

## Watershed Planning Advisory Council

### Recommendations for 2023 Legislature

#### Monitoring and Measurement

1. The Iowa Water Plan must be updated. This update should include incorporation of climate change related issues relating to sustainability of Iowa surface and ground water resources for short- and long-term management and usage. This update should establish a measurement system to monitor ground water supply levels. Data from the monitoring system should be analyzed monthly by the State Climatologist and reported to IA DNR, IDALS, Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management Department, USGS, and the National Weather Service.
2. Build a soil health-monitoring network across Iowa to better understand the relationship between soil health, carbon sequestration and water quality.
3. Deploy a collaborative, comprehensive water monitoring strategy in priority watersheds to measure impact of WQI projects at multiple scales (field, stream, basin). Make results of the water quality monitoring available and accessible to the public, and report to the state legislature annually. Use the water quality monitoring data and watershed information (land use, farming practices, topography, weather, etc.) to evaluate progress on the Nutrient Reduction Strategy (NRS). Update the NRS based on the evaluations to improve effectiveness of the strategy.
4. Conduct a 10-year review of the NRS to evaluate the strategy and update it based on progress made. Include recommendations for improved monitoring of NRS outcomes. Release a public report on the review.

#### Partnerships

1. Encourage state legislature to explore funding frameworks or incentives for administrative and technical staffing support for watershed coordination in the state of Iowa considering city, county, state and WMA needs to accelerate conservation practice adoption. For watershed projects to be effective long-term, watershed coordinator and other technical assistance FTE positions should be funded by the state. Identify where there is a need for additional staff capacity based on project demand (watershed coordinators, technicians, outreach specialists). By funding at least one coordinator per HUC-8 watershed long-term, this will enable more effective relationships with partners including landowners. The state should work with partners to continue to support watershed

coordinator and other technical staff as needed in watersheds where project demand exists. We request that the legislature be favorable to requested increases to state agency FTE caps in order to support this goal.

2. For partnerships to be more effective at the watershed level, we encourage broader public and private stakeholder involvement beyond WMA members and agencies. Consideration for funding should be given to projects that have demonstrated sufficient involvement of partners within a watershed project. This will be quantified by measuring how many partners and cooperators are involved in projects, practice implementation, and the co-benefits achieved, such as Source Water Protection. Partners and the public should be invited to annual statewide watershed or conservation based meeting to share updates and opportunities for involvement in the watershed.
3. Partnerships are encouraged as a means to support and promote water quality practices as a component of drainage systems. Continue to support partnerships such as the Middle Cedar Water Quality Partnership and Polk County Saturated Buffer Batch & Build Projects project by allocating state resources in a way that increases the pace of practice implementation.
4. Systems resiliency should be incorporated into all projects through the development of comprehensive watershed management plans that address water scarcity, source water protection, flood risk reduction, crop production systems, wastewater treatment, and other co-benefits. In addition to continuing to monitor nutrients and bacteria, partnerships to support monitoring of emerging issues, such as HABs, PFAS, and pharmaceuticals in wastewater are needed. State and partner funding should be allocated in such a way that supports comprehensive watershed management planning on a targeted basis.

## Economics

1. Encourage the DNR to continue building upon the early success of the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Exchange program by expanding to additional communities throughout Iowa in partnership with other organizations. This program creates a path to incentivize cities/communities to invest in water quality improvements.
2. To encourage the implementation of water quality improvement projects, the legislature should explore the constraints to the development of water quality improvement projects, including improved collaboration with the Army Corp of Engineers to address expedient, efficient, and holistic drainage area construction practices. This should be addressed within one year by the legislature for efficient use of non-point source funding (SF512 and other).

3. Encourage legislature to study the fee structure for water use permitting to reflect the value of water. Such study should include effects on various surface water and groundwater recharge systems. Studies should also include effects that large users and individual ratepayers have on overall water system availability. Any increase in fees considered to be returned to the Groundwater Protection Fund
  
4. To address soil health, regenerative agriculture, and long-term sustainable agriculture, we suggest the legislature re-evaluates the role of the Leopold Center and consider re-establishing funding for this Center. In support of the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy, regenerative agriculture and soil restoration are key to water quality improvements. We recommend evaluation of Center funding in the upcoming legislative session.