

## Water Resources Coordinating Council

Thursday, September 5, 2019  
Meeting Notes

### Welcome & Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 1:05 PM. Sign-in sheets showing members and guests in attendance are attached to these meeting notes.

### WRCC Member Agency Updates

IEDA (Geerts): Quarterly CDBG Water/Sewer project awards were just released. 7 awards for just over \$2 million with \$6.5 million in local match. Iowa Energy Center has some funding available for biomass projects but has not received much interest so far.

ISU Extension (Benning): One practice has been submitted to the NRS Science Team for inclusion (multi-use oxbow) and was approved. This practice will be added to the NRS practice list going forward. Kay Stefanik has joined the INRC as Associate Director. There will be 16 new projects announced in September by the INRC, bringing the total number of supported projects to 92.

EPA Region 7 (Tate): EPA will announce the Water Reuse Action Plan on September 10. This is a plan to spur acceptance and interest in reuse of water resources as appropriate.

DNR (Schnieders): Kayla Lyon has been appointed as the new DNR Director and is out meeting with partners. Bruce Trautman will be retiring on September 27<sup>th</sup>. DNR is finalizing 2019 statistics on beach closures and advisories. So far there have been 21 advisories this year. DNR and Iowa Dept. of Public Health will present statistics in greater detail at the next meeting. IDPH is investigating 2 illnesses reported that may be attributable to microcystin. EPA has finalized criteria for cyanotoxin and DNR is evaluating its use for the 2020 beach season.

FSA (Holcombe): 2018 Farm Bill increased CRP cap to 27 million acres. Currently at 22.7 million acres (1.74 million in Iowa). About 200K acres expiring both this year and next, factoring in one year extensions. General signup 52 ended in August with roughly 400 offers approved so far. Most approvals so far are reenrollments. Looking at another general signup in December. Hoping for the new handbook to be completed by that time. ECP work is underway in flooded areas for repairs and will continue to be enrolled as land dries out.

USGS (Nania): Out of flood response mode. Most streams are at normal conditions, some streams are running high in NE Iowa. Continuing to monitor nitrate levels at sensors and now have some real-time phosphorus monitoring under development. Bill in Congress to authorize PFAS sampling.

DOT (Nicholson): DOT is still wrapping up flood recovery, especially in far southwest Iowa. All but 6 flood impacted closures have now been resolved. DOT is now looking at resiliency in response in order to rebuild routes in a way to reduce future damages/loss of service. DOT has

a research proposal submitted and funded to research two-stage ditches and will be initiating project soon.

HSEMD (Gioffredi): Still heavy into flood recovery mode. 80 counties are currently receiving some form of individual or public assistance totaling in the area of \$250 million. Also looking at another \$40-50 million in Hazard Mitigation funding potential. Hoping to see much more hazard mitigation money starting next year. Flood recovery fund applications have been submitted. 3-4 applications came in from SW Iowa exceeding the \$15 million available. Applications have been submitted to provide match for buyouts. The meeting to review applications will be held on September 16<sup>th</sup>.

IDALS (Hansen): This year there are nearly 3,000 participants in the statewide cover crop program including 1,200 first time users. Total enrollment is just under 325,000 acres. Additionally, IDALS is preparing to release guidance for year 3 of the cover crop-crop insurance program in collaboration with RMA. Senate File 512 funding has been received for FY2019 with IDALS efforts focused on scaling up edge-of-field practices and building capacity in anticipation of significant funding increases starting in FY2021. IDALS also received a grant for \$1.15 million from EPA's Farmer to Farmer program for a wetland pilot initiative in the Middle Cedar River watershed. The project will result in construction of six new wetlands and will include monitoring for nutrient reduction effectiveness.

### **US Army Corps of Engineers State Partners Discussion**

Deputy Commander John Fernas led a discussion of key USACE developments for all districts covering Iowa. Currently USACE is actively assisting with levee restoration efforts, including assistance with non-USACE restoration. Active dredging of the Mississippi River channel is also a current priority.

In most cases the 2019 flooding along the Mississippi River was the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest flood of record, trailing only the 1993 floods. 27 pumps and more than 500,000 sandbags were deployed this year, along with several miles of poly and HESCO barriers.

Current shift is now to repair and long-term viability of levee system, including inclusion of non-federal levees that were previously not built. Most of the restoration work centers around erosion, revegetation of levees, and channel dredging. Currently working to dredge open 26 spots that are filled in (9 are completed). USACE is also working with the Upper Mississippi River Basin association on Planning Assistance to States on dredge disposal, drought, and flood risk management. A series of public meetings on that effort is nearing completion. A handout was also distributed overviewing the Upper Mississippi River Restoration program.

USACE now has statewide coverage for mitigation bank service areas. Previously there were only a few banks servicing the state. The Waters of the United States rule is expected to be signed by EPA on September 12. At that point the old WOTUS rule will take effect until the new replacement rule is finalized later this year.

**Nutrient Reduction Strategy Annual Report**

Laurie Nowatzke, ISU Extension, gave a presentation on the Iowa Nutrient Strategy Annual Report. The presentation slides can be accessed on the ISU Nutrient Reduction Strategy website.

**HUD Iowa Watershed Approach**

Jeff Geerts, IEDA, gave an update on progress on the Iowa Watershed Approach. Most of the watershed projects now have completed watershed plans and are moving to project construction. The Dubuque Bee Branch project is nearing its final phase. Infrastructure projects in Storm Lake, Coralville, and Dubuque are also continuing to progress. The program is nearing completion of its third year.

**Public Comments**

There were no requests by the public to provide comments.

**Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 PM. The next meeting will be held in early December, date and location to be determined.