Citizen Science for Clean Water

Outdoor Ethics & Conservation Roundtable

February 11, 2026

Agenda

- Welcome and opening
- Safety moment—Ice Fish Responsibly
- Citizen Science for Clean Water
- Announcements
- Closing
- Open discussion

Paul Schimke, National Capitol Area Council

Pledge

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Scout Oath

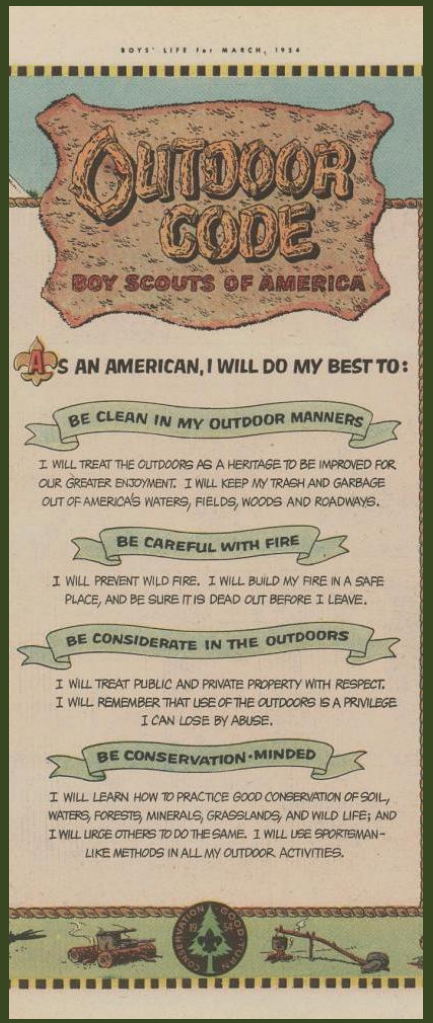
On my honor I will do my best
to do my duty to God and my country
and to obey the Scout Law;
to help other people at all times;
to keep myself physically strong,
mentally awake, and morally straight.

Scout Law

A Scout is:
Trustworthy, Loyal, Helpful,
Friendly, Courteous, Kind,
Obedient, Cheerful, Thrifty,
Brave, Clean, Reverent.

Outdoor Code

As an American, I will do my best to –
Be clean in my outdoor manners.
Be careful with fire.
Be considerate in the outdoors.
Be conservation minded.



Ice Fish Responsibly

Michelle Bierstedt, Sioux Council

Paul Schimke, National Capitol Area Council

Safety Moment

ICE FISH RESPONSIBLY

Check the weather

Tell someone where you're going.

Bring a friend - for company and safety.

Look for signs that others have been out on the ice first. **Never be first on the ice!**

Check ice thickness and clarity

- There should be at least 4-6 inches of clear ice

If there's snow on the ice, use caution. It can hide the ice condition.

Don't approach open water.

Stay clear of pressure ridges and/or large cracks.

Be extra cautious around areas that can make ice weaker such as docks and other structures. inlets and outlets, and springs.

Spread out if you have a big group.

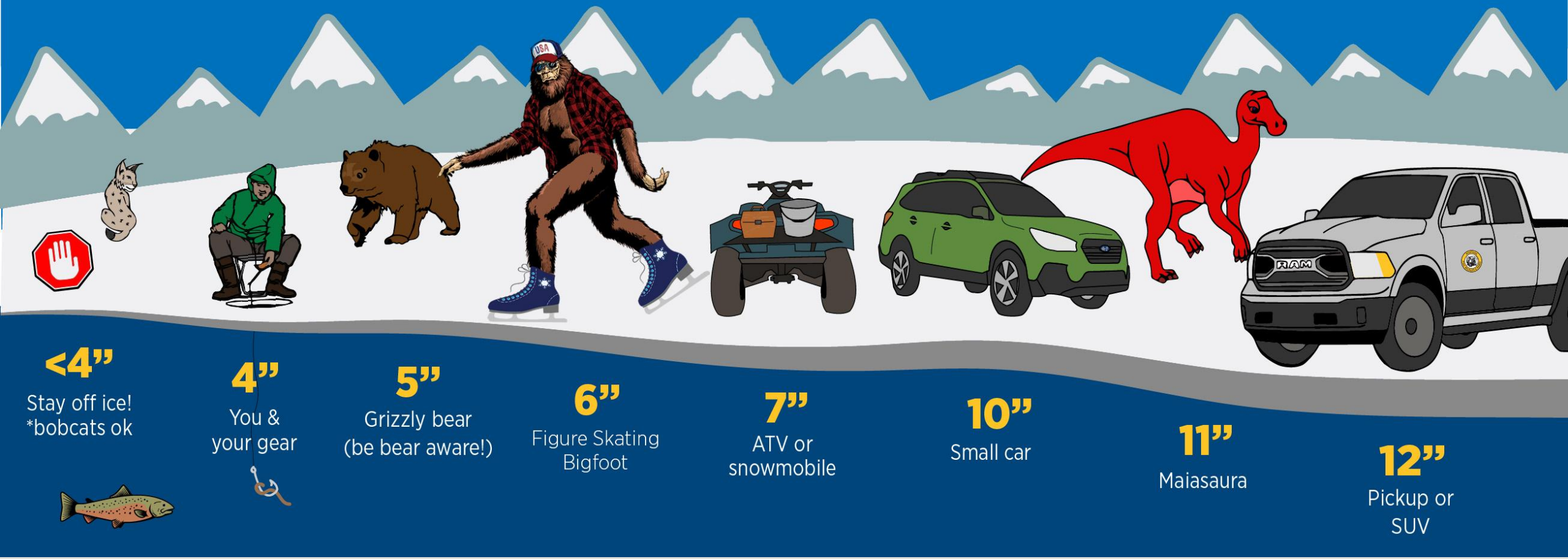
Using lead-free tackle is a simple choice that saves wildlife.

Broken gear, scrap materials, and unused equipment should also be packed out. Small disturbances made during winter can have outsized effects once the spring thaw allows materials to move freely into the water.

Mark or fill holes when possible to reduce hazards for people, pets, and wildlife.

MONTANA ICE SAFETY GUIDE

NO ICE IS 100% SAFE MINIMUM ICE THICKNESS FOR CLEAR, HARD ICE



<4”
Stay off ice!
*bobcats ok

4”
You &
your gear

5”
Grizzly bear
(be bear aware!)

6”
Figure Skating
Bigfoot

7”
ATV or
snowmobile

10”
Small car

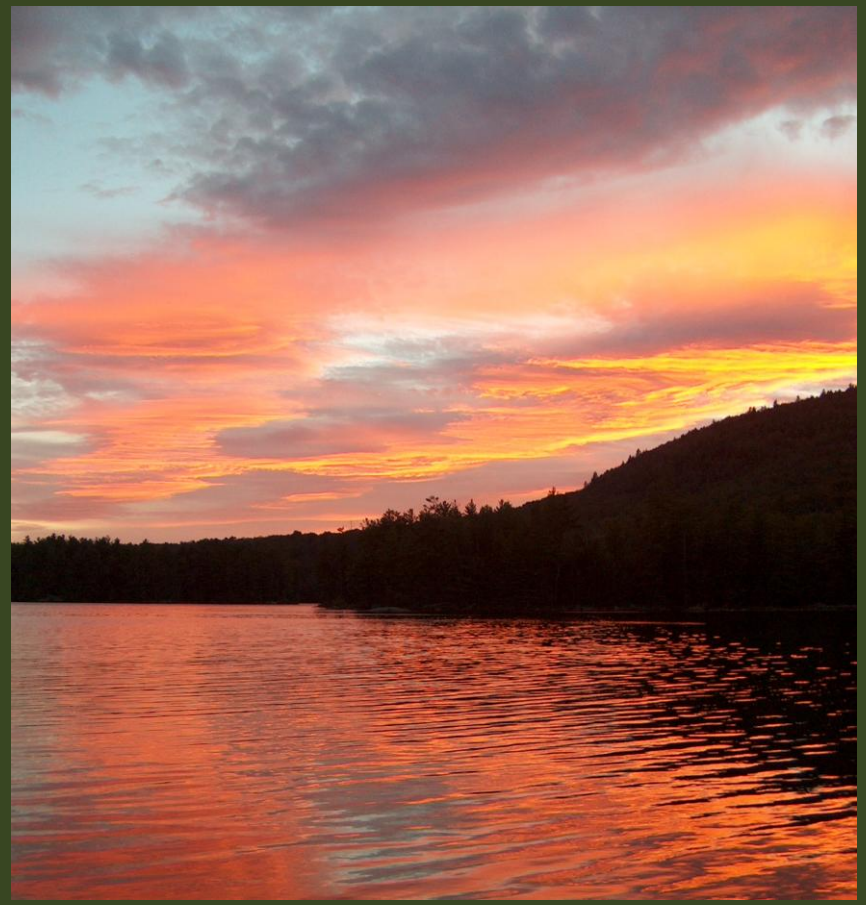
11”
Maiasaura

12”
Pickup or
SUV

https://lnt.org/sustainable-ice-fishing-practices/

Citizen Science for Clean Water

Maggie Dombroski, Izaak Walton League of America

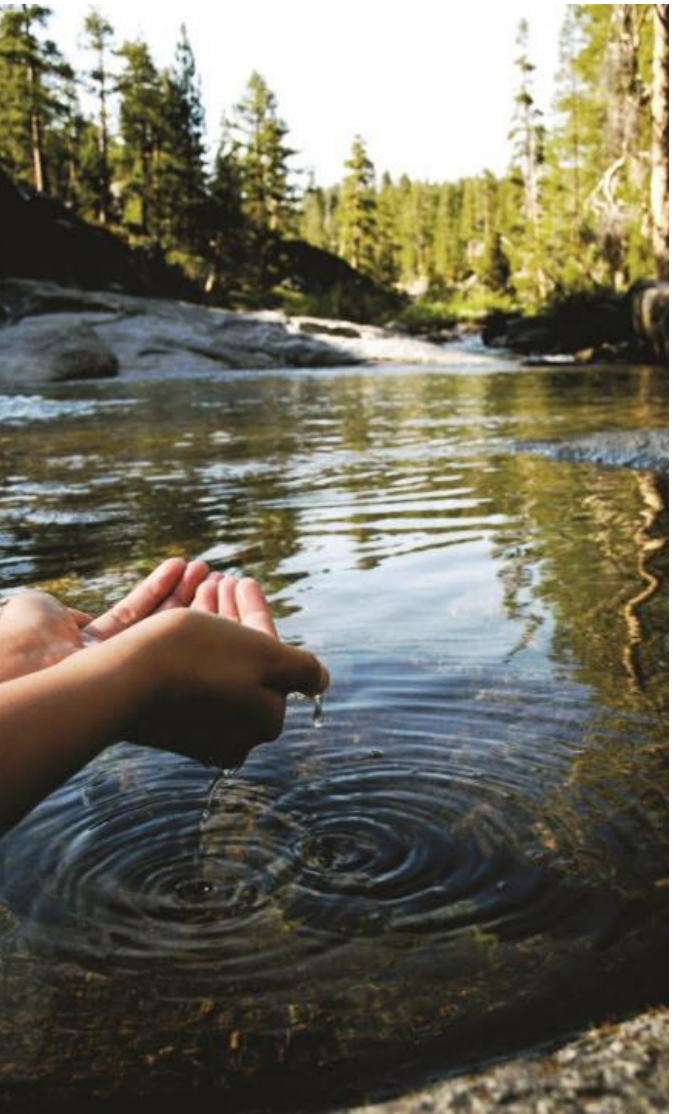


Dave O'Leary, Western Massachusetts Council

Community Science Water Quality Monitoring

Maggie Dombroski, Mid-Atlantic Save Our Streams Coordinator
Izaak Walton League of America

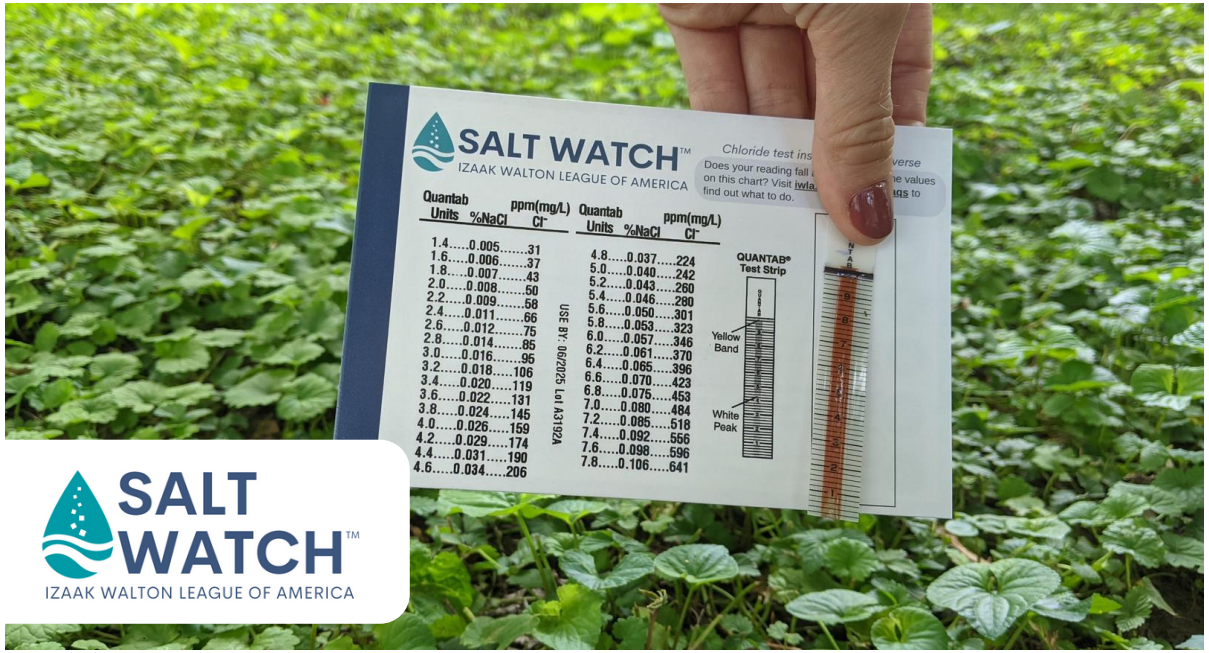
Izaak Walton League of America



To conserve, restore, and promote the sustainable use and enjoyment of our natural resources, including ***soil, air, woods, waters, and wildlife.***


SAVE OUR STREAMS
IZAAK WALTON LEAGUE OF AMERICA


Creek Critters!
nature forward
CREEK CRITTERS
Collect Critters
Identify Critters
My Stream Health Reports


SALT WATCH™
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NITRATE WATCH℠
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SAVE OUR STREAMS
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Creek Critters!
nature forward
CREEK CRITTERS
Collect Critters
Identify Critters
My Stream Health Reports


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Quantab Units
%NaCl
ppm(mg/L) Cl⁻
QUANTAB® Test Strip
Yellow Band
White Peak
USE BY: 06/2025 Lot A3192A
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Goals of Salt Watch

- To raise awareness in the general public about the connection between salt and stream/public health
- To identify chloride hot spots in freshwater
- To advocate for smarter application of road salt by sharing results with private landowners and local and state agencies

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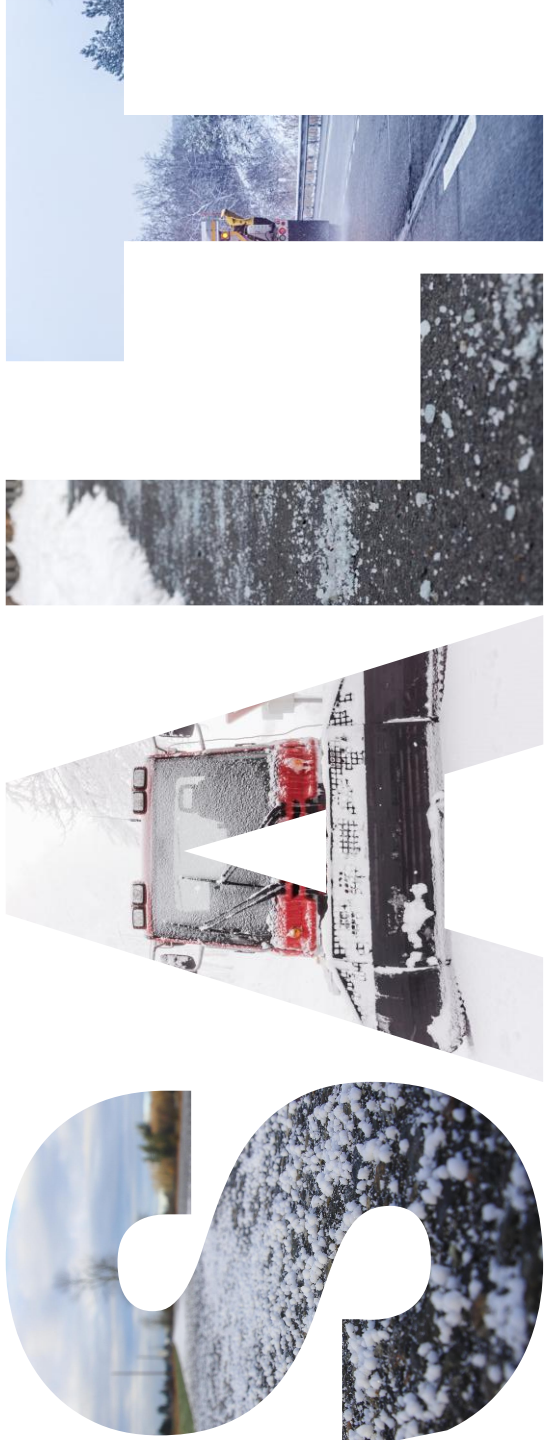

WHAT IS ROAD/WINTER SALT?

NaCl - Sodium Chloride

KCl -Potassium Chloride

$MgCl_2$ - Magnesium Chloride

$CaCl_2$ - Calcium Chloride

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Gaithersburg
Chesapeake
Bay Trust


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HOW IS SALT APPLIED?

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It only takes

1 teaspoon of salt

to **permanently pollute** 5 gallons of water

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50# Bag of Salt

Pollutes

10,000 Gallons of Water

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IMPACTS

Wildlife

Infrastructure

Drinking Water

Habitat

Pets

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Wildlife Impacts

- Affects fish, but macroinvertebrates, plankton, and microbes may be even more sensitive than fish
- Vernal pools may be more intensely affected--as well as the organisms that spawn in them
- Migratory fish not able to find spawning ground due to elevated salinity

Infrastructure Impacts

- Chloride is incredibly corrosive
- Impacts to roadways (pavement), bridges, concrete surfaces, cars, culverts, pipes, appliances, stormwater infrastructure and more!
- It is estimated to cost between $1,740-17,086 in damages per ton of road salt used (adjusted for inflation in 2023 by Bolton and Menk, Inc)

Drinking Water Impacts

- Chlorides not typically removed at water treatment plants due to high cost
- Higher levels of sodium in water
- Contaminated water cannot be used for dialysis treatment
- Concern of pipe corrosion leading to heavy metals in drinking water
- Well water not regulated by government

Habitat Impacts

- Plant desiccation (drying out) and death
- Plants near sidewalks and roadways most at risk
- Aquatic plants at risk, altering freshwater habitats
- Salty soil less likely to retain water and can become compacted
- Chloride mobilizes heavy metals in the environment

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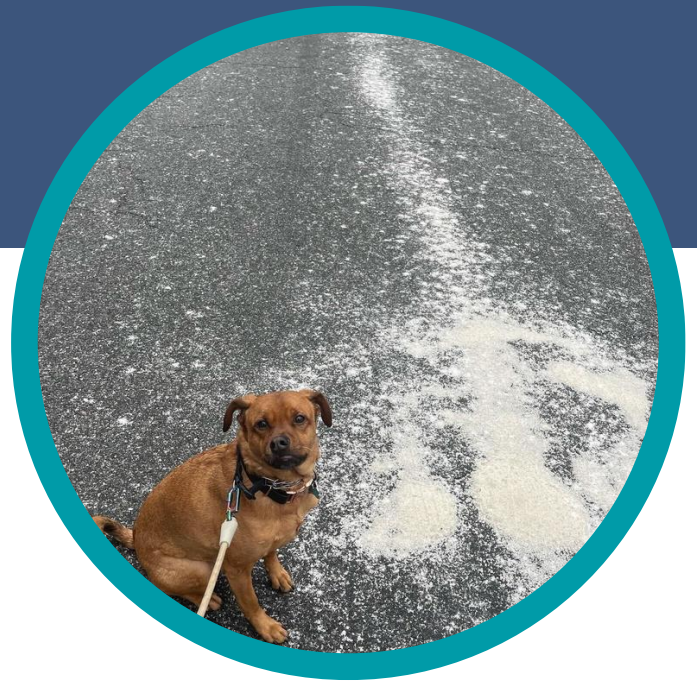

Pet Impacts

- Poisoning through ingestion
- Dehydration
- Paw and skin irritation, dryness, cuts, and burns

Salt Watch Kit

Includes:

- 4 Hach 30-600ppm chloride test strips
- Sample testing instructions
- Conversion chart
- Data uploading instructions

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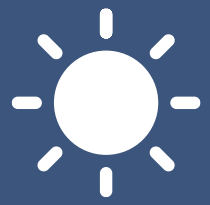
When Should Volunteers Monitor in Winter?



Before a winter weather (to get a baseline reading).

After the first winter storm (when salt has been applied to roads).

After the first thaw or rainstorm of winter.

After the next rain event.

Consistently throughout the year (e.g. the first Saturday of every month).

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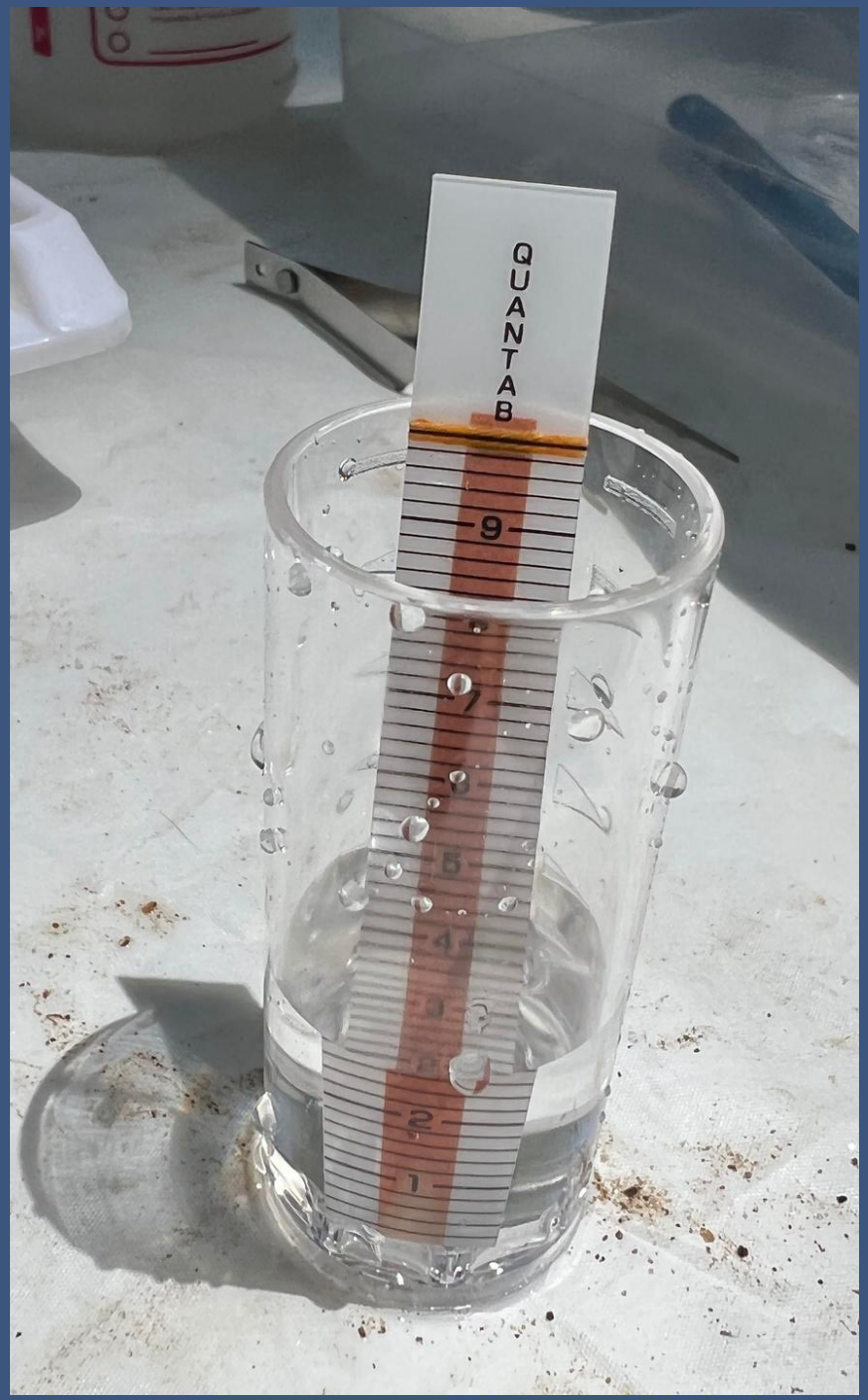

Taking Your Sample

- 1 test strip
- 1 small jar/cup
- Add water
  - Rinse and repeat 3x
  - Leave 1/2-1" of water
- Wait ~3 minutes

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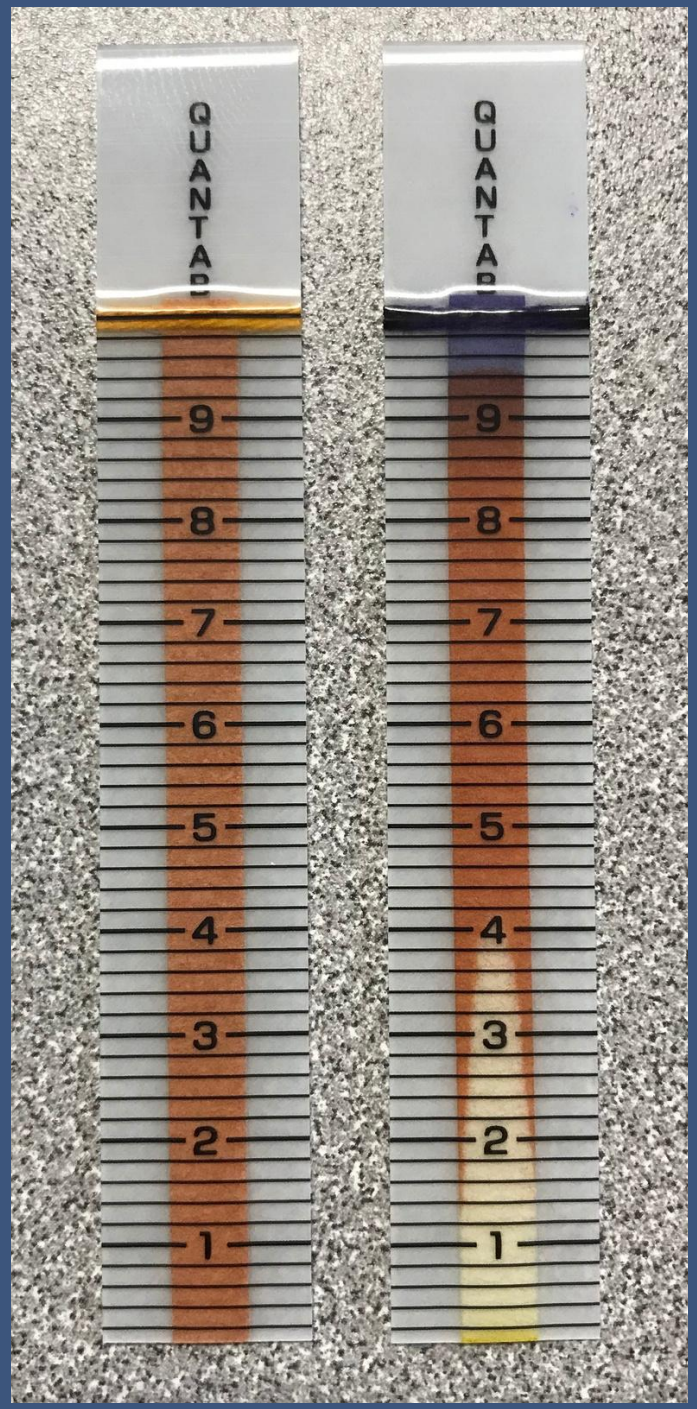

Taking Your Sample

- 1 test strip
- 1 small jar/cup
- 1-2 inches of water
  - Add water
  - Rinse and repeat 3x
  - Leave 1/2-1" of water
- Wait ~3 minutes

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Chloride test instructions on other side.
Need help? Visit watch.org.

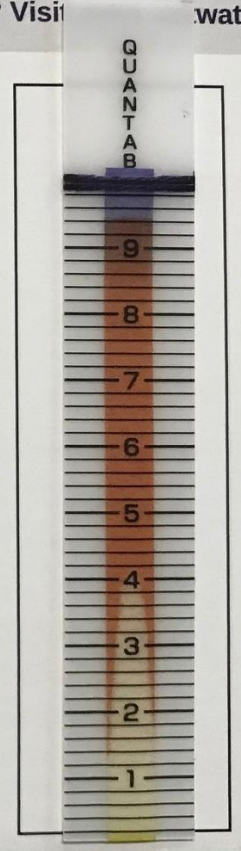
Quantab Units	%NaCl	ppm(mg/L) Cl^-
1.4	0.005	31
1.6	0.006	37
1.8	0.007	44
2.0	0.008	50
2.2	0.010	58
2.4	0.011	66
2.6	0.012	75
2.8	0.014	85
3.0	0.016	95
3.2	0.017	106
3.4	0.019	117
3.6	0.021	130
3.8	0.024	143
4.0	0.026	157
4.2	0.028	172
4.4	0.031	187
4.6	0.034	203
4.8	0.036	220
5.0	0.039	238
5.2	0.042	257
5.4	0.046	276
5.6	0.049	297
5.8	0.052	318
6.0	0.056	341
6.2	0.060	365
6.4	0.064	391
6.6	0.069	418
6.8	0.074	448
7.0	0.079	479
7.2	0.085	513
7.4	0.091	551
7.6	0.098	592
7.8	0.105	637

USE BY: 08/2024 Lot A2238

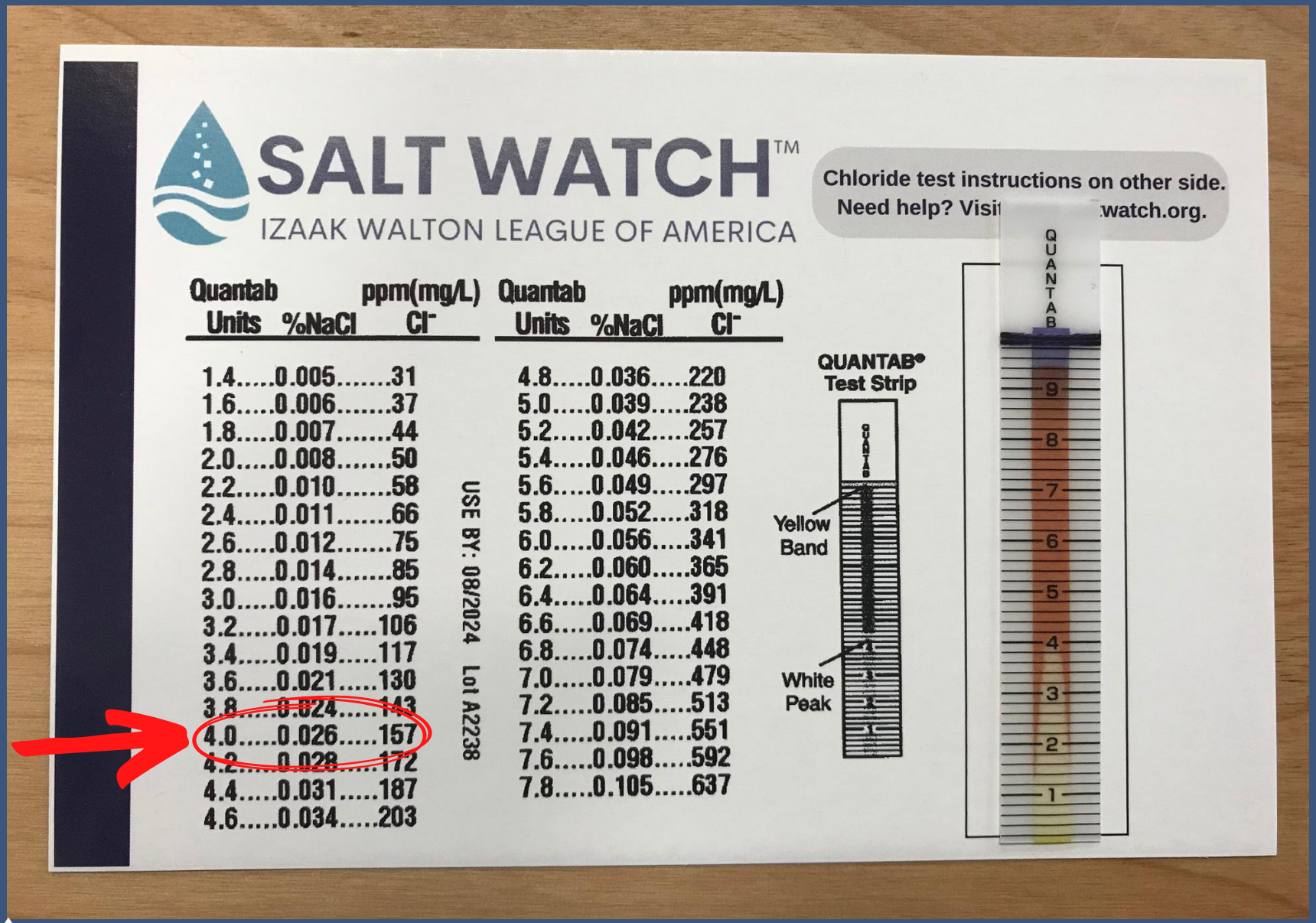
QUANTAB® Test Strip

Yellow Band

White Peak



This test strip reads:
4 Quantab Units



This test strip reads:

4 Quantab Units

4 Quantab Units means the sample is 157ppm

What do Chloride Levels Mean?

0-100 mg/L	Chloride in freshwater naturally occurs *
230 mg/L	Chloride is "chronically" toxic to aquatic life
250 mg/L	EPA Secondary Standard of Drinking Water
860 mg/L	Chloride is "acutely" toxic to aquatic life

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Be a Smart Salter

Once you put salt down, it doesn't go away...

Salt alters the soil, harms plants, and weakens infrastructure like bridges and roads.

It gets into our streams, lakes, and rivers, putting aquatic life and human health at risk.

It only takes **1 teaspoon of salt...**

...to pollute **5 gallons of water**

Salt applied by cities, businesses, and homes adds up.

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Wisconsin Salt Wise

Reduce your salt use to protect our water!

Do your own salt application?

1. Shovel
Clear snow from sidewalks and parking lots before it turns to ice. The more snow you remove, the less salt you'll have to use - and the more effective it will be!

2. Scatter
If you use salt, scatter it so there's space between the grains. A coffee mug of salt is enough to treat an entire 20 foot driveway!

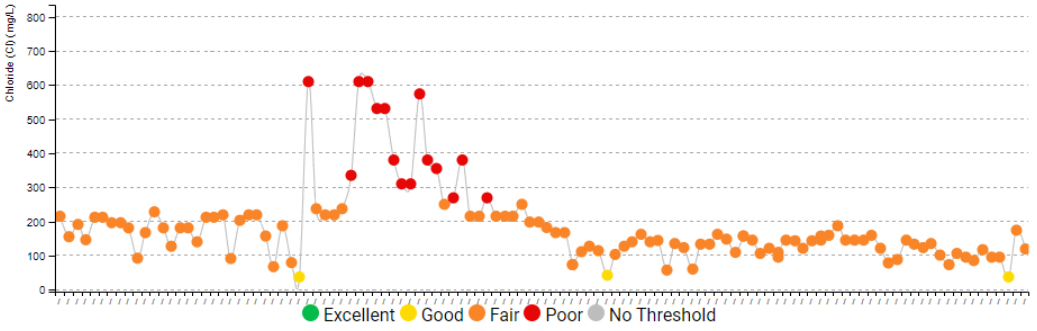
3. Sweep
Once the salt has done its job, sweep up the extra so you can reuse it for later storms - and prevent it from washing away.

4. Switch
Salt doesn't work when the pavement temperature is 15 degrees or lower. Switch to sand or use a different deicer that works at low temperatures.

Hiring a snow removal contractor?

Choose a contractor who is certified through a winter salt certification program.

Find out about salt application courses from your state Department of Transportation or visit www.saltwatch.org!



TTF Streamkeeper Testifies at Philadelphia City Council about Road Salt

Jamilee Hoffman
Mar 17, 2022

Data Action

The Washington Post
Democracy Dies in Darkness

Local Opinions

Opinion: The true cost of salt on the D.C. area's roads

An Annapolis city employee spreads salt on the downtown sidewalks as a slow-moving winter storm dumped snow and ice across the region in February 2021. (Jonathan Newton/The Washington Post)

By Karl Van Neste
January 19, 2022 at 2:45 p.m. EST

Keep freshwater fresh for future generations!

Abby – Stand up for clean water in Minnesota by reducing salt pollution! In many areas of the United States, road salt is used in the winter to create safe travel conditions, but excessive salting is a growing problem. Excess road salt ends up in our waterways, creating toxic conditions for aquatic life and threatening human health.

You can take action on this pervasive problem! Let your state representatives know that you would like to see reduced road salt pollution in Minnesota.

Shovel

Clear walkways before snow turns to ice.

Scatter

A 12 oz mug holds enough salt to treat a 20-foot driveway or 10 sidewalk squares.

Sweep

Sweep up excess salt and reuse it!

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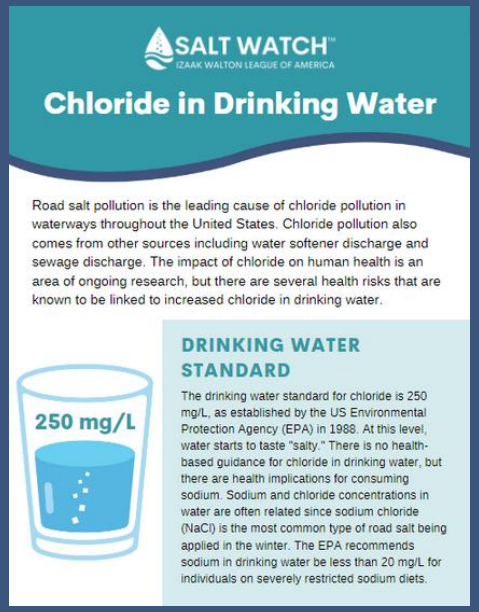
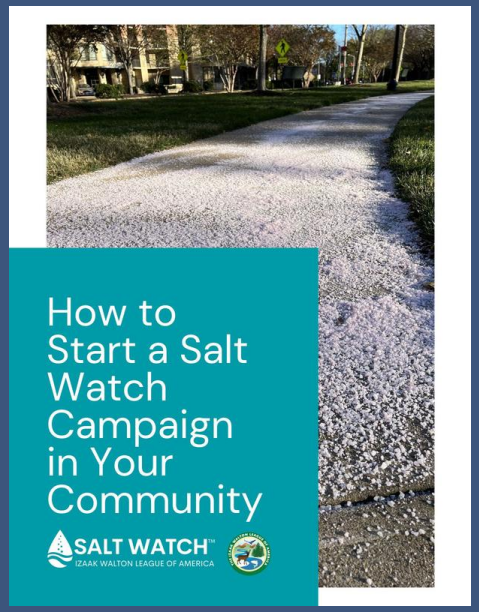
Resources



Fact Sheets

Flyers



Advocacy Guide

Spanish Resources

Bonus: Letter to State Representative
(edit with your own experience and voice)

Dear Representative/Senator **[your rep's name]**,

Every winter, snowy weather creates dangerous conditions on our roads. Since the 1940s, communities across the U.S. have been spreading road salt on streets, sidewalks and parking lots to melt ice and create safer traveling conditions. Road salt is effective when used correctly, but we have fallen into a pattern of over-applying and misusing road salt in ways that have damaging side effects on wildlife, human health and the environment. I am asking that you work towards salt reduction in **[the name of your community/state]**.

Road salt inevitably ends up in our streams, rivers and lakes. USGS monitored 30 streams from 1960–2011 in Wisconsin, Illinois, Colorado, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Texas and the District of Columbia and found that 84 percent of those streams experienced high chloride concentrations due to road salt. And once road salt enters bodies of water, it is extremely difficult and expensive to remove; it's simply not feasible to filter it out at water treatment plants.

Road salt threatens our water quality in multiple ways, by contaminating drinking water, corroding pipes and leaching metals into our water. High levels of chloride are dangerous to human health, especially for people with pre-existing conditions such as high blood pressure. Chloride is also toxic to aquatic life and can degrade vegetation and soil. All told, our current road salt practices cost the U.S. $16–19 billion a year in damages.

It's possible to reduce salt usage without endangering travelers; some communities are already doing it. Minnesota, for example, has substantially reduced salt usage without seeing any loss of safety on the roads. They've accomplished this through strategies including training salt applicators in smarter salting practices, offering a smart-salting certification to professional applicators and private property owners, drafting model contracts between applicators and owners (https://www.pca.state.mn.us/water/smart-salting-training), and requiring applicators and manufacturers to properly store salt supplies.

[Your community/state] can take these steps too. By supporting smarter salting practices, you will be protecting water quality for generations of **[Marylanders/Iowans/etc.]** to come. Please **[insert specific action you want legislator to take: introduce a bill requiring smarter salting practices, co-sponsor an existing bill, etc.]**.

Sincerely,

[Your Signature]

[Your Name]

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Template Letters

SALT RESPONSIBLY

Visit:
www.saltwatch.org

Email:
saltwatch@iwla.org

NITRATE WATCH℠

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What is nitrate pollution?

- Nitrate (NO3-) is naturally occurring
- Nitrogen is important for plant growth
- Soils and plants aren't able to take up all the nitrate that is applied
- Excess nitrate is carried to surface water via runoff or groundwater via infiltration

Sources of excess nitrate

Fertilizers

Animal Feedlots

Wastewater treatment

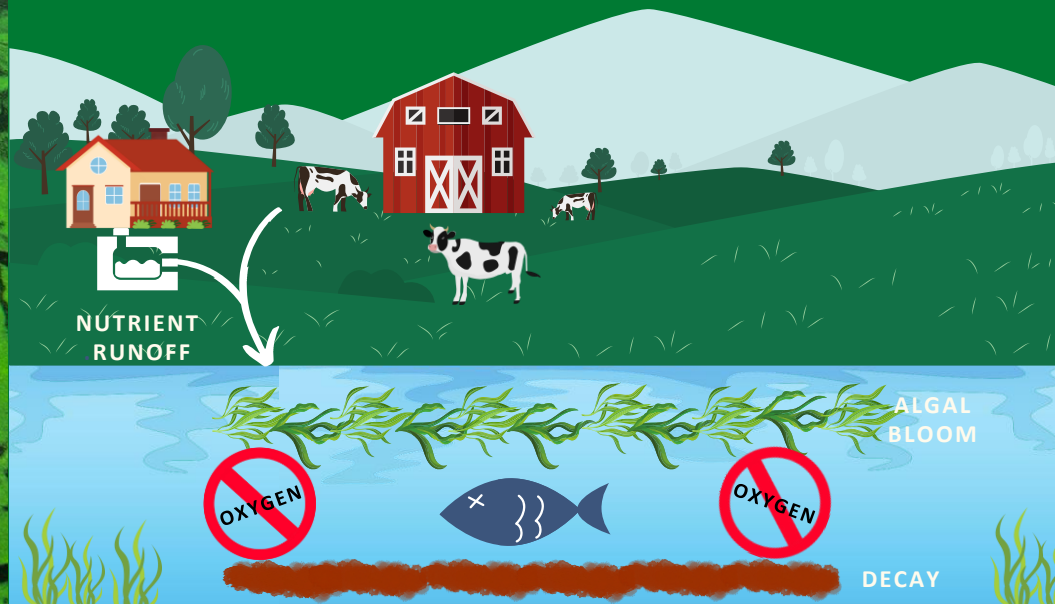
Atmospheric deposition

Nitrate pollution impacts...

Environment

Environmental impact

- Excess nutrients lead to:
  - Algae blooms
  - Fish kills
  - Dead zones



Human Health

Human Health impact

In surface water:

- Toxins from harmful algae blooms

In drinking water:

- Methemoglobinemia (blue baby syndrome)
- Thyroid disease
- Birth defects
- Colon cancer

Drinking water standard

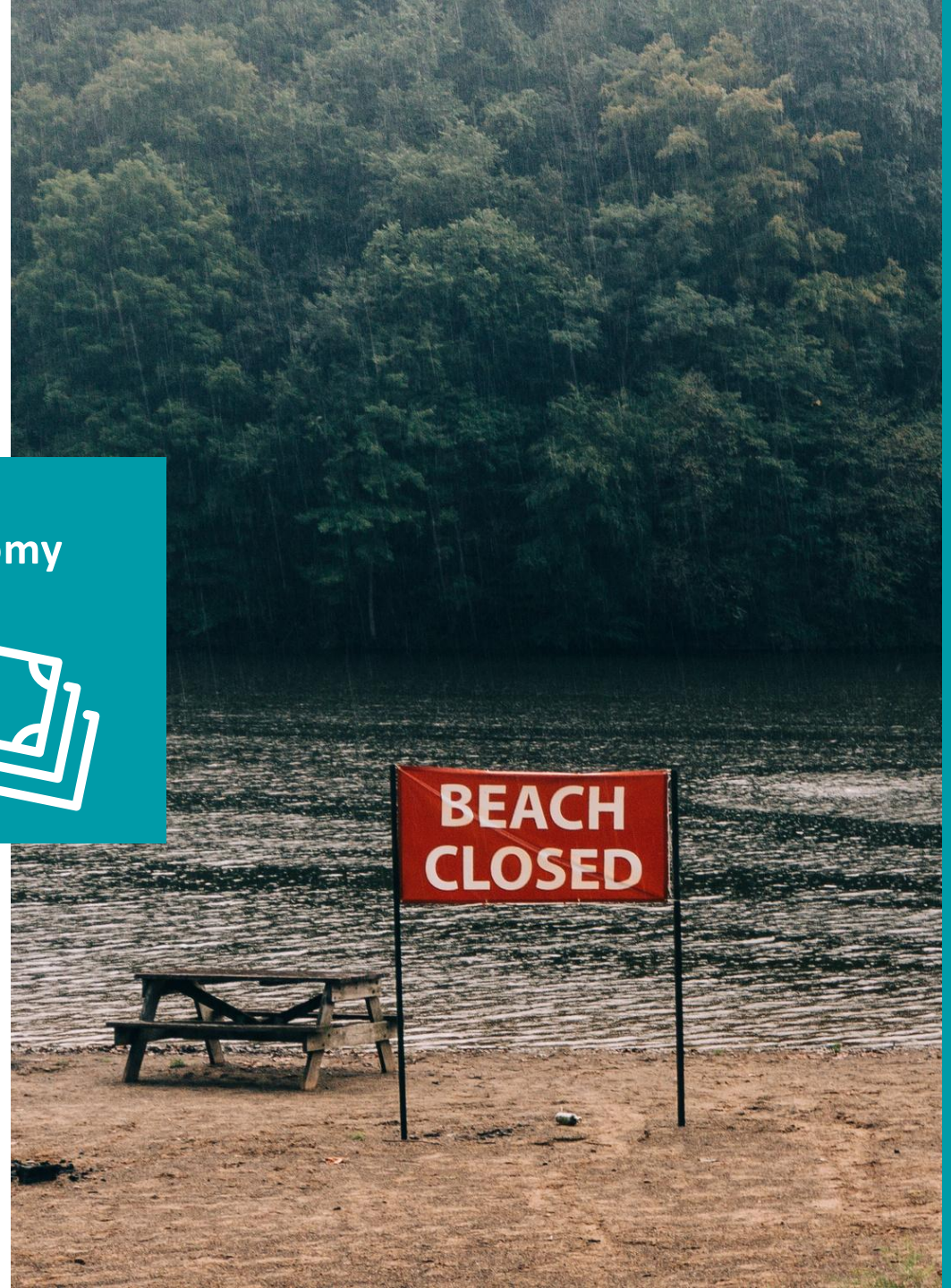
US EPA maximum contaminant level: **10 mg/L**

- created in **1**992
- to prevent blue baby syndrome
- other health effects observed with prolonged exposure to lower concentrations

Private wells are not regulated

Human Health

Economy



Economic impact

- Drinking water treatment
- Medical costs
- Fishing industry
- Recreation
- Property values

Estimated US economic impact:
$210 billion/year

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Mobilizing volunteers to monitor nitrate in surface water & drinking water

Goals:

- **Raise awareness** about the impacts of nitrate on the environment and human health
- **Identify hotspots** of nitrate pollution
- **Advocate for solutions** that reduce nutrient pollution.

How to Participate

What you need:

- smartphone or computer
- free Nitrate Watch kit

Kit includes:

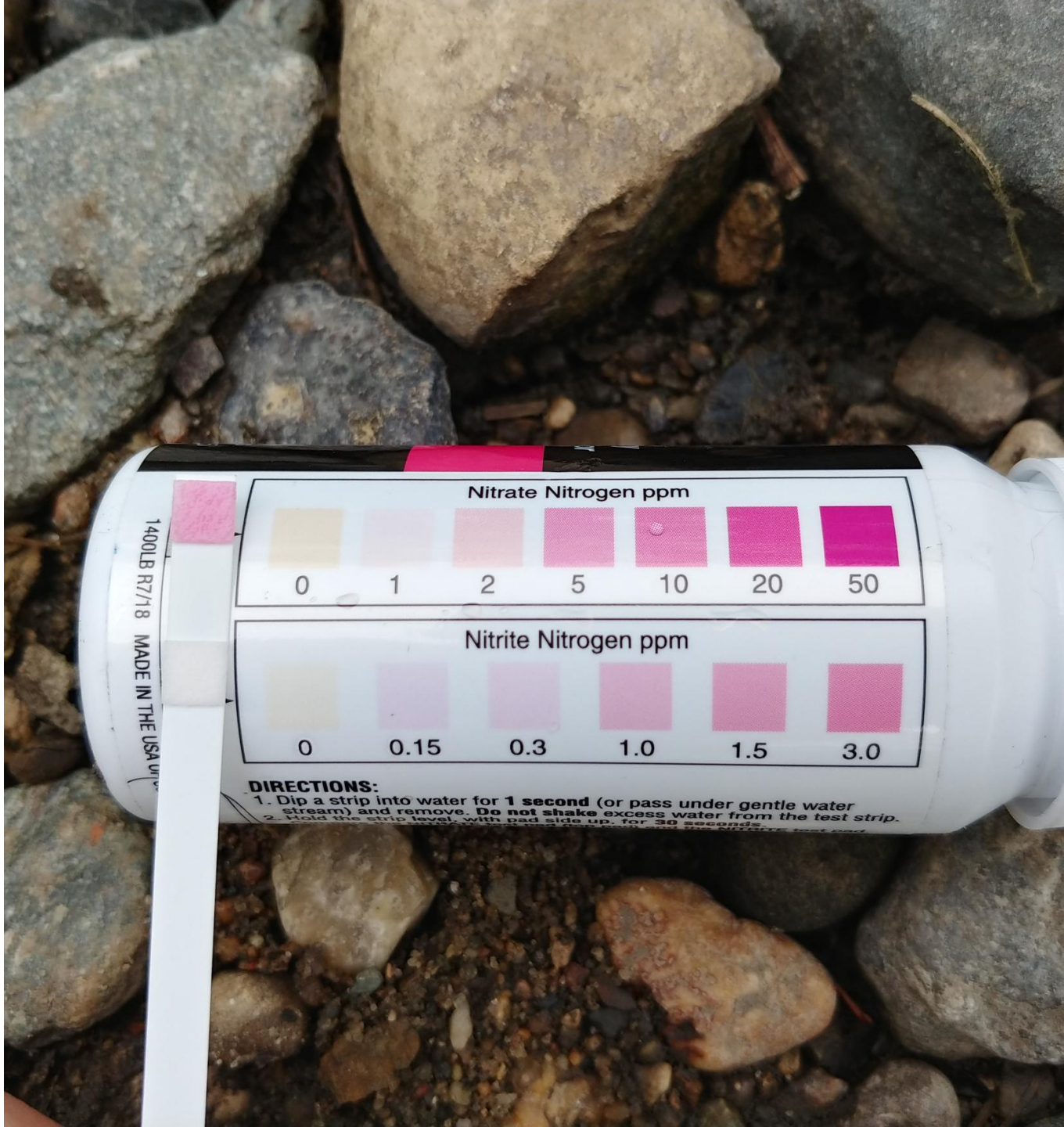
- 25 nitrate test strips
- sample testing instructions
- data uploading instructions
- Nitrate Watch Sticker

Request a free kit at www.nitratewatch.org

How to Participate

1. Dip test strip in any source of water (pond, stream, tap etc.) for 1 second
2. Wait 30 seconds
3. Take reading by comparing color to bottle at exactly 30 seconds
4. Enter data on Clean Water Hub

Monitor consistently throughout the year (ideally monthly)



Knowledgeable advocates for clean water, community organizers and educators

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pollution reduction

engage in advocacy efforts

document pollution problem locally

monitor nitrate pollution with Nitrate Watch

learn about nitrate pollution and its impacts

Un-engaged, little to no knowledge of local or regional water quality issues

Resources for Monitors: *advocacy*

Petition

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Time to Call a Halt to Harmful Nitrate Pollution

Nitrate is a well-known and highly prevalent water pollutant with harmful impacts to human and environmental health. Nitrates are abundant in synthetic fertilizers, animal manure, and sewage. They are easily picked up by rainfall and frequently run off into water bodies and seep through soil into the groundwater below. Dangerously high levels of nitrate present in our surface waters and drinking water sources are unacceptable and demand action.

High nitrate levels lead to algae blooms which deplete the oxygen in waterways, creating dead zones where aquatic life is scarce. Algae blooms may also harbor toxic cyanobacteria, which can cause rashes, nausea, and in some cases death to humans and animals that come into contact with the bacteria.

Consuming nitrates in drinking water is known to have negative impacts on human health, including methemoglobinemia ("blue baby syndrome"), thyroid disease, central nervous system birth defects, and colorectal, bladder, ovarian, and kidney cancers. While the EPA has set a drinking water standard of 10 mg/L for nitrates, private water supplies from groundwater wells are not regulated and do not have established standards for

Letters to the editor & Letters to representatives

A little fertilizer goes a long way.

Many modern agricultural practices depend on synthetic fertilizers that are high in nitrates to produce crop yields that will support a growing population. Unfortunately, those nitrates can be harmful to human health and the environment when they run off into waterways. From July 2017 to June 2018, Iowa distributed 4,486,121 tons of fertilizer. Runoff from rain and snow may carry the nitrates from fertilizers into groundwater or into drainage systems which empty into streams. About 80% of the nitrogen in fertilizers is lost from the fields where they are applied. Iowa has more than 22 million acres of row crop agriculture, and most of it remains incompletely or inadequately treated for nitrate pollution.

High levels of nitrates in streams can lead to unsafe drinking water. More than 118 million Americans depend on local streams for drinking water. In 1990, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) established the drinking water standard for nitrates as 10 mg/L. But studies have found that water with nitrate levels even lower than that may not be safe to ingest. Some health risks related to ingesting high levels of nitrate include methemoglobinemia (blue baby syndrome), cancer, thyroid disease, respiratory issues, and birth defects. Only about 10% of public water suppliers in Iowa treat their water for nitrate, and private water supplies, such as groundwater wells, are not regulated and do not have standards for contaminants. Together, that means that about one third of the households in Iowa are at high risk of nitrate exposure.

[add data from your Nitrate Watch testing and/or share why this issue is important to you personally]

As an Iowan, I understand the responsibility that our state has for providing food for our people and country. However, our current farming practices can be modernized to improve soil health and reduce runoff so fertilizers applied to fields don't poison our water. Our agriculture systems must evolve so that we can continue to feed a growing population without harming our waters. Government officials and our communities need to unite to reduce chemical fertilizer use, advocate for alternative farming practices, and stop polluting our waterways.

For more information about nitrate pollution, visit *nitratewatch.org*.

Fact Sheets

The Cost of Nitrate Pollution

The contamination of surface water and drinking water with nitrate is dangerous to human health and harmful to the environment. But what is the economic impact of nitrate pollution?

WATER TREATMENT COSTS
When nitrate is present in drinking water sources, water utilities must remove the excess to meet the EPA standard. Specialized nitrate removal infrastructure is required, which is expensive to install and operate.

MEDICAL COSTS
Health conditions associated with nitrate pollution - like thyroid disease, birth defects, and some cancers - are costly to treat.

IMPACT ON THE FISHING INDUSRTY
Algae blooms that harbor toxic cyanobacteria can contaminate fish and shellfish, meaning the commercial fishing industry suffers.

DECLINING PROPERTY VALUES
Unsightly and dangerous algae blooms affect the value of waterfront property.

LOSS IN RECREATION
Nitrate pollution can lead to unsightly and dangerous algae blooms. It makes sense that this would negatively impact recreation activities, like fishing and paddling.

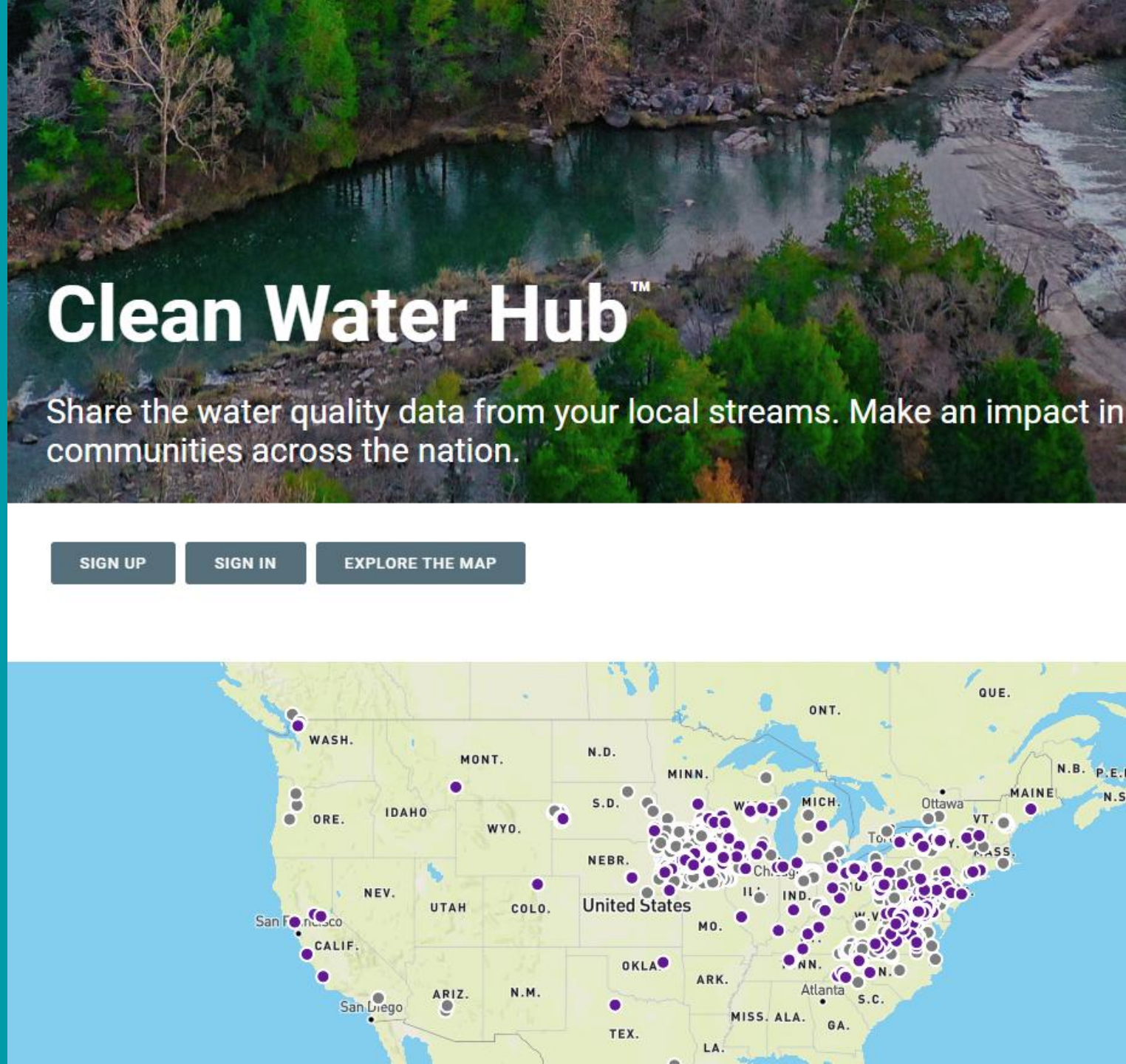
Visit www.nitratewatch.org to learn about nitrate pollution and how you can help protect clean water in your community.

NITRATE WATCH
IZAAK WALTON LEAGUE OF AMERICA

ESTIMATED U.S. ECONOMIC IMPACT: **$210 BILLION/YEAR**[1]

1. Sobota, D. J., Compton, J. E., McCrackin, M. L., & Singh, S. (2015). Cost of reactive nitrogen release from human activities to the environment in the United States. Environmental Research Letters, 10(2). https://doi.org/10.1088/1748-9326/10/2/025006

Clean Water Hub Overview



What is the Hub?

National water quality database

Collaborative tool to help volunteers and organizations track water quality in local creeks and streams

A place to view and share **local data** with the goal of making a **broader impact**

SHARE
Share water quality data from your local streams.

TRACK
See changes in water quality in your community.

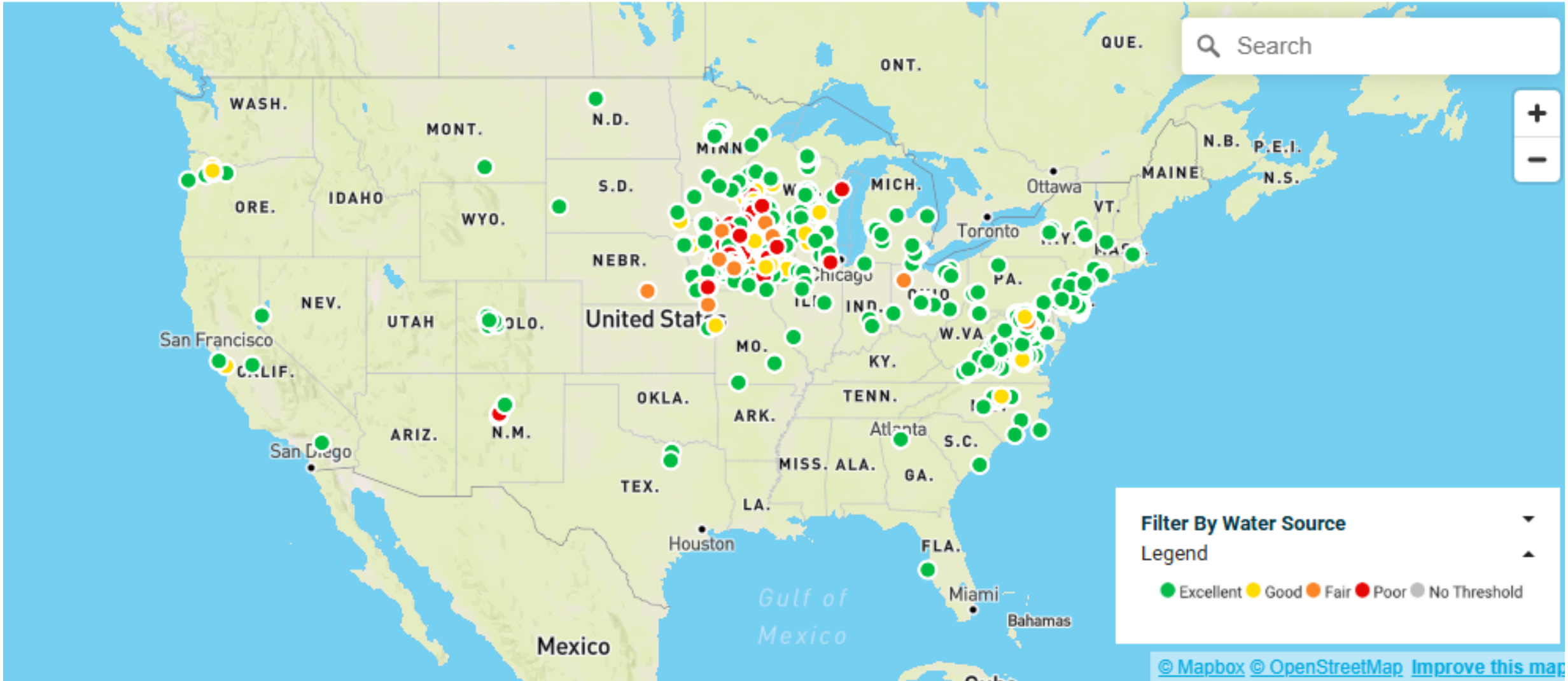
DISPLAY
Connect with, join, and explore the nationwide effort.

Salt Watch Map

Start Date 01/01/2025 End Date 12/31/2025 Filter by Dates

Nitrate Watch Map

Start Date 01/01/2025 End Date 12/31/2025 Filter by Dates

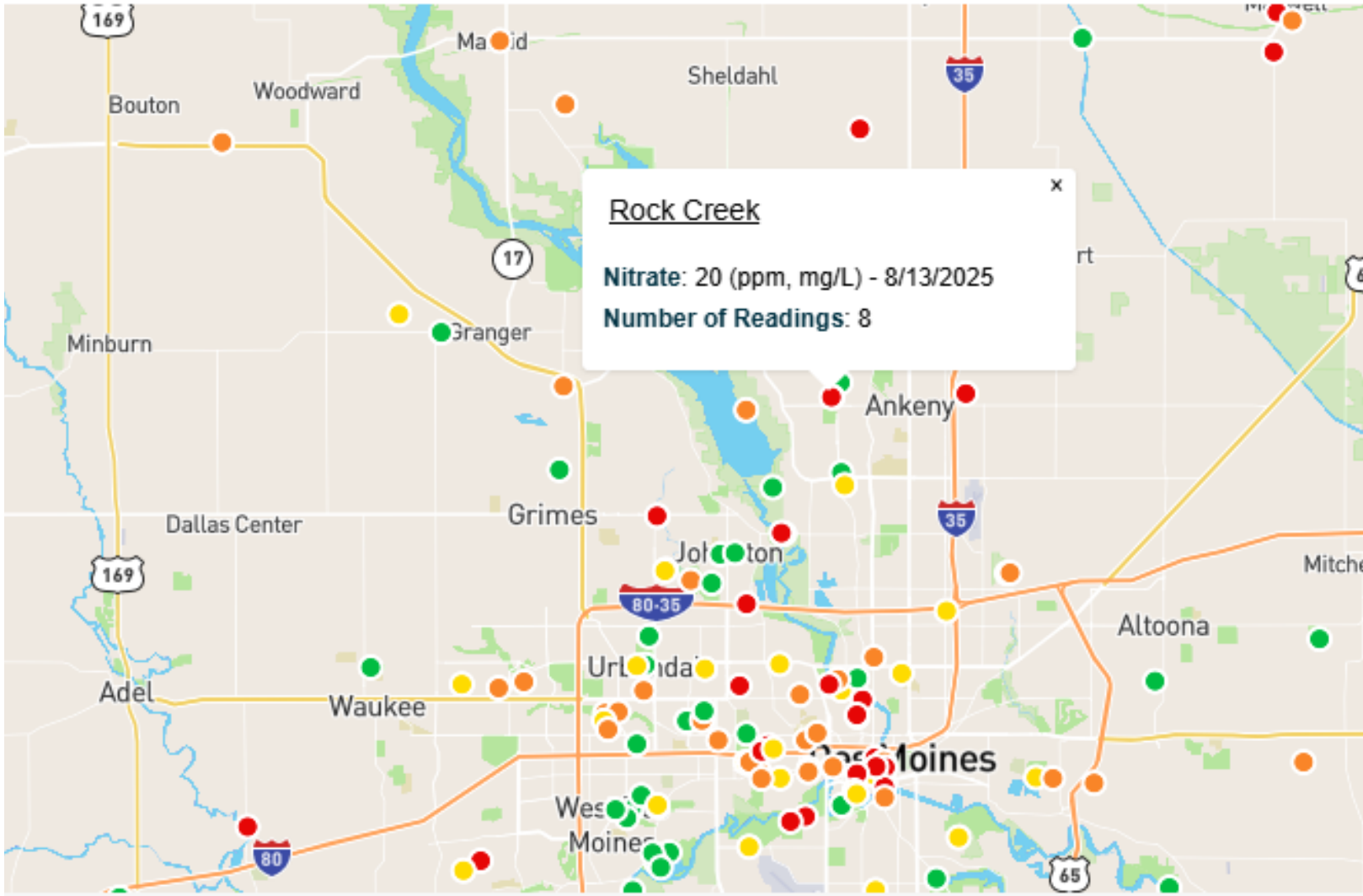


Data Access

Individual Sites

Nitrate Watch Map

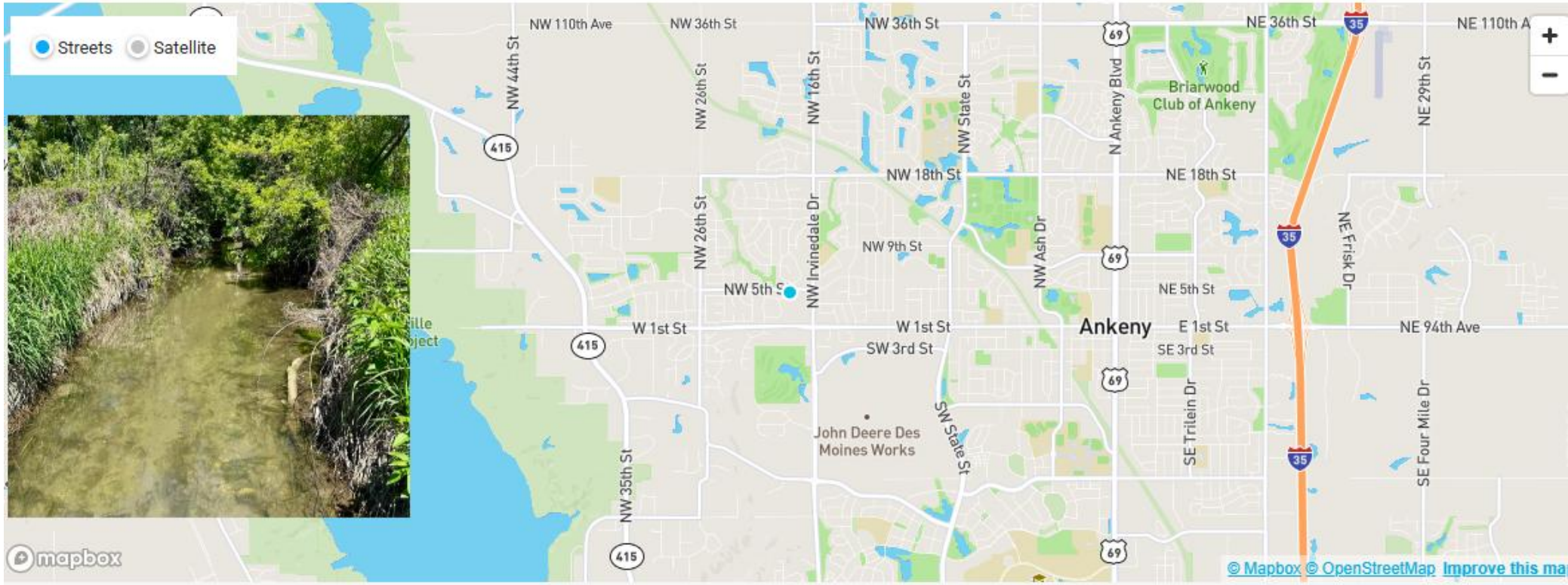
Start Date 01/01/2025 End Date 12/31/2025 Filter by Dates



Data Access

CLEAN WATER HUB

EXPLORE DATA ABOUT LOG IN SIGN UP HELP



ROCK CREEK

Creek runs through more recently developed areas and neighborhoods.

ROCK CREEK
Ankeny, IA

SOS BIOLOGICAL SOS CHEMICAL SALT WATCH **NITRATE WATCH**

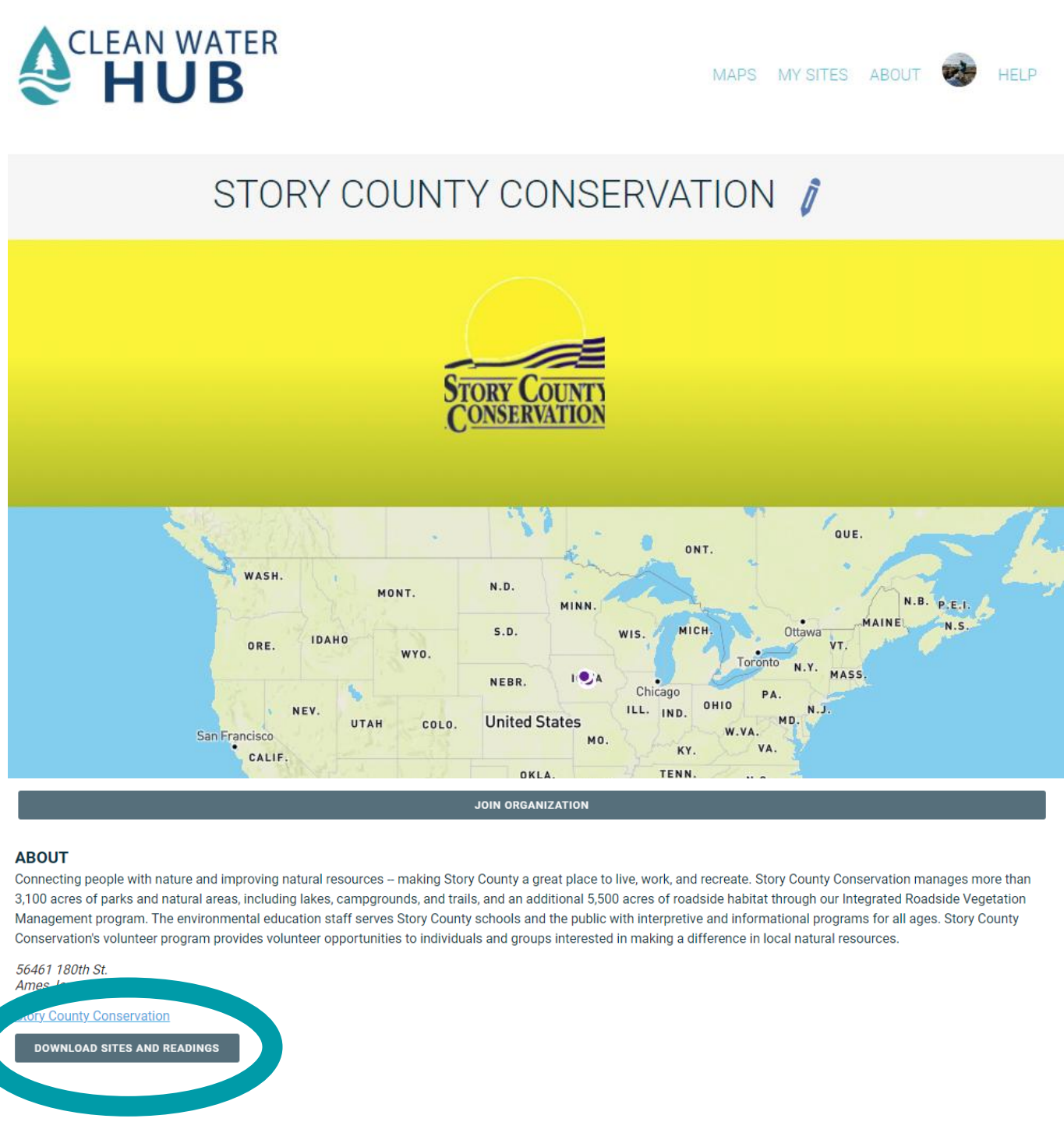
LATEST READING - NITRATE WATCH

Aug 13, 2025

Data Export

- Site Data
  - View & Screenshot graphs
  - View all site data
  - View individual readings
- Organization Data
  - **Export dataset**

DOWNLOAD SITES AND READINGS



SALT WATCH™
IZAAK WALTON LEAGUE OF AMERICA

www.saltwatch.org
saltwatch@iwla.org

NITRATE WATCH℠
IZAAK WALTON LEAGUE OF AMERICA

www.nitratewatch.org
nitratewatch@iwla.org

My contact: mdombroski@iwla.org

Announcements

EvelynAnn Bruno, National Capitol Area Council

Our past conferences have been tied to the land, and now it's time to embrace Scouting America's aquatic adventure side, so we are headed to Sea Base for our next conference! Join us for a week of outdoor ethics and conservation education focused on both land and aquatic activities, hands-on field experiences, and Sea Base adventure opportunities. This event includes pre-conference training courses, sessions led by subject-matter experts, off-site environmental tours and much more!

Main Conference Dates: February 18 (afternoon) - February 21

Pre-Conference Dates: February 15 - February 18 (morning)

While on property, you will be staying in spacious bunkhouses with plenty of ground-level bunks to park your flip flops under. There are two cost options to choose from which include your housing and all meals while on site.

Full Week (February 15 - 21) $325

The full-week option includes a pre-conference course or optional Sea Base activity of your choice and the main conference, but excludes any additional course/adventure fees that may apply.

Main Conference Only (February 18 - 21) $230

Getting there is easy! Sea Base is served by airports in Miami, Fort Lauderdale or Key West. Shuttle service is available to and from these airports for a fee of $55 each way if you don't want to rent a car.

Our planning team is working to bring our members some really great experiences and we hope to see you there! Stay tuned for more information as we finalize our plans.

* Costs are not final yet.

CONSERVATION AT THE SUMMIT

SCOUTING AMERICA

SCOUT CONSERVATION TRAINING

Come ready to gain knowledge, work outside, and become equipped to bring what you learned back home!

WHAT TO EXPECT

- Classroom training on concepts
- Hands-on application of concepts in the outdoors
- Recreation day at the Summit
- Registration for the week is $350

SUNDAY MAY 31- SATURDAY JUNE 6, 2026

THE SUMMIT BECHTEL FAMILY NATIONAL SCOUT RESERVE
2550 JACK FURST DRIVE GLEN JEAN, WV 25846

JOIN US NOW! **REGISTER AT SUMMITBSA.ORG/TRAINING**

Leave No Trace Level 2 Instructor Courses

Dates	Council	Camp	Course Info	Field Experience
2026				
May 16-22	National Council	Summit Bechtel Reserve	Info/Registration	Non-Trek
August 9-14	National Council	Northern Tier High Adventure Base, Ely, MN	Flyer Info/Registration Contact: Mark Hammer	Canoeing
Sept 25-30	National Council	Philmont Scout Ranch, Cimarron, New Mexico	Information/Registration	Backpacking
Oct 18-23	National Council	Summit Bechtel Reserve	Info/Registration	Non-Trek

SCHOLARSHIPS Available

Partial course scholarships are available for scouters needing financial assistance in order to attend a Scouting America Leave No Trace Level 2 Instructor Course. Please see our Dan Howells Scholarship webpage for more information.

The Dan Howells Memorial Fund was established to honor the memory of this passionate leader and his lifelong commitment to Leave No Trace and Scouting.

Thanks to the Howells' family and Leave No Trace for creating this wonderful way for us to honor Dan's legacy.

Scouting for Clean Waterways

- Sign up online to receive updates
- https://www.scouting.org/outdoor-programs/scouting-clean-waterways

Please send in your photos of Outdoor Ethics education, Conservation projects, or great nature photos you've taken!

roundtable@scouting-oec.org

Paul Schimke, National Capitol Area Council

Your feedback is a gift!

Was this roundtable helpful?
What would you like to see covered in future roundtables?

roundtable@scouting-oec.org

Recordings of Outdoor Ethics & Conservation roundtables are posted at https://scouting-oec.org/roundtable

Watershed Address

What's your watershed address?

Practice your map skills!

Interactive Watershed Explorer
https://mapscaping.com/interactive-us-watershed-map/

How's My Waterway? https://mywaterway.epa.gov/

Paul Schimke, National Capitol Area Council

Thank you for attending.
See you next month!

Youth Talk About the DCSA

Shreemann Patel, Council, Pathway to Adventure Council