



FACT SHEET:

The PERMIT Act would harm Iowans

Iowa has severe water quality issues due to nitrate contamination of drinking water sources, and rivers and lakes have been closed for swimming due to toxic algae and high bacteria levels. Congress is about to make those matters worse when members return to Washington after Labor Day and vote on the PERMIT Act.

The PERMIT Act is bad for the Iowa economy, bad for public health, and bad for our communities. We all drink the same water.

Legislation is currently pending in the U.S. House of Representatives, the Promoting Efficient Review for Modern Infrastructure Today Act (“PERMIT Act,” H.R. 3898) that if passed by Congress and signed into law, would “PERMIT” more pollution to be discharged into Iowa’s waterways, threaten the health of Iowans, and remove protections from wetlands and small streams that filter out pollution and reduce flooding.

This legislation is the most dangerous, misguided weakening of the Clean Water Act (CWA) that Congress has considered in decades. It would dramatically narrow CWA protections that Iowans have relied upon for more than 50 years to safeguard Iowa’s rivers and lakes for drinking water, for swimming and boating, for businesses that need clean water, and to support thriving fish and wildlife populations.

Iowa’s waterways have among the highest levels of nitrates in the nation, requiring advanced treatment to meet minimum drinking water standards. Long-term nitrate exposure is linked to cancer, and Iowa has the [second highest rate of cancer](#) in the nation. The National Institutes of Health data show leukemia and cancers of the pancreas, breast, stomach, kidney, thyroid, and uterus are rising in the state. Iowa’s waters are also contaminated with E. coli bacteria, harmful algal toxins, and pesticides. Nitrate-contaminated drinking water contributes to this cancer risk.

What would the PERMIT Act do?

Allow pesticides, already harming water quality in Iowa, to be **discharged into Iowa's rivers without Clean Water Act permits.**

Protect polluters who discharge toxic “forever chemicals”, known as PFAS, into Iowa's waters, without notifying Iowa Department of Natural Resources, who issues permits.

Allow US EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers to remove wetlands and other waterways from Clean Water Act protection, leaving downstream-rivers and streams and drinking water sources completely unprotected from upstream pollution. Iowa waterways could also end up with polluted waters flowing in from other states whose Clean Water Act protections have also been diminished. And fewer wetlands means less filtering of pollution, less protection from flooding, and harm to wildlife

Allow stormwater pollution not necessary to agricultural needs.

Limit the authority of Iowa and its tribes to make decisions to protect waterways from oil and gas and carbon pipelines.

Allow wetlands destruction permits to be issued for **projects that would kill or harm endangered species**, including the barn owl, piping plover, and yellow mud turtle.

How will Iowans be harmed by the PERMIT Act?

More unsafe waterways for swimming due to bacterial contamination and harmful algal outbreaks.

Higher costs for water treatment needed to remove nitrates so water is safe to drink.

More harmful pesticides, PFAS, and other forever toxic chemicals in Iowa's waterways.

More “dead zones” in rivers and lakes without enough oxygen for fish to breathe.

Many businesses would spend more on higher water treatment costs, experience greater legal liability, and run the risk of reputational harm if they depend on safe clean water sources to operate or grow their products.

**Protect Iowa.
Protect our Clean Water.**

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