **Protect your remote or smart meter antenna** to avoid unnecessary charges for recurring preventable damages to RRWA equipment.
- For traditional self-read meters, please **read the meter in the pit periodically and compare it to the remote reading.** Insects or environmental conditions can affect the accuracy of the remote.
- Always report to RRWA anytime you believe the meter or remote are not working correctly.

- Services are subject to disconnection for non-payment by the first day of the following month after a payment is past due.
- A \$250 tampering fee plus material and labor can be assessed for any fraudulent tampering to RRWA property such as water meters or meter pits.
- Sign-in to your smart meter account at www.waterscope.us (Metron/WaterScope) or www.beaconama.net (Beacon/EyeOnWater) to make sure your smart meter is registered to receive leak notifications.
- For AutoPay or Epay payments: PayPal may appear or be included in the description on your bank or credit card statement next to your payment amount. RRWA uses Braintree, a division of PayPal, Inc., to securely process automatic or online payments.
- **Report a verifiable leak or an exposed pipe** in a ditch or stream on a RRWA waterline and receive a \$25 leak report reward.
- RRWA staff can be reached at 1-800-233-8849 from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday and 24/7 for emergencies at 1-800-233-8849.

## **ATTENTION**

#### **Public Notices Sent to RRWA Customers**

Did you receive a public notice email or letter from RRWA about your water service line? RRWA recently sent public notices to customers as part of the Association's lead service line inventory. This notice informs customers that RRWA has not been able to determine



their water service line material. The notice also asks customers to help RRWA identify their service line material. RRWA is required to obtain this information about our customers' water service lines.

#### Help RRWA Identify Your Service Line Material

If you received a public notice email or letter, please help RRWA identify your water service line material. Please visit the Lead Service Line Information page on RRWA's website at https://www.rrwa.net/lead-service-line-information.aspx . You can use the Lead Service Line Inventory Map or Lead Service Line Survey on that page to provide information about your water service line material. You can also call RRWA at 1-800-233-8849 to provide this information to Association staff.

Thank You for Helping RRWA!



## MORE THAN 9,000 SMART METERS, REALLY? WOW!!

That's right, RRWA has installed more than 9,000 smart meters for our customers!

Why do so many RRWA customers want a smart meter?

#### Here are the TOP THREE REASONS:

RRWA staff will install a new Metron smart meter for customers for **FREE**.

Smart meters help customers avoid costly water bills by sending *LEAK NOTICES*.

Customers who have smart meters save time and money by using **AUTO-PAY**.

Join the thousands of RRWA customers who enjoy these benefits of smart meters.

Call RRWA Now for Your Free Smart Meter! 1-800-233-8849





Rathbun Regional Water Association, Inc. 16166 Hwy J29 Centerville, IA 52544 1-800-233-8849 www.rrwa.net

# WATER MATTERS

## Source Water Protection

#### What is Source Water?

Source water is untreated water from surface and ground sources. Groundwater is water from rain or snow that seeps below the ground and pools in cracks and spaces beneath the earth's surface. It is a valuable resource as it makes up for over 75% of lowa's drinking water. Groundwater supplies are not endless and can be depleted. Human activities can pollute groundwater so severely that the damage may be very difficult and costly to clean up. An lowa drought can also create source depletion.

#### What is Source Water Protection?

Source Water Protection is simply protecting your source of drinking water from contamination or overuse. To ensure water quality and quantity is maintained, managing various influences should be made a priority. Potential negative influences on your drinking water source include natural and human activities.

## Why do we need Source Water Protection?

Many public water supplies in lowa depend on ground water resources, known as aquifers, to meet the needs of their customers. Protection of these aquifers helps ensure that both current and future users can count on clean and safe water. Protection can:

- Ensure that enough safe, clean drinking water is available for our communities.
- Protect current and future sources of Municipal drinking water.
- · Safeguard our health and the health of our families.
- Prevent costly remediation efforts to your utility system and increases in utility bills.

## What can I do to help protect the source of water?

Recognize that many of our actions can potentially impact our water supplies.

• Don't dump old lawn chemicals, gas or oil on the ground.

- Encourage your local county and city governments to adopt source water protection measures.
- Encourage your utility to contact the lowa Rural Water Association for assistance in creating a Source Water Protection Plan, if they haven't already.
- Have them visit www.lowaRuralWater. org for contact information.
- Support source water protection efforts by your local public water supply.

To learn more about source water/ground water protection, contact your local public water supplier or check the websites listed below.

- lowa Department of Environment & Natural Resources https://www.iowadnr.gov/
   Environmental-Protection
- U. S. Environmental Protection Agency www.epa.gov/sourcewaterprotection/ local-source-water-protection-measures

Safe, clean drinking water: it's everyone's responsibility.