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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
February 2, 2005

## **UPPER IOWA RIVER WATERSHED ALLIANCE REPORTS WATER QUALITY RESULTS**

The Upper Iowa River Watershed Alliance, a group of natural resource professionals in Northeast Iowa and Southeast Minnesota, would like to announce the completion of water quality testing in the Upper Iowa River and its tributaries for 2004. The results of the water testing are being used to identify areas requiring special attention to improve water quality in the region.

The Upper Iowa water sampling program tests water samples on a monthly basis from April through October. Samples were collected from 28 sites within the watershed, 2 from the Upper Iowa River and 26 from tributaries that flow into the river. Each sample is tested for nitrates and nitrites, *E. coli* bacteria, ammonia nitrogen and total phosphate. Locations upstream from Decorah are also tested for atrazine. Samples are shipped to the Iowa Hygienic Lab at the University of Iowa for analysis.

2004 water sampling showed nitrate levels in some tributaries as high as 25 mg/L, most of which were near or above all-time sampling highs. The highest levels were recorded at locations in the western portion of the Upper Iowa River Watershed during the high rainfall periods in the spring of 2004. Nitrate levels in the Upper Iowa River at Decorah had a geometric mean of 6.28 mg/L. The EPA's drinking water standard for nitrates is 10 mg/L.

Bacteria levels, specifically *E. coli*, in the Upper Iowa River Watershed varied greatly across sampling location and date. In the Upper Iowa River at Decorah the geometric mean was measured at 87 colonies per 100 mL. The State of Iowa standard for recreational use waters is 126 colonies per 100mL. Continued sampling of the Upper Iowa River and its tributaries is necessary to acquire a true evaluation of water quality.

The Upper Iowa River Watershed Alliance has been collecting water quality data periodically since 1999. Recent and historic water quality data on the Upper Iowa River and its tributaries can be viewed at the Upper Iowa River Watershed website at [www.northeastiowarcd.org/uirw](http://www.northeastiowarcd.org/uirw).

The 2004 water sampling program was made possible by donations from private individuals, the Palisades Chapter of the Izaak Walton League, the Fred Carlson Company, Winneshiek County Conservation, Conservation Districts of Iowa, Lime Springs Fish and Game, Craft's at Bluffton, the City of Decorah, Winneshiek County, McKnight Foundation, and sales of the Upper Iowa River Canoe Guide.

The Upper Iowa River Watershed Project is coordinated through Northeast Iowa RC&D. This project has been funded in part by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources through a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency under the Federal Non-point Source Management Program (Section 319 of the Clean Water Act) and has been funded wholly or in part by the United States Environmental Protection Agency under assistance agreement CP

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