

River basins are focus of water-quality assessment

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OF THE REGISTER'S IOWA CITY BUREAU

Iowa City, Ia. — Eastern Iowa has been selected for a \$6 million to \$7 million water-quality study by the U.S. Geological Survey.

Starting Oct. 1, the Geological Service will begin gathering and analyzing water samples from the Cedar, Iowa, Skunk and Wapsipinicon river basins. The long-term study will cover 22,900 square miles in Iowa, Minnesota and Illinois.

Nick Melcher, the Geological Survey's Iowa district chief, estimated that 85 percent to 90 percent of the study area will be in Iowa.

The study area, known as Eastern Iowa Basins, is one of 20 study areas announced by Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt as part of a national water-quality assessment being conducted by the Geological Survey.

Ultimately, the program will

cover 60 study areas that account for about two-thirds of the nation's water use. Assessment of the first 20 study units began in 1991. Assessment of Eastern Iowa Basins and the other 19 units announced by Babbitt will begin Oct. 1. Assessment of the final set of 20 units is scheduled to begin in 1997.

Melcher said the Cedar, Iowa, Skunk and Wapsipinicon river basins were chosen because they are representative of water-quality conditions in the Corn Belt.

Water-quality problems in Eastern Iowa Basins are related to agricultural practices. Water samples taken from the four river basins will complement other data collection activities on the use of pesticides and herbicides. They also will support efforts to determine the best agricultural practices to protect the environment. And they will be used to augment studies on the relationship between drinking water quality and cancer rates.

WATER-QUALITY STUDY AREA

THE U.S. Geological Survey national water-quality assessment program has designated the eastern Iowa river basins as a study area.

