



# The Iowa Policy Project

20 E Market St. • Iowa City, Iowa 52245 • (319) 338-0773  
www.iowapolicyproject.org

---

FOR RELEASE MONDAY, MAY 21, 2012, 9:45 A.M.

NOTE: Full report is here: <http://www.iowapolicyproject.org/2012docs/120521-climate-water.pdf>.

CONTACT: Mike Owen (319) 338-0773, [ipp@Lcom.net](mailto:ipp@Lcom.net)

## Advice Ignored — Will Flooding Follow? Lawmakers Shun Recommendations to Deal With Climate Change

IOWA CITY, Iowa (May 21, 2012) — Iowa policymakers are ignoring important public policy recommendations to cope with the reality of climate change, and doing so at the peril of communities across the state, researchers said today.

A new report from the nonpartisan Iowa Policy Project (IPP) noted poor state policy attention to well-researched strategies to mitigate flooding issues and promote better watershed management in the face of climate change and greater flooding threats.

“Iowans are going to see increased problems with water quality and quantity, in the form of flood damage, unless we make changes,” said lead author Brian McDonough, an IPP research intern and lead author of the report, with IPP research associate Will Hoyer and executive director David Osterberg.

“This will be a task for state and local policy makers, as well as the farm community,” he said. “As rainfall events get bigger with the potential for greater and more expensive damage, it becomes imperative to keep water on the land where it falls than to let it run off and create dangerous floods. Tools are available to deal with this.”

Many past infrastructure engineering projects, however, run contrary to that goal. Agricultural sub-surface drain tiling, the straightening and channeling of streams and rivers, urban storm sewers — all of these were done with the idea of getting rid of water as quickly as possible.

“What is needed now is a rethinking of those systems and an increase in infiltration that allows water to be absorbed and stored in the ground. That is occurring in some places,” McDonough said.

The report cited the work of three committees set up by lawmakers — the Iowa Climate Change Advisory Council, the Iowa Climate Change Impacts Committee and the Water Resources Coordinating Council. The first gave way to the second committee, whose findings thus far do not appear to be receiving consideration.

Four key recommendations of the third group have been rejected and few have been adopted.

“While legislators are not under an obligation to act upon advisory groups’ recommendations, these groups were asked for their advice and expertise. It is hard to believe that serious consideration of their findings would result in so little public policy,” said Osterberg, a former state representative.

Osterberg pointed in particular to the 2011 report of the Iowa Climate Change Impact Committee, which quantified the effects of climate change and made broad recommendations to consider the financial and social impacts of climate change.

“These are the experts, yet it is not clear such impacts are being considered in Iowa public policy. We should be paying attention to the science and applying it on the ground,” Osterberg said.

The researchers noted Iowa media have been reporting on water issues — the Gazette in Cedar Rapids has made watershed management and stormwater management the featured topic of editorials on its last two Sundays. Many Iowa media in this past week reported on the findings of a Rocky Mountain Climate Organization/Natural Resources Defense Council report that showed the frequency of heavy rainfalls in Iowa have increased by 32 percent in 50 years.

The Iowa Policy Project is a nonpartisan, nonprofit public policy research organization based in Iowa City. IPP reports are online at [www.iowapolicyproject.org](http://www.iowapolicyproject.org), and IPP staff perspectives may be found at [www.iowapolicypoints.org](http://www.iowapolicypoints.org).

# # # # #