



# Where Are Iowa's Private Wells? New Online Map Shares Location, Water Quality Data

By KATE PAYNE • JUN 22, 2019

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Iowans have a new way to access information about private drinking water wells across the state. Researchers hope the tool will help well drillers, residents and public health workers.

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Iowans now have a new way to find out about private drinking water wells in their area. A team of researchers at the University of Iowa has built an [interactive online map](#) for residents, engineers and well drillers to better access well location and water quality information.

Iowans can now access a searchable online map to look at the depth of wells, and see if nitrates, arsenic or bacteria have been detected in wells in their area.

David Cwiertny of the UI's [Center for Health Effects of Environmental Contamination](#) says the online interface can help well drillers and residents make decisions about where to place and how deep to dig new wells.

"We've been testing for those [contaminants] for some time and can we get that data out there so people can see it, understand what's been collected historically and help that to inform decisions about where wells might go or maybe not want to go," Cwiertny said.

The map is a [collaboration](#) of [CHEEC](#), the UI [Hydroinformatics Lab](#), the [Iowa Geological Survey](#), and [IIHR-Hydrosience and Engineering](#), and draws on years of public health data.

Through Iowa's [Grants to Counties program](#), residents can have their private well testing for nitrates, coliform bacteria and arsenic for free, with the help of the state Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Public Health. While that information is available in [an online database](#), visualizing that information with an interactive map may provide new insights to drillers, residents and public health workers, Cwiertny says.

"That's a win-win," he said. "That's a very useful benefit from this site, is not just to inform drillers but also help agencies figure out, here's where we could use a little more information. Why don't we now, based upon the historical record, go prioritize in that area?"

It's estimated some 300,000 Iowans rely on private wells for their drinking water. While state law requires newly-constructed wells to be screened for contaminants, pre-existing wells do not have to be tested.

The [Iowa Well Forecasting System](#) is now available on the website of the UI's [IIHR-Hydrosience and Engineering](#) program.

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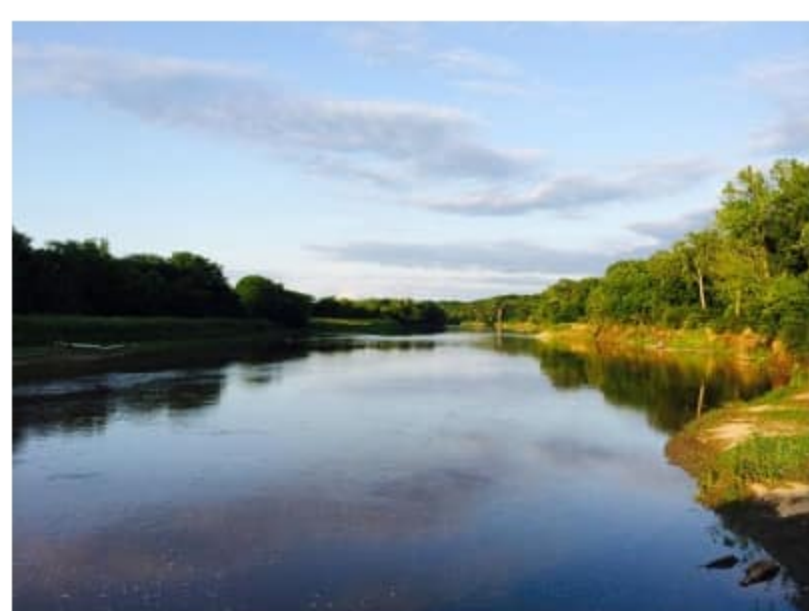


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The Iowa Utilities Board is asking for more information about plans to move more oil through the Dakota Access Pipeline. In a recent letter to the board, Dakota Access mentioned a project to upgrade pumps at a station near the central Iowa town of Cambridge. That would allow the pipeline to carry more than the current 570,000 barrels per day.

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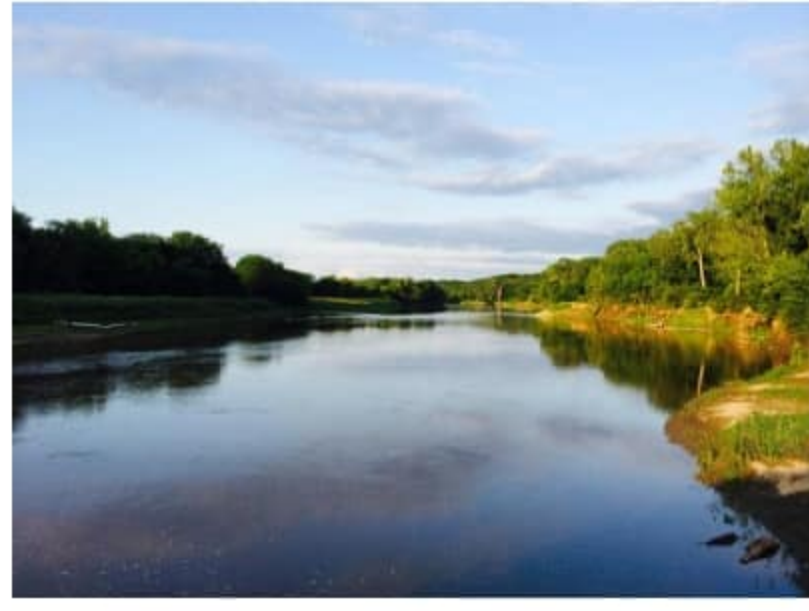


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Some business owners in downtown Burlington are pumping out river water after a temporary floodwall broke Saturday. It's the second such breach this year for Iowa cities on the Mississippi.

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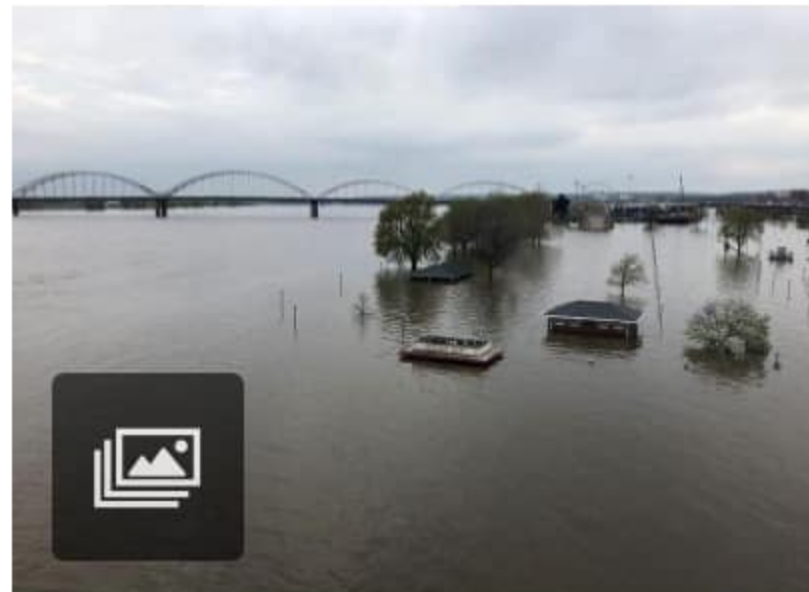


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The [Des Moines Water Works](#) is putting pressure on state regulators to clean up [contamination at a nearby military base](#). In letters to the state [Department of Natural Resources](#) and the [Iowa Attorney General's Office](#), the utility called the chemicals a public health concern.

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By KATE PAYNE • MAY 24, 2019



KATE PAYNE/IPR

The floodwaters have largely receded in Davenport, weeks after the Mississippi River crested at its highest level on record and flooded parts of downtown. The city is known for its progressive approach to flooding, giving the river more room to ebb and flow while other communities build walls. But the recent flooding is testing this philosophy of resilience.

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