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## Out of Sight, Out of Mind The Problem of Stormwater Pollution

MOUNT VERNON, Iowa (Aug. 9, 2007) – Stormwater management in Iowa needs a fresh focus on water quality, not just coping with the volume running off our streets, rooftops and landscaped lawns, according to a new report.

“The pressures on Iowa’s natural resources have changed much since the 19<sup>th</sup> century,” said Stacie Johnson, an environmental consultant and co-author of the report for the nonpartisan Iowa Policy Project (IPP). “The movement of Iowans to the cities has changed the way our land handles rainfall, and this has consequences for the environment.”

The report notes the “out-of-sight, out-of-mind” focus of past stormwater management has changed in the past decade. Moving water quickly out of developed areas has given way to strategies of controlled release using stormwater detention basins.

“The change in how fast water drains to streams has not solved the stormwater problem. In fact, it may harm water quality,” said David Osterberg, IPP executive director and another co-author.

“For one, rainfall can’t soak into the ground the way it would on green fields. For another, pollutants from urban development – oil, grease, chemicals, sediment – are not addressed by detention, and they can be released quickly into nearby bodies of water without treatment.”

Author Pat Sauer added that the majority of Iowans live in urban areas.

“We need to understand the direct connection between the rain water that drains off our roofs, driveways, sidewalks and streets and the impacts on local streams,” said Sauer, stormwater coordinator for the Iowa Association of Municipal Utilities.

The report compiles findings and recommendations from Johnson, Sauer, Osterberg and IPP’s Teresa Galluzzo. Both Johnson and Sauer are part of the Iowa Stormwater Education Program.

The report recommends that the state lead by example on stormwater, by requiring best-management practices on state-related construction projects, helping communities meet requirements and enforcing requirements.

It also recommends that revenue derived from stormwater and environmental protection permits and fees be directed to solutions for those challenges.

The report also recommends that the state hire urban conservation specialists to help landowners and communities with stormwater issues.

"Support is needed for educational efforts and implementation of best-management practices in urban watersheds," Sauer said.

The Iowa Policy Project (IPP) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit research and public policy analysis organization based in Mount Vernon. IPP reports on budget issues, job and income trends, and renewable energy and the environment are available on the web at <http://www.iowapolicyproject.org>.

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