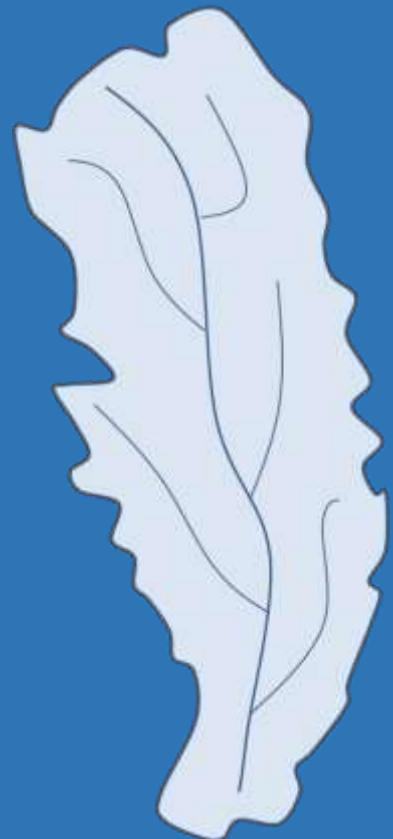


WATERSHED PLANNING  
ADVISORY COUNCIL  
2017 ANNUAL REPORT



## **Legislative Background**

The Watershed Planning Advisory Council (WPAC) was established by the Iowa Legislature (Iowa Code 466B.31) to assemble a diverse group of stakeholders to make recommendations to state and federal agencies to protect water resources in Iowa. (See more detail in Appendix A.)

## **Summary**

In February 2017, WPAC Chair Clare Lindahl, representing Conservation Districts of Iowa, and WPAC Vice-Chair Ann Robinson, representing the Iowa Environmental Council, presented a WPAC report to the Iowa Legislative Ag and Natural Resources Subcommittee. They emphasized conservation “bright spots” reflected in WPAC’s 2016 “Areas of Agreement” and asked legislators to consider them during the 2017 session. The summary of the Areas of Agreement were stated as:

- Ongoing, continuous and protected funding
- “Local works” with adequate capacity
- Measurement is essential for long-term progress
- Communication and outreach are vital to building support.

Two meetings were convened in 2017, with good attendance at each from the 19 WPAC member groups. Each meeting also included non-WPAC participants, interested representatives of the public and government who attended to listen and ask questions.

Following the Fall WPAC meeting in late October 2017, WPAC members were anonymously surveyed for feedback. Comments and ratings of the meeting were very similar to input in late 2016 and generally reflected positive views regarding the structure of the meeting and speakers. (See more detail Participant Survey Results in this report.)

## **Background**

The Watershed Planning Advisory Council (WPAC) was established by the 2010 Iowa Legislature (see Appendix A: Iowa Code 466B.31) to assemble a diverse group of stakeholders to review research and make recommendations to state and federal agencies regarding methods to protect water resources in Iowa, assure an adequate supply of water, mitigate and prevent floods, and coordinate the management of the state’s resources in a sustainable, fiscally responsible, and environmentally conscientious manner.

The voting members of WPAC (see Appendix B) consist of representatives of designated nongovernmental organizations as well as representatives appointed by the Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship and the Department of Natural Resources. Nonvoting members include two members of the Iowa Senate and two members of the Iowa House of Representatives.

Many of the organizations that make up WPAC were involved in the Watershed Quality Planning Taskforce (WQPTF) that was called for by the Iowa Legislature in 2006 to make recommendations on water quality programs and the need to improve water quality and reduce pollution from both point and nonpoint sources (Senate File 2363). In November 2007, the WQPTF produced a consensus report: <http://www.iowaagriculture.gov/WPAC/pdf/finallegislativereport2007.pdf>. The WQPTF recommendations were considered by the Iowa Legislature in 2008, resulting in the creation of a Water Resources Coordinating Council (WRCC): <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/code/466B.pdf>.

WPAC continues to consult with representatives of the WRCC, other governmental and non-governmental organizations and provides recommendations on watershed planning and effective implementation.

### **Recent Activity**

WPAC met April 4, 2017, at the Wallace State Office Building. The primary focus was on WPAC logistics, legislative updates and member reports and announcements. Discussion included meeting frequency and whether to continue WPAC work groups. In recent years, WPAC had met several times a year, often quarterly, and had developed subcommittees, known as task force work groups, that were charged to develop recommendations to bring to the full WPAC for consideration. The result of the discussion was that WPAC members decided to:

- meet only once or twice each year, but likely for somewhat longer sessions that have “more meaty” agendas. (The legislation guiding WPAC only requires one meeting per year.)
- suspend WPAC workgroups. As many of the recommendations members brought forward were failing to gain approval among WPAC’s diverse stakeholders, they decided the work invested was not productive.

Subsequently, one additional meeting was held October 31, 2017. That meeting was primarily focused building on the 2016 Areas of Agreement to focus on the partners, programs and policies that are most likely to improve water quality in Iowa. Four speakers gave related presentations that had been selected, based on interests indicated by surveying members via email prior to the meeting:

- Progress Report on the Iowa NRS and Logic Model – Laurie Nowatzke, Measurement Coordinator for the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Iowa State University
- State Revolving Loan Fund - Jon Tack, Iowa DNR Water Bureau Chief
- Iowa Watershed Approach - Nathan Young, Research Scientist, IHR Hydroscience and Engineering, University of Iowa
- Iowa Watershed Academy – Jamie Benning, Program Manager for the Water Quality Program, Iowa State University Extension and Outreach

After presentations, WPAC members randomly divided into the following groups for further discussion to refine the 2016 Areas of Agreement and start to prioritize items within them for policy attention, as well as identify disagreements and questions.

1. Partnerships for Progress – Providing greater and broader public involvement through watershed management planning and expanded partnerships for water quality improvement and flood risk mitigation.
2. Water Quality Economics – Creating voluntary, economic incentives for water quality improvements from point and non-point sources through programs, wetlands, and emerging technologies.
3. Measurement and Reporting – Providing incentives and strategies for water quality measurement and reporting.

Participants in the breakout sessions discussed why the topic was on the agreement sheet and what is important about the topic that the Legislature should understand. Each small group returned a short set

of recommendations, or agreements, to the facilitators, and time was allowed for all participants to ask clarifying questions and offer suggestions for the three sets of agreements.

### Areas of Agreement

#### A. Partnerships

- The Iowa Department of Natural Resources' State Revolving Loan Fund (SRF) encourages urban/rural collaboration enabling strong and flexible partnerships. Increased promotion of success stories is needed by reaching out to more partners.
- Public-Private partnerships – The integrated watershed management approach (as implemented through Watershed Management Authorities) positively engage rural and urban stakeholders, gaining support beyond state appropriations, and providing support for learning, assessment, implementing and monitoring. Hydrologic assessment is a critical component. It is important to reach out to potential corporate, supply-chain partners interested in 'sustainability' to leverage additional resources of funding and other types of support.
- Data sharing is valuable to avoid duplication, create a shared benchmarking system and provide an accessible clearing house with transparency that can build trust.

#### B. Economics

- Iowa should support the Iowa DNR's SRF and look for opportunities to grow the model. It would be great to see a similar USDA program.
- As the SRF program gets more competitive, we encourage Iowa to consider a prioritization strategy for distribution of funds, based on watershed assessment and planning. (An application could do at least initial effort to organize and assess for best use of funds).
- We encourage the state to allow a percentage of funds (5-10%) for planning and administration to support water quality coordinators and assessment. Funding is currently unreliable and regionalized in Iowa.

#### C. Monitoring

- Planning is critical for a successful monitoring plan that can make best use of funds.
- Hydrologic assessment should be a critical element of monitoring.
- Additional financial resources are needed. Funding the Iowa Water and Land Legacy Trust Fund could be a source of financing.
- A website is important for data sharing.
- An integrated, flexible approach is necessary because of diverse watersheds and access to varying community resources.
- It all happens with good leadership. Opportunities for training can help, for coordinators and volunteers.
- Grant writing is a key task of watershed-based staffing needs.

### Evaluation Synopsis provided by the Iowa Water Center

The Iowa Water Center (IWC) was invited to consult on WPAC meeting planning and facilitation in 2017. Following the half-day fall meeting, IWC conducted an end-of-year anonymous online evaluation survey that focused on the effectiveness of the meeting format. Highlights of the survey include:

Fourteen individuals responded to the evaluation for the meeting, a 52% response rate of the total WPAC members. Notable results were as follows:

- Approximately 93% of respondents agreed that the educational presentations were constructively related to the WPAC's goal.
- Approximately 71% agreed the open discussion within their working group was useful in engaging in WPAC topics.
- Approximately 77% agreed all working group members had an equal opportunity to participate in discussions with the meeting format.
- Approximately 54% were neutral when asked if the small group exercises allowed them to look at the topic in a new way. That same percentage also agreed or strongly agreed that their ideas were considered for overall working group recommendations, and the format allowed them to understand other' perspectives and input on the topics.
- Approximately 79% agreed that progress was made in achieving the goals established by the WPAC meeting.
- Overall, about 79% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the meeting, and about 86% were interested in participating in another WPAC meeting the following year.

New WPAC chair and vice chair candidates will be nominated and voted upon in 2018.

## **Appendix A: Iowa Code 466B.31**

### WATER PROTECTION AND WATERSHED MANAGEMENT, §466B.31

#### 466B.31 Watershed planning advisory council.

1. A watershed planning advisory council is established for purposes of assembling a diverse group of stakeholders to review research and make recommendations to various state entities regarding methods to protect water resources in the state, assure an adequate supply of water, mitigate and prevent floods, and coordinate the management of those resources in a sustainable, fiscally responsible, and environmentally responsible manner.

The advisory council may seek input from councils of governments or other organizations in the development of its recommendations. The advisory council shall meet once a year and at other times as deemed necessary to meet the requirements of this section. The advisory council may appoint a task force to assist the advisory council in completing its duties.

2. The watershed planning advisory council shall consist of all of the following members:

*a.* The voting members of the advisory council shall include all of the following:

- (1) One member selected by the Iowa association of municipal utilities.
- (2) One member selected by the Iowa league of cities.
- (3) One member selected by the Iowa association of business and industry.
- (4) One member selected by the Iowa water pollution control association.
- (5) One member selected by the Iowa rural water association.
- (6) One member selected by growing green communities.
- (7) One member selected by the Iowa environmental council.
- (8) One member selected by the Iowa farm bureau federation.
- (9) One member selected by the Iowa corn growers association.
- (10) One member selected by the Iowa soybean association.
- (11) One member selected by the Iowa pork producers council.
- (12) One member selected by the soil and water conservation districts of Iowa.
- (13) One person representing the department of agriculture and land stewardship selected by the secretary of agriculture.
- (14) One person representing the department of natural resources selected by the director.
- (15) Two members selected by the Iowa conservation alliance.
- (16) One member selected by the Iowa drainage district association.
- (17) One member selected by the agribusiness association of Iowa.
- (18) One member selected by the Iowa floodplain and storm water management association.
- (19) One member selected by Iowa rivers revival.

*b.* The nonvoting members of the advisory council shall include all of the following:

- (1) Two members of the senate. One senator shall be appointed by the majority leader of the senate and one senator shall be appointed by the minority leader of the senate.
- (2) Two members of the house of representatives. One member shall be appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives and one member shall be appointed by the minority leader of the house of representatives.
- (3) By December 1 of each year, the watershed planning advisory council shall submit a report to the governor, the general assembly, the department of agriculture and land stewardship, the department of natural resources, and the water resources coordinating council. The report shall include recommendations regarding all of the following:

- a.* Improving water quality and optimizing the costs of voluntarily achieving and maintaining water quality standards.
- b.* Creating economic incentives for voluntary nonpoint source load reductions, point source discharge reductions beyond those required by the federal Water Pollution Control Act, implementation of pollution prevention programs, wetland restoration and creation, and the development of emerging pollution control technologies.
- c.* Facilitating the implementation of total maximum daily loads, urban storm water control programs, and nonpoint source management practices required or authorized under the federal Water Pollution Control Act. This paragraph shall not be construed to obviate the requirement to develop a total maximum daily load for waters that do not meet water quality standards as required by section 303(d) of the federal Water Pollution Control Act or to delay implementation of a total maximum daily load that has been approved by the department and the director.
- d.* Providing incentives, methods, and practices for the development of new and more accurate and reliable pollution control quantification protocols and procedures, including but not limited to development of policy based on information and data that is publicly available and that can be verified and evaluated.
- e.* Providing greater flexibility for broader public involvement through community-based, non-regulatory, and performance-driven watershed management planning.
- f.* Assigning responsibility for monitoring flood risk, flood mitigation, and coordination with federal agencies.
- g.* Involving cities, counties, and other local and regional public and private entities in watershed improvement including but not limited to incentives for participation in a watershed management authority created under this chapter.

(4) Each year, the voting members of the advisory council shall designate one voting member as chairperson.

2010 Acts, ch 1116, §1; 2011 Acts, ch 131, §98, 158

**Appendix B: WPAC Membership 2017**

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Member Name or Delegate</b>
Senate Seat 1 (non-voting member)	Senator Joe Bolkom
Senate Seat 2 (non-voting member)	Senator Dan Zumbach
House of Representatives Seat 1 (non-voting member)	Rep. Charles Isenhardt
House of Representatives Seat 2 (non-voting member)	Rep. John Wills
Agribusiness Association of Iowa	Joel Brinkmeyer Shawn Richmond (alternate)
Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship	Susan Kozak Matthew Lechtenberg (alternate) Will Myers (alternate) Jake Hansen (alternate)
Department of Natural Resources	Bill Ehm Tim Hall (alternate) Allen Bonini (alternate) Adam Schneiders (alternate)
Growing Green Communities	Reo Menning
Iowa Association of Business and Industry	Jessica Harder
Iowa Association of Municipal Utilities	Tim Whipple Bill Stowe (alternate)
Iowa Conservation Alliance Seat 1	Fred Long Glenn Vondra (alternate)
Iowa Conservation Alliance Seat 2	Steve Roe Randy Taylor (alternate)
Iowa Corn Growers Association	Ben Gleason
Iowa Drainage District Association	John Torbert
Iowa Environmental Council	Ann Robinson (vice-chair) Susan Heathcote (alternate)
Iowa Farm Bureau Federation	Rick Robinson
Iowa Floodplain and Storm Water Management	Mark Land
Iowa League of Cities	Dean Mattoon
Iowa Pork Producers Association	Tyler Bettin
Iowa Rivers Revival	Robin Fortney Molly Hanson (alternate) Jerry Peckumn (alternate)
Iowa Rural Water Association	Gregory Huff
Iowa Soybean Association	Roger Wolf Todd Sutphin (alternate)
Iowa Water Environmental Association	Greg Sindt Jay Brady (alternate)
Soil & Water Conservation Districts of Iowa	Linda King (acting chair November 2017)