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To: IDDA Membership

From: John T. Torbert, CAE

Re: Legislative Update

We have passed the first “funnel” week in the 2008 legislature so I thought I would bring you up to date on bills in which IDDA is involved.

HF 2554 – This legislation was requested by IDDA. It raises the dollar threshold that must be met before a hearing or notice is required for repairs or improvements on drainage ditches. Currently, that dollar level is set at \$15,000. This legislation increases that amount to \$20,000. The dollar threshold on repairs done with secondary road or weed fund equipment also increases from \$15,000 to \$20,000. The bill also raises from \$20,000 to \$25,000 the threshold that must be met before a landowner can file a remonstrance. **Status** – This bill has been passed by the House Agriculture Committee so met the first funnel deadline. **Reason for the legislation** – This legislation increases the noted threshold amounts largely in response to cost increases that counties have been experiencing for drainage repairs and improvements. It is designed to bring the drainage statutes in line with inflation and the cost of materials.

HF 2400 – This bill creates a water resources coordinating council in the Governor’s office and spells out what their duties would be. Members of the council would be state agency directors with authority over water issues as well as water quality experts from the regent’s institutions. The council would be charged with coordinating the efforts to improve water quality in an efficient and fiscally responsible manner.

The bill also mandates that the council conduct a marketing campaign to educate Iowans about water quality issues and about their responsibility for improving it. The focus of the campaign would be to make sure that Iowans know that clean water is everyone’s responsibility and that everyone benefits. This provision of the bill is contingent upon the receipt of funding.

The bill also directs that the IDNR conduct a statewide watershed assessment. The department must divide the state into larger regional watersheds and engage in a water quality assessment of those regions. The assessment would have to be completed in five years. Based on the results of the assessment, the council must prioritize the regions so that resources can be directed to where they are most needed.

The bill also directs the council to designate one or more agencies to assist in improving water quality at a smaller local watershed level. Local communities would be recruited by these agencies to create local community based sub-watershed improvement plans and to take the initiative in water quality improvement. Local stakeholders may include many diverse groups such as community groups, soil and water conservation districts **and drainage districts**.

The bill also directs the department to assist local communities with water quality monitoring. This monitoring would not be contingent on the statewide regional assessment and is intended to help communities in the community-based improvement efforts by providing data to assist in proper planning efforts and the allocation of resources. The bill also provides for a wastewater and storm water treatment infrastructure assessment and directs the department to prioritize local communities according to water quality and the greatest risk to the health of residents.

Finally, the bill gives the IDNR and IDALS rulemaking authority to carry out the duties imposed by the act.

IDDA position – IDDA does not have an official position on this legislation. At this point, we are monitoring it very closely. **Status** – The bill passed the house on March 11 by a vote of 98-0 and now goes to the senate. There is a companion bill in the senate which is SF 2197.

IDDA was also watching several other bills that did not meet the funnel deadline. They could, however, be resurrected in a different form. These bills include SF 2121, SF 2164, HF 2111 and Senate Study Bill 3165