



Nitrate, drinking water, and the impaired waters list

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How often does nitrate in these 7 rivers exceed the 10 mg/L drinking water standard?	Impaired for Drinking Water Use?
Never	No
Less than 10% of the time (plus a statistical fudge factor)	Disputed (IDNR said no, EPA said yes in Nov 2024 and reversed course in July 2025)
Significantly more than 10% of the time	Yes

Assessment Cycle	2026	2024	2022	2020	2018
Data from:	2022-2024	2020-2022	2018-2020	2016-2018	2014-2016
Raccoon River near Des Moines	99 of 759 (13%)	38 of 755 (5%)	24 of 729 (3%)	173 of 759 (23%)	455 of 821 (55%)
Des Moines River near Des Moines	52 of 759 (7%)	11 of 738 (1%)	0 of 238 (0%)	143 of 759 (19%)	360 of 831 (43%)
Cedar River near Cedar Rapids	15 of 123 (12%)	7 of 151 (4%)	1 of 149 (<1%)	12 of 153 (8%)	22 of 150 (15%)
South Skunk River near Oskaloosa	4 of 36 (11%)	2 of 36 (6%)	0 of 36 (0%)	1 of 36 (3%)	3 of 36 (8%)
Des Moines River near Ottumwa	No data	2 of 33 (6%)	2 of 33 (6%)	2 of 33 (6%)	2 of 33 (6%)
Iowa River near Iowa City	27 of 165 (16%)	5 of 146 (3%)	1 of 59 (2%)	3 of 60 (5%)	3 of 58 (5%)

How often does nitrate exceed 10 mg/L in finished water in these cities? Almost never, but the utilities have to drill wells, blend water sources or run filtration equipment to keep that from happening and getting fined. The Safe Drinking Water Act does not have a binomial 10% rule.