

318 2nd Ave. N • Mount Vernon, IA 52314

[www.iowapolicyproject.org](http://www.iowapolicyproject.org)

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CONTACT: Mike Owen (319) 338-0773, (319) 331-1287 or [ipp@Lcom.net](mailto:ipp@Lcom.net).

## Managing Wastewater Better, and Affordably New Report Offers Hope for Small Iowa Communities

IOWA CITY, Iowa (Oct. 7, 2005) – Alternatives to address serious water pollution caused by poor wastewater management can be more affordable than conventional approaches for communities with inadequate or without sewer systems, a new report noted Friday.

Technologies cited in the report for the Iowa Policy Project (IPP) include alternative sewers, constructed wetlands, enhanced pond systems, media filters, drip irrigation, and effluent reuse.

“These technologies offer the best solution to providing cost-effective wastewater services to the small communities left behind by more conventional engineering approaches,” said co-author Scott Wallace, a wastewater treatment system designer from Minnesota.

“This is important, because the state of Iowa has over 700 unsewered communities,” Wallace added. “Iowans might be surprised to hear that communities are discharging some 1.2 billion gallons of inadequately treated sewage each year. This poses great risks to human health, aquatic life and the environment.”

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has pegged costs of upgrading 334 existing wastewater facilities at between \$790 million and \$956 million using conventional technology, and of addressing unsewered communities at between \$214 million and \$322 million.

“As the DNR has acknowledged, these costs can be lowered by using alternative technologies,” Wallace said.

Other authors of the report include Gene Parkin, an engineering professor at the University of Iowa; Brent Ballavance, an engineer with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency in Duluth; and Ryan Brandt, director of operations for a Minnesota firm that supervises operators and managers of wastewater treatment systems.

Among recommendations in the report:

- Change permitting procedures to be more accepting of new technology, which will require better training and academic support for DNR staff.

- Improve monitoring of single-home treatment systems with inspections whenever a home is sold, as is required in Minnesota and Wisconsin and in 15 counties in Iowa, and encourage soil-infiltration approaches to wastewater treatment.

- Offer engineering courses covering design alternatives at Iowa State University and the University of Iowa, and better tie academics to the professional community through continuing education requirements.

Wallace noted the DNR is holding hearings this week and next on new, stricter rules that would require some communities to update or construct wastewater treatment systems. For more information about the hearings, see <<http://www.iowadnr.com/news/05oct/standards.html>>.

IPP Executive Director David Osterberg said the report presents hope for small communities that might be alarmed by cost estimates to establish or improve their wastewater systems.

“Small communities in Iowa need to know they can afford to do the right thing. They have options,” Osterberg said.

The Iowa Policy Project is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research organization based in Mount Vernon. IPP reports are on the web at [www.iowapolicyproject.org](http://www.iowapolicyproject.org).

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Remaining Iowa Department of Natural Resources hearings:

Oct. 10 – Clear Lake, 7 p.m.

Clear Lake Community Meeting Room, 15 North Sixth St.

Oct. 12 – Manchester, 11 a.m.

Farmers and Merchants Savings and Trust, 101 East Main St.

Oct. 12 – Washington, 7 p.m.

Washington Community Y, 121 East Main St.

Oct. 13 – Iowa Communications Network (5 locations), 7 p.m.

Cedar Rapids, Prairie High School, 401 76th Ave. SW

Davenport, Kimberly Center, 1002 West Kimberly

Fort Dodge, Fort Dodge High School, 819 N 25th St.

Spirit Lake, Spirit Lake High School, 2701 Hill Ave.

Waterloo, West High School, Baltimore Street and Ridgeway Avenue

Oct. 14 – Des Moines, 1 p.m.

Wallace State Office Building, fifth floor conference rooms, 502 East Ninth St.