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Iowa Policy Project says state is 38th in environment spending

by O.Kay Henderson

Iowa's state government ranks 38th among the states in spending on the environment according to a new report issued today by the Iowa Policy Project. Teresa Galluzzo, the report's author, says it's time to dedicate a small portion of the sales taxes collected in Iowa should be spent to improve the state's natural resources.

"If we don't increase the funding for our environmental stewardship organizations and increase their employee numbers, you can't expect the state's environment to improve," she says. Another group has suggested the state needs to spend 150-million more on the environment in the next decade, and Galluzzo says the need for more environmental protection "is as clear as the water is dirty."

"Overall, the state's natural resources have not been treated as a vital part of the state budget," she says. "There has not been adequate funding to meet Iowa's environmental challenges." The Iowa Policy Project report also suggests legislators should consider new state fees for industries which use lots of water.

"Although Iowa really hasn't experienced many water quantity problems so far, there are a number of water-intensive industries that are expanding fairly rapidly across the state right now -- for example, ethanol plants," she says. Galuzzo suggests the state could charge a water usage fee that rises as more water is used, in order to encourage water conservation. The report is available on-line at www.iowapolicyproject.org.

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