

# Water Quality



## Who We Are:

Friends of the Big Sioux River is a water advocacy nonprofit on a mission to protect and restore the Big Sioux River and its watershed. We focus on four main areas: water quality monitoring, public policy and advocacy, river restoration, and education. These core areas all center around improving our local community and building a conservation ethic.

## What is Water Quality?

- Water quality is the condition of a body of water, including the chemical, physical, and biological characteristics. It can be used to help determine a water body's suitability for a particular purpose, such as drinking or swimming.
- Water quality can be measured by a variety of factors, including bacteria levels, salinity, heavy metals, temperature, dissolved oxygen, and turbidity.
- Water quality is important for recreation, quality of life, economic development, tourism, and the health of people and wildlife.
- In the Big Sioux River in 2022, water quality decreased as the river flowed south. The river is regularly exceeding safe levels for E. coli, and contaminant levels often spiked following rainfall events.

## How Can You Improve Water Quality?

### Urban Areas

- Replace turf grass with native grasses and perennial flowers.
- Pick up and dispose of pet waste in a trash bin.
- Reduce, reuse, and recycle materials. Keep trash, soap, paints, etc. out of storm drains.
- Vote for candidates that make conservation measures a priority.

### Rural Areas

- Use cover crops to build healthier soil, reduce fertilizer applications, and retain soil moisture.
- Preserve wetlands to act as natural filters for runoff and serve as critical habitat for wildlife.
- Construct livestock fencing and implement responsible grazing.
- Reduce tile drainage to reduce chemical pollutants in the river.

## Volunteer For Friends of the Big Sioux River

- **Clean-Up Events:** FBSR offers companies, organizations, and community groups an opportunity to be directly involved in picking up trash on the streambanks of our local streams and rivers. If your business or group is interested in donating time to help clean up a stretch of a waterway, FBSR will provide all clean-up materials.
- **Water Testing:** From May through September, our incredible team of water testing volunteers collects water samples from the Big Sioux River and its surrounding tributaries. You can help make an impact in our watershed by becoming a water testing volunteer or joining us for a water testing ride-along this summer!

Learn more at [fbsr.org](https://fbsr.org)

Contact our Outreach and Donor Coordinator at [outreach@friendsofthebigsiouxriver.org](mailto:outreach@friendsofthebigsiouxriver.org) to schedule a clean-up event or to learn more about becoming a water testing volunteer.

