

# Water Quality

## Mission

To ensure that Indiana's water is safe for Hoosiers to drink, swim in, and fish.

## Summary of Activities



The **Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM)** Office of Water Management is comprised of five branches which work to achieve the water quality goals of “drinkable, swimmable, fishable” waters for Indiana’s 36,000 river and stream miles, 575 lakes and reservoirs, and Lake Michigan. The five areas of the water program are Assessment, Planning & Restoration, Permits, Compliance, and Drinking Water.

The Assessment Branch monitors the quality of surface water to determine if the waters support all uses for drinking, swimming, and fishing. This monitoring occurs throughout the year at 160 fixed station locations on major waterways and a major basin monitoring effort, through intensive field sampling of water quality for physical, chemical, and biological indicators. Those waters that are determined to not meet quality standards are then reviewed by the Planning and Restoration Branch to develop restoration plans to achieve Indiana’s water quality goals through implementation projects within the affected watershed.

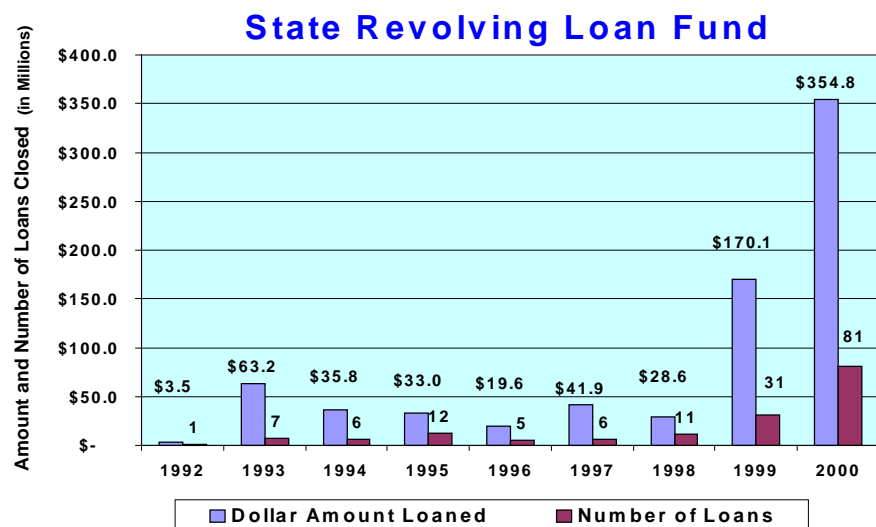
In support of the federal Clean Water Act, the Permits and Compliance Branches focus on limiting the discharge of pollutants into Indiana waterways. Permits are issued to dischargers that limit the amount of water pollution to a level that will not reduce water quality below the drinking, swimming, and fishing standard. There are approximately 1,600 organizations with discharge permits across the state whose performance must be inspected and reviewed by the Compliance Branch to assure that discharge limits are not exceeded.

In support of the federal Safe Drinking Water Act, the Drinking Water Branch reviews the performance of 4,500 public water supplies to assure compliance with the safe drinking water requirements. Nearly two-thirds of Indiana residents drink groundwater. The Drinking Water Branch works with local, state, and federal agencies to protect Indiana’s abundant groundwater supply, assuring safe drinking water for Hoosiers both now and in the future.

The State Revolving Loan Fund (SRLF), administered by IDEM and the **State Budget Agency**, provides low-interest loans to local communities for the purposes of financing infrastructure improvements that support clean drinking water and sewage treatment. Low-interest SRLF loans improve water quality and save money for utility ratepayers.

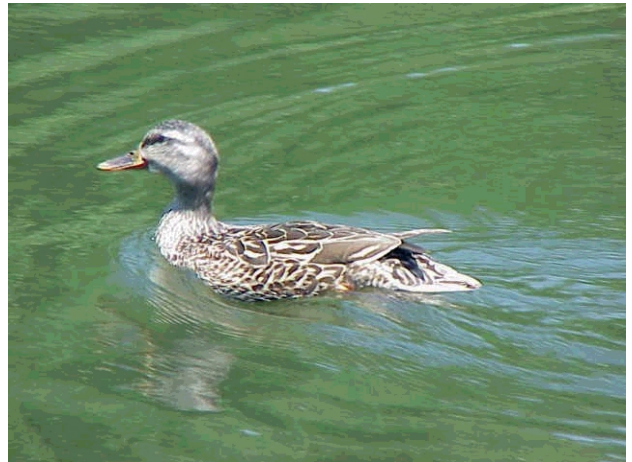
## External Factors

External factors threatening Indiana’s rich freshwater include combined sewer overflows, stormwater runoff from agriculture and urban surfaces, and the destruction of wetlands. Combined sewer overflow problems stem from sewer construction practices utilized when urban areas were developed approximately 100 years ago. Rainwater and sewage drains were combined into a single system -- if heavy rains exceed the system’s drainage capacity, sewage is forced into rivers and streams, causing bacterial contamination.



Runoff from agriculture and urban areas can also contaminate water sources with bacteria, as well as pesticides, oils and other contaminants which are washed off of roads. Wetlands are critical to providing flood control, water quality improvements, and habitat for fish and other wildlife. Indiana has lost 87% of its original wetlands over the past two centuries.

Severe and unpredictable water pollution events such as the recent contamination of the White River require corresponding intensive use of IDEM response and mitigation resources. The agency must also respond to changing water quality standards.



## Evaluation and Accomplishments

The number of major wastewater treatment facilities (typically those facilities with average design flows of more than one million gallons per day) with significant violations was reduced to 16 percent. The number of minor facilities with significant violations was reduced to 26 percent. IDEM completed water quality samples at its 153 fixed stations; 48 more fixed stations than existed two years ago.

Over the last two years, IDEM and the State Budget Agency have made 112 low-interest State Revolving Loans worth over \$524 million to utilities across the state to make local wastewater and drinking water infrastructure improvements.

## Plans for the Biennium

IDEM will continue to search for innovative solutions to growing federal water quality regulations to assist communities and businesses in addressing the costs of these programs. The Office of Water Management will develop partnerships with local communities to restore state watersheds in ways that will achieve Indiana's water quality goals for drinking, swimming, and fishing.

