

# Water Resources Coordinating Council

Thursday, December 12, 2019

## Meeting Notes

### Welcome & Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 1:33 PM. Sign-in sheets showing WRCC members and guests present are attached to the meeting notes.

### WRCC Member Agency Updates

ISU Extension (Stefanik): Extension is starting winter meeting season through Crop Advantage series and ICM meetings. INRC is preparing to do FY2020 call for proposals. Also starting a seminar series 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of each month focused on water quality/nutrient reduction.

USACE (Thostenson): USACE had 52 Rock Island employees assisting with 2019 flood response and recovery activities. Flood of record at LD 15 for height and duration. Saylorville Reservoir crested 4 feet below spillway elevation. Red Rock also crested at top of flood control pool. UMRR program has completed feasibility on four projects and construction on two. \$33 million budget this year. Also looking at lock and dam maintenance throughout Mississippi River basin and pursuing select buyouts in advance of anticipated spring flooding, as well as additional work at Lake Red Rock. Sustainable Rivers project with The Nature Conservancy is nearing completion of stakeholder meetings. WOTUS implementation based on 1986 definition will be effective December 23<sup>rd</sup> with guidance forthcoming.

DNR (Schnieders): Alex Moon has been named DNR Deputy Director, and Ed Tormey is now Environmental Services Division Administrator. DNR is also in the process of filling Water Quality Bureau Chief, Land Quality Bureau Chief, and General Counsel. Draft impaired waters list update was released November 14<sup>th</sup>. 17 new waterbodies were listed and 14 new impairments are added to this list, based on available monitoring information. Comments will be accepted through December 28<sup>th</sup>. DNR is still working on PFAS action plan with focus on Des Moines and Sioux City National Guard bases. SF512 implementation is moving forward, with an announcement on Water/Wastewater Financial Assistance Program awards coming from IFA in December.

EPA asked us to convey that the Water Reuse Action Plan is nearing completion of public comment and implementation, and is a priority of the Office of Water and Wetlands. EPA has also finalized cyanotoxin advisory criteria and is working with states and partners to formalize those criteria.

IDPH (Schmitz): Presented information on the Iowa Public Health Tracking Portal, accessible at <https://tracking.idph.iowa.gov>.

IIHR (Weber): IIHR is planning a visit to North Carolina in March to see flood reduction practices there in exchange from the fall meeting in the Cedar River basin. IFC has an MOU with the LSU Water Institute to look at river-based flooding and watershed impacts through an NSF proposal

to be implemented over a 5-10 year period. Louisiana is also looking at an IWA-type modeling and flood reduction practice monitoring and deployment. The Iowa Flood Center is also receiving interest from similar institutes throughout the Midwest. Missouri governor has expressed interest in an EPA Region 7-wide look at flood risk management.

IEDA (Geerts): IEDA awarded 9 CDBG projects in November for water and sewer projects. \$3 million in CDBG leveraged \$18 million in other funds. Next deadline is in January. Met with 5 communities on storm water-related projects. Also HUD has notified Iowa that we will receive \$96.7 million in Disaster Recovery funding, with focus anticipated to be on infrastructure and property buyouts. IEDA also submitted a disaster recovery proposal to EDA to assist with planning in disaster-impacted areas. The Iowa Energy Office has some returned funding that is going to support a research project in Muscatine and Iowa Falls looking at alternative energy and wastewater treatment processes.

DOT (Brink): DOT presented a video showing reconstruction of the Highway 2 bridge over the Missouri River in Fremont County and highlighted the flood recovery efforts and challenges associated with that project area.

NRCS (Simon): Simon introduced Dr. Scott Cagle as the new Assistant State Conservationist for Partnerships. Cagle will interface with the WRCC along with Simon in the future. Also distributed NRCS At A Glance handout, highlighting conservation accomplishments in Iowa during FFY2019. Source water protection efforts were discussed as they are prominently featured in the new Farm Bill. EWP Easement signup resulted in 393 applications requesting more than \$250 million in assistance for nearly 40,000 acres of flood-impacted farmland. Currently Iowa has \$36 million available for these easements but is hopeful to get more.

FSA (Goettsch): CRP program currently has over 104,000 contracts covering more than 1.7 million acres. New rules are out with the new Farm Bill and the CRP handbook has been revised. Calls are scheduled to discuss with partners. There are two new CRP signups: General signup will run through February 28<sup>th</sup> and continuous signup is also underway. General signups will occur annually under the new Farm Bill. Many SAFE programs have moved from continuous to general signups. ECP program is being heavily utilized in disaster impacted counties, allowing for restoration of fields to a croppable state.

HSEMD (Giofreddi): Reported that the East and West Nishnabotna River watershed plan received an Iowa Chapter EPA Planning award for 2019. This is one of several HUD Iowa Watershed approach plans being completed. 2019 Flood Recovery fund awards were made in October with \$15 million in awards for projects in disaster-impacted counties. There is also an Interagency Flood Planning Committee meeting to prepare for potential spring flooding, as well as a Flood Recovery Task Force looking at housing and infrastructure concerns.

IDALS (Hansen): IDALS continues to work on efforts to scale up water quality practices in conjunction with Senate File 512 funding and the Water Quality Initiative. We are in the process of adding watershed coordinators in the Middle Cedar and Floyd River basins, and replacing a

coordinator in the North Raccoon. This will bring our total number of IDALS coordinators to six with one more working for ISU Extension.

Cover crop signups for 2019 were on pace with previous years, however the short, cold, wet fall likely prevented many applicants from seeding in time. We have more than \$2 million in completed cost share for cover crops and more than \$3 million more obligated, and we will find out in the next few weeks how many applicants were able to get their crops in.

Despite the weather IDALS is experiencing a record start to our year in terms of construction of cost-share practices. During the first quarter, districts contributed more than \$2.9 million of cost-share for conservation practices, nearly \$600,000 more than the previous record year set in FY2015. 58 of the 100 SWCDs have completed more construction work to date this year than in FY2019.

Finally, IDALS has received 30 applications for WQI Urban Demonstration projects. Evaluation and invitations for full proposals will be completed in December with final project decisions coming in the Spring and projects starting April 1, 2020.

NWS (Zogg): NWS presented the current temperature and precipitation outlooks for December and the winter as a whole. Expectation is for above normal precipitation and above normal temperatures in December and above normal precipitation for the Winter as a whole. NWS will issue a Spring Flood Situation Report on December 13<sup>th</sup>. The focus is that high potential for Spring flooding exists, particularly in the border river basins.

### **HUD Iowa Watershed Approach**

Larry Weber, IIHR, gave an update on progress within the HUD Iowa Watershed Approach. Planning is nearing completion and project coordinators are working with landowners to install flood reduction practices. Hydrologic modeling is also being done to look at other areas suitable for construction. Several projects are looking at remaining funds available and may reallocate project funds to areas with higher workloads.

### **Watershed Planning Advisory Council Annual Report**

John Whitaker, CDI Director and WPAC Chair, gave a presentation on the WPAC Annual Report. The report is accessible on the WPAC website.

### **Public Comments**

Adam Kiel Iowa Soybean Association announced ISA is launching the Iowa Soil and Water Outcomes Fund to work with landowners in the South Skunk and Middle Cedar watersheds. The effort is going to work with municipalities to establish cost-sharing and credit mechanisms.

Karl Gesch, Iowa Soybean Association, discussed scale up efforts regarding diffusion hubs in priority watersheds and will send the report to the WRCC for distribution.

### **Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 3:44 PM.