

Water Resources Coordinating Council

Wednesday, February 17, 2016

Polk County Extension Office, Altoona, IA

WRCC Website: <http://www.iowaagriculture.gov/WRCC.asp>

MEETING NOTES

Welcome & Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 1:30 PM. Copies of sign-in sheets showing attendance of members and the public are attached.

WRCC Member Agency Updates (All)

Governor's Office (Branstad)- Gov. Branstad addressed the WRCC and discussed the SAVE (Secure and Advanced Vision for Education) proposal, which would extend the one-cent local option sales tax statewide from 2029 to 2049. The program would guarantee increases for education infrastructure and provide additional increases to support water quality. The proposal would provide \$4.68 billion for water quality and more than \$20.7 billion for school infrastructure over 30 years. Funding estimates are provided by forecasts generated by the Iowa Department of Revenue.

The proposal has been passed through the House Agriculture committee with some amendments as of this morning and will now move forward to the Ways and Means committee for debate, and then to the full House.

This source of funding would be dedicated for these purposes and would not be subject to annual legislative appropriation.

Question: Is this an alternative to the 3/8 cent tax increase? Could this be used to support that?

Answer: No, only for the purposes stated. Reality is that legislature is not inclined to raise the sales tax.

Question: Will practices supported be more permanent than just management practices?

Answer: Yes, WRCC and rulemaking groups will clarify this.

Question: Will 50% allocated to IDALS be distributed equally among programs?

Answer: Discretion will be granted to Department as to the allocation of those funds. Distinction between in-field and edge of field practices- cost and land retirement will necessitate different program design.

Schmitz (IDPH)- Deferred to presentation.

DNR (Ehm/Schneiders)-Ehm distributed DNR's Working for Clean Water publication and highlighted partnerships in projects in the release. Also reviewed DNR's role with WMA development in HUD project. FEMA has reached out to DNR with interest in floodplain mapping/management. DNR will propose mapping updates in 32 more counties with funding, for 41 counties total that will be mapped.

Schneiders provided a point source update showing progress of permits with nutrient reduction provisions. Roger Bruner provided an update from Nutrient Budget workgroup, specifically dealing with challenges in measuring phosphorus within the network.

IIHR (Weber)- HUD Iowa Watersheds project was selected for nearly \$97 million in funding over a 5-year period. Partner agencies will begin administrative tasks for implementation. Project will bring infrastructure improvements to Dubuque, Storm Lake, and Coralville, along with watershed flood resiliency projects in nine

watersheds. Project will focus on flood risk reduction but many practices will also create measurable water quality benefits. Next step is partner agency coordination along with early public information meetings.

ISU Extension (Castellano)-Castellano provided a handout from the Stories magazine on nitrogen management. Laurie Wissler distributed and discussed results of 2015 INRS Farmer Survey, which are the first set of results in a five year study.

Question: Is the figure about 40% of farmers not being aware of their contribution to Gulf Hypoxia accurate?

Answer: That is not in the handout but is roughly accurate per the survey.

Follow-up: Do you see this as a problem? Response: It merits ongoing measurement in the survey.

NRCS (Foreman)- Highlighted RCPP awards, including five new projects in Iowa. A summary sheet from NRCS is attached to these notes. Also have had 55 partner employees complete conservation planning training, and has national and state CIG RFPs forthcoming.

Matt Lechtenberg, IDALS, discussed the Midwest Partnership RCPP project that was funded for \$9.5 million and will leverage \$47 million of other funds. Comment from Gillespie- Next round is forthcoming and Iowa should encourage people to look at planning/design funding for PL-566 program and to reenergize that program.

NWS (Zogg)- First Spring Flood outlook will be released on Feb 18th. Overall there will be an elevated risk of minor flooding statewide. Streamflows are above normal largely due to record rainfall across state in December. Long-term flood risk will depend on spring precipitation. Tends to be dry following strong el Nino but right now signal is toward normal spring. Iowa Flood Center sensor data is being shared. Helpful in forecasting ice jams in the spring.

USGS (Nalley)- Elevated water levels and higher than normal streamflows. Partner meetings set for the Spring.

HSEMD (Turba)- Pre-implementation of HUD award. Also working with FEMA on measurement of cost-benefit ratios and waiting on decisions on waivers for HUD project. Still 14 open Presidential Disaster Declarations.

USDA-RD (Sand)- Well into funding cycle for funding water and sewer projects for this year. \$20 million in loans and \$5.5 million in grants available in Iowa. New interest in storm water projects- also lots of interest in projects that had stalled out previously.

USACE (Freyermuth)- No report. Hosted partnering meeting in January in West Des Moines.

EPA (Fluornoy)-Revolving Loan Fund program reviews are underway. Iowa program is doing really well.

Question on 319 funding: Answer is that funding levels will likely be flat next year.

U of I Public Health (Osterberg)- Looking at a drinking water conference around April 27 in Des Moines. CHEEC will be primary sponsor. Focus will be on drinking water contaminants. WRCC will receive more information when conference is developed.

DOT (Brink)-No report- active in projects with other partners at meeting.

UNI (Clayton)-Conservation Corps funding has been received for work on water quality, flood resilience, and training on public outreach.

IDALS (Gillespie/Lechtenberg): **Water Quality Initiative**

- Three new demonstration projects are underway. New grantees are the Iowa Seed Association, Polk SWCD, and Taylor SWCD. These projects bring the total number of watershed and systems-based demonstrations to 23. The first eight demonstration projects are entering their third and final year of their initial project agreement. In many of the projects momentum is building and we are working with

grantees to look at continuing those projects, including potentially transitioning the projects into implementation projects and/or extending projects to utilize RCPP funds.

- Second round of URBAN request for pre-applications closed on December 11th. Received 32 pre-applications. 15 projects were selected to submit full-applicants by Feb. 2nd. 13 full applications were received, requesting just over \$1 million in WQI funds, leveraging more than \$2 million in other funding. Presently there are nine active urban demonstration projects from the initial application cycle in 2015.

Final funding decisions are anticipated next week. It is anticipated that successful applicants will enter into contracts beginning April 1, 2016.

- Final statistics from the 2015 statewide WQI offering for management practices are forthcoming, but initially it appears that more than \$3 million in cost-share has been completed and certified, with some bills yet to be processed. For 2016, we anticipate a similar offering, with the potential to add an edge-of-field component to the program in order to get more bioreactors and saturated buffers on the ground.

RCPP: IDALS/IAWA – Midwest Agriculture Water Quality Partnership

\$48M project – Awarded \$9.5M

- \$4.75M from the state (IDALS+DNR)
- Does not include the match provided by Iowa farmers and landowners (several million \$)

Award Breakdown as Follows

- \$8.5M for EQIP practices, ACEP, and CSP
- \$1M Technical Assistance to deliver the practices
 - \$500k for NRCS; \$500k for IDALS and partners
- ~90% of the funding will go directly to farmers and landowners for the practices they install.

Partnership among IDALS + IAWA and 45 other partners (47 total)

- Agribusiness, Ag Retailers, Seed Companies, etc.
 - \$28.2M in TA
 - \$9.6M in FA (practices)

Focus area is the Middle Cedar, Upper Cedar, North Raccoon, and South Skunk HUC8s.

- Priority areas are 4 WQI funded projects: Headwaters North Raccoon, Elk Run, Squaw Creek, Walnut Creek + Fourmile (1 WQI project).

These projects allow for focused implementation of practices in the nutrient reduction strategy, which have not historically been prioritized in other, traditional programs.

This project will build on the efforts of two active RCPP initiatives: IDALS (\$3.5M) and Cedar Rapids (\$2.1M)

Charles City: was also successful in securing a \$1.6M award through 2016 RCPP focused on work in the Upper Cedar WS (Rock Creek and other HUC12 WSs)

Nutrient Reduction Strategy Annual Report coming in May

Staff will work with ISU Extension and DNR to distribute a reporting template in order to gather data for the update later in the Spring.

Hypoxia Task Force

The next Hypoxia Task Force Meeting will be held in St. Louis area April 26-28.

Algal Blooms and Microcystin Study- Stu Schmitz, IDPH

This is a presentation that was tabled from November and is the culmination of a joint effort between Iowa Dept. of Public Health and the Iowa DNR, focused on evaluating algal blooms at state beaches. A copy of the presentation is included in the WRCC archives.

Question: At what point does IDPH data become a public health concern?

Answer: IDPH responds to calls from the public and provides monitoring information. The presentation illustrates a manifestation of a nutrient issue. In theory this should illustrate local water quality issues.

Follow-up: Who does anything about this? Response: Presently monitoring is limited to state beaches and some reservoirs. DNR staff will issue public advisories as needed, particularly if beaches or surface drinking water are impacted.

Question on how cyanotoxin advisories are being developed. EPA responded that currently states and EPA are looking at World Health Organization protocols for advisories.

Comment: Cyanotoxin and related issues were more widespread than just Toledo last year. UMRBA has similar concerns for Mississippi River basin going forward.

Public Perceptions of Water Quality in Iowa- UNI Center for Social & Behavioral Research

Mary Losch gave a presentation by social researchers at UNI to gauge the level of understanding and urgency of water quality issues in the general public. A copy of the presentation is included in the WRCC archives and the full report can be accessed on the DNR's Water Quality website.

Question: Did report differentiate between groundwater and surface water as drinking water source? Answer: No.

Statistical Considerations in Nutrient Reduction Measurement- Iowa State University

Dr. Castellano presented a statistical simulation of nutrient load reductions and the corresponding metrics that might show up as a result of different nutrient reduction outcomes. A copy of this presentation is included in the WRCC archives.

Question: Is there a difference in predictability in concentration vs. loads?

Answer: Current simulations show more confidence in concentration than in load. Weber clarified that measurements are flow-weighted concentrations.

Question: Long period of data was available here, but currently isn't available in smaller watersheds. How many years of data would you need to measure in a smaller watershed?

Answer: The approach here can be essentially reversed to determine how much data is necessary.

Question: Based on simulation, what do the models show versus real-time data?

Answer: USGS would have to refer to historic sensor data to ground-truth this.

Question: What is the purpose of this exercise if we have real data?

Answer: Real-time data like what Des Moines Water Works has is very rare. This study tells us how much data we would need to measure accurately.

WPAC Update

Susan Heathcote provided an update from the WPAC. The committee met on February 5 and heard a presentation on a Minnesota watershed tour, and also discussed 2016 priorities. She suggested the WRCC hear the watershed presentation.

Public Comments

Three members of the public addressed the WRCC. First, Steve Roe with the Racoon River Watershed Alliance addressed the Council. Steve thanked the people who participated in the Agren planning project with the Alliance. The RRWA board has addressed the need to establish a watershed management authority for the North Racoon in order to help with funds to be programmed. The RRWA would like assistance from state agencies to implement their funding and set up a WMA. DNR pointed out that this is one of the areas where funding is available through the HUD project.

Second, Jennifer Terry with Des Moines Water Works addressed the Council. She addressed the work of the Greater DM Partnership Task Force and their proposal to establish a watershed framework. She inquired about inviting the Minnesota group to present in a future meeting.

Linda Kinman- Asked if a group or subset of the WRCC would be able to review/address barriers to working with landlords on conservation.

Ms. Kinman is also interested in research on saturated buffers and progress. Hansen indicated that he would reach out to ISU and NRCS on presenting on this in the future.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 4:06 PM.

Next Meeting: Early May 2016; Location TBD.

The next meeting will likely be held early in May. We will look at the legislative calendar and determine when and where. The committee and the public will receive advance notice of the next meeting.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	WRCC Representative	Position	Organization
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1 Bill Northey	Secretary (WRCC Chair)	Iowa Department of Agriculture & Land Stewardship
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2 Terry Branstad	Governor	Governor's Office
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Julie Vande Hoef	Designee	Governor's Office
<input type="checkbox"/>	3 Chuck Gipp	Director	Iowa Department of Natural Resources
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Bruce Trautman	Designee	Iowa Department of Natural Resources
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Bill Ehm	Designee	Iowa Department of Natural Resources
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4 Jim Gillespie	Director	IDALS - Division of Soil Conservation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Jake Hansen	Designee	IDALS - Division of Soil Conservation
<input type="checkbox"/>	5 Gerd Clabaugh	Director	IA Department of Public Health
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Kenneth Sharp	Designee	IA Department of Public Health
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Stu Schmitz	Designee	IA Department of Public Health
<input type="checkbox"/>	6 Mark Schouten	Administrator	Iowa Homeland Security & Emergency Management
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	John Beason <i>Joshua Turba</i>	Designee	Iowa Homeland Security & Emergency Management
<input type="checkbox"/>	7 Wendy Wintersteen	Dean	College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, ISU
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	John Lawrence <i>Laurie Wisler</i>	Designee	College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, ISU
<input type="checkbox"/>	8 Susan Curry	Dean	College of Public Health, University of Iowa
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	David Osterberg	Designee	College of Public Health, University of Iowa
<input type="checkbox"/>	9 John Fritsch	Dean	College of Humanities, Arts and Sciences, UNI
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Maureen Clayton	Designee	College of Humanities, Arts and Sciences, UNI
<input type="checkbox"/>	10 Paul Trombino III	Director	Iowa Department of Transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Ken Brink	Designee	Iowa Department of Transportation
<input type="checkbox"/>	11 Debi Durham	Director	Iowa Economic Development Authority
<input type="checkbox"/>	Vacant	Designee	Iowa Economic Development Authority
<input type="checkbox"/>	12 Dave Jamison	Executive Director	Iowa Finance Authority
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lori Beary	Designee	Iowa Finance Authority
<input type="checkbox"/>	13 Alec Scranton	Dean	College of Engineering, University of Iowa
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Larry Weber <i>Guy Nolley</i>	Designee	College of Engineering, University of Iowa
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	14 Kevin Richards <i>Designee</i>	Director	USGS, Iowa Water Science Center
<input type="checkbox"/>	15 Kurt Simon	State Conservationist	USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Marty Adkins <i>Barclay Palmer</i>	Designee	USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
<input type="checkbox"/>	16 John Whitaker	State Executive Director	USDA, Farm Services Agency
<input type="checkbox"/>	17 Bill Menner	State Director	USDA, Rural Development
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Kate Sand	Designee	USDA, Rural Development
<input type="checkbox"/>	18 Mark Hague	Regional Administrator	EPA-Region 7
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Karen Flournoy	Designee	EPA-Region 7
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Damon Frizzell	Designee	EPA-Region 7
<input type="checkbox"/>	19 Colonel Craig Baumgartner	Rock Island District Commander	US Army Corps of Engineers Rock Island District
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Diane Karnish	Designee	US Army Corps of Engineers Rock Island District
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Angela Freyermuth	Designee	US Army Corps of Engineers Rock Island District

WRCC Public Attendance Sign-In Sheet
(Public comments will be accepted at specified time on agenda)

	Name	Affiliation	Have Comments (Y/N)
1	Heidi Woerber	US Fish and Wildlife Service	N
2	Tyler Bettin	Iowa Pork Producers Assn.	N
3	Robin Gortney	Iowa Rivers Revival	N
4	Kesler Bruno	IDNR	N
5	Jill Witbeck	University of Northern Iowa	N
6	Mary Losch	" " " "	N
7	Allen Bonini	ONR	N
8	Ken Howard	GMK	N
9	Laurie Wissler	ISU	N
10	Laurel Foreman	NRCS	N
11	Steve Falck	ELPC	N
12	Steve Williams	Consultant	N
13	Jessie Turba	HSEMD	N
14	Eun Heiden	UNI	N
15	Kate Sand	USDA RD	N
16	Angela Freyermuth	USACE, Rock Island District	N
17	Steve Roe	RRWA IKES IEC	Y
18	Brian McGarvey	RRWA	N
19	Mike Del		
20	Susan Karkhate	WPAC & Iowa Envir Council	
21	Bri Farber	USC	N
22	Karen F. Lounney	EPA	N
23	Jennifer Terry	Des Moines Water Works	Yes
24	Julie Vandetta	IGOV	N
25	Governor Terry E. Branstad	IGOV	
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SAVE for the Future

Supporting Our Education Infrastructure & Water Quality Efforts

Current Law

The Secure an Advanced Vision for Education (SAVE) program was enacted on July 1, 2008. These dollars are currently being utilized for school infrastructure needs & school district property tax relief.

The SAVE fund expires on December 31, 2029.

SAVE funding has provided Iowa school districts with more than **\$3.2 billion** for school infrastructure since 2008.

By sharing SAVE funding growth, this plan will provide a long-term source of funding for school infrastructure and water quality and **WILL NOT RAISE TAXES**

SCHOOLS:

★ **Provide Predictability and Long Term Stability to Schools:** By extending the expiration date for school infrastructure funding through December 31, 2049 and allowing for the use of revenue for per pupil and transportation cost inequities.

★ **Increase Education Infrastructure Funding:** Through a \$10 million increase in growth each fiscal year, beginning in fiscal year 2017, where schools will receive **\$468 Million**. Estimates show schools would receive **\$788 Million** in 2049, and **\$20.7 billion** total for school infrastructure.

★ **Twenty Year Extension with Growth:** Gives school districts critically needed funding for building projects and property taxpayers confidence their taxes will not be increased to meet education building needs.

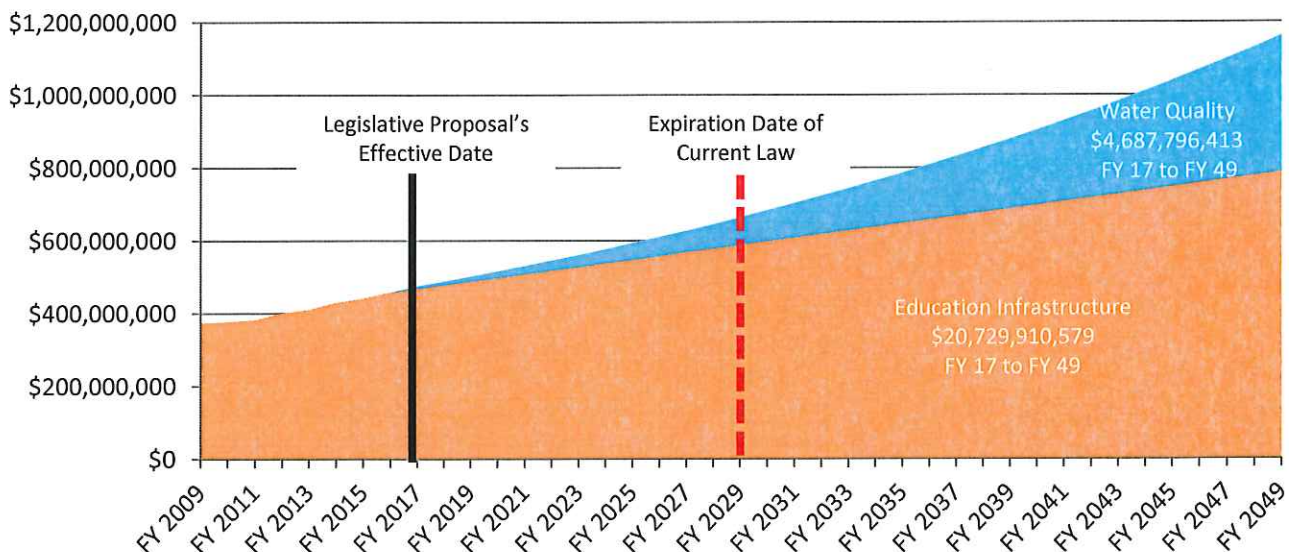
WATER QUALITY:

★ **Dedicated Funding Source for Water Quality:** Capture the remaining projected growth to support water quality efforts, providing an estimated **\$4.7 billion**.

★ **Support Both Point & Non-Point Water Quality Efforts:** Funding for water quality shall be allocated to assist with both point and non-point efforts through current and new programs under the Iowa Dept. of Agriculture and the Iowa Finance Authority.

★ **Continue Collaboration:** Continue to collaborate with Iowa landowners, cities, counties and others on a science-based approach to water quality and assist un-sewered communities with treatment options.

Funding Estimates by the Iowa Department of Revenue



Water Quality Funding – SAVE Proposal
100% to Support the Nutrient Reduction Strategy

Iowa Department of Agriculture & Land Stewardship (IDALS)
Division of Soil Conservation & Water Quality
50%

Water Quality Infrastructure Cost Share Program
*Edge of Field

Statewide Cost Share Program
*In Field

Demonstration Projects
*Targeted Watersheds

Iowa Finance Authority (IFA)

Water Quality Financial Assistance Committee
Committee Members: Secretary of Agriculture, DNR Director & IFA Exec. Director

Water Quality Financing Program
* Revolving Loan Program
35%

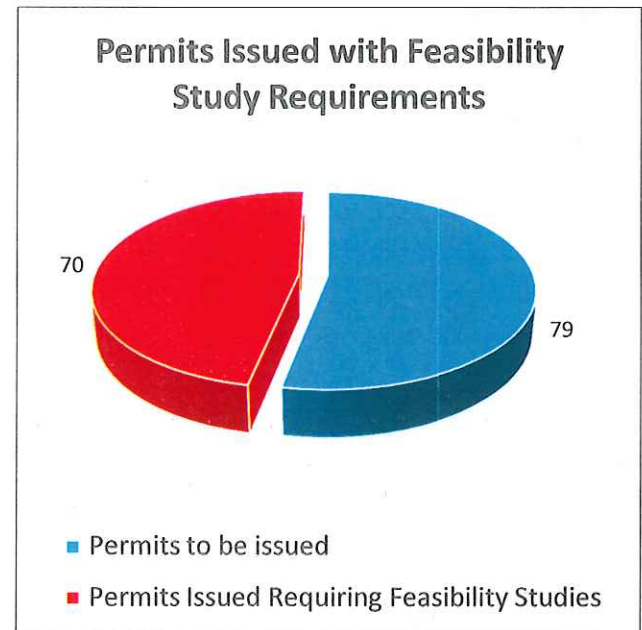
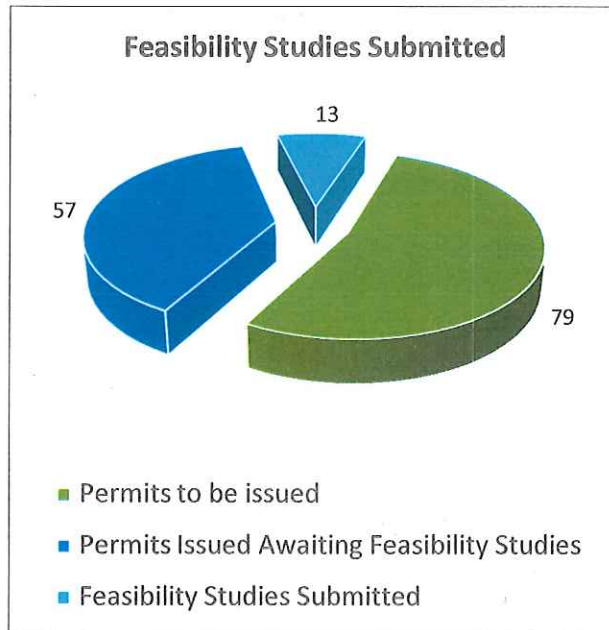
Wastewater & Drinking Water Financial Assistance Program
* Grants
15%

New Program

Current Program

Nutrient Reduction Strategy Point Source Report

WRCC – February 2016



New Permits Issued since the December WRCC Meeting

#	Facility/Location	Issued Date	Status
1	City of Grimes	2/1/2015	
2	City of Osceola	2/1/2015	

New Permits on Public Notice since the December WRCC Meeting

#	Facility/Location	Notice Date	Status
1	ARCHER DANIELS MIDLAND CORN PROCESSING - Clinton	1/27/2016	
2	NEXTERA ENERGY DUANE ARNOLD, LLC – PALO	1/6/2016	
3	IPL - LANSING STATION	1/29/2016	
4	CRESCO CITY OF STP	1/14/2016	
5	WASHINGTON CITY OF STP	12/7/2015	
6	SHENANDOAH CITY OF STP	12/17/2015	
7	BURLINGTON CITY OF STP	1/29/2016	
8	WATERLOO CITY OF STP	1/5/2016	

	Facility Name	Location	Permit Issued	Feasibility Report Submitted	Feasibility Report Approved	Earliest Construction Date	Potential Load Reductions (lbs)		Will Meet Goals? 1=Yes 2=No	Total Estimated Cost (millions)	Cost/Pound Removed (dollars)	
							TN	TP			TN	TP
1	Dariconcepts	Allerton	9/1/2013	9/1/2015	N							
2	Tyson Foods	Perry	11/1/2013	11/1/2015	N							
3	Manildra Milling	Hamburg	12/1/2013	11/19/2015	N							
4	Rembrandt Enterprises	Thompson	9/1/2013	9/1/2015	N							
5	Oakland Foods	Oakland	12/1/2013	12/1/2015	N							
6	City of Grinnell	Grinnell	9/1/2013	9/1/2015	N							
7	City of Dubuque	Dubuque	10/1/2013	10/1/2015	N							
8	City of Harlan	Harlan	10/1/2013	9/15/2015	N							
9	City of West Liberty	West Liberty	9/1/2013	9/1/2015	N							
10	City of Atlantic	Atlantic	12/1/2013	12/1/2015	N							
11	City of Eldridge	Eldridge	12/1/2013	12/1/2015	N							
12	City of Grundy Center	Grundy Center	2/1/2014	2/1/2016	N							
13	City of Mt. Pleasant	Mt. Pleasant	2/1/2014	2/1/2016	N							

Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy 2015 Farmer Survey

Questions? Contact:
Laurie Wissler, lwissler@iastate.edu
Dr. J. Arbuckle, arbuckle@iastate.edu

Survey Objective

The survey project, which is funded by the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, is a five-year project that is collecting data that will help stakeholders to measure progress toward Iowa's Nutrient Reduction Strategy (NRS) objectives.

Survey Design

HUC6	HUC8	Number of Respondents	Response Rate
Iowa	Lower Iowa	440	37%
	Middle Cedar	500	42%
Missouri-Little Sioux	Big Papillion-Mosquito / Boyer	357	35%
	Floyd	425	42%
Total		1746 [†]	

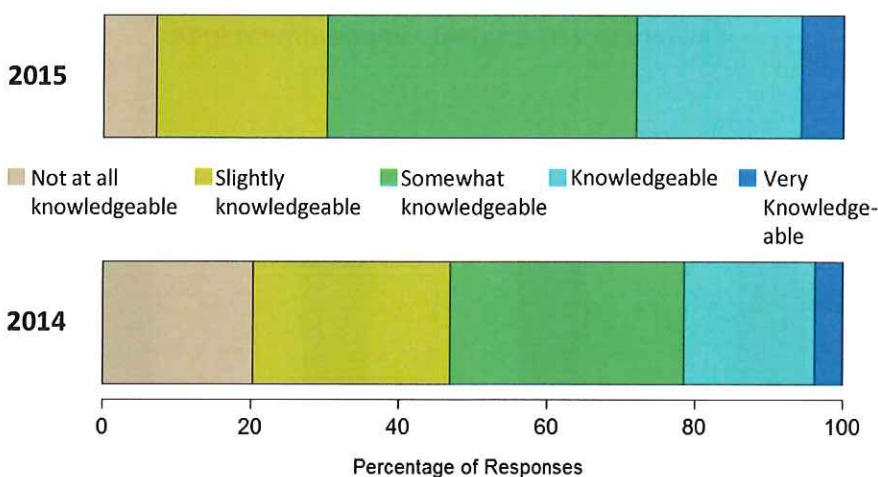
[†] Some respondents did not provide watershed information but were included in the survey analysis.

In the first year of the study, approximately 1700 farmers from two Hydrological Unit Code (HUC)-6 watersheds served as respondents. In each HUC6, respondents were based in a NRS Priority HUC8 watershed and a non-priority HUC8 watershed. This survey will be conducted each year, drawing on respondents from each Priority HUC8 watershed as well as paired non-priority watersheds from the corresponding HUC6.

Preliminary Results

1. How knowledgeable are the respondents about the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy?

Farmer Knowledge of the Nutrient Reduction Strategy

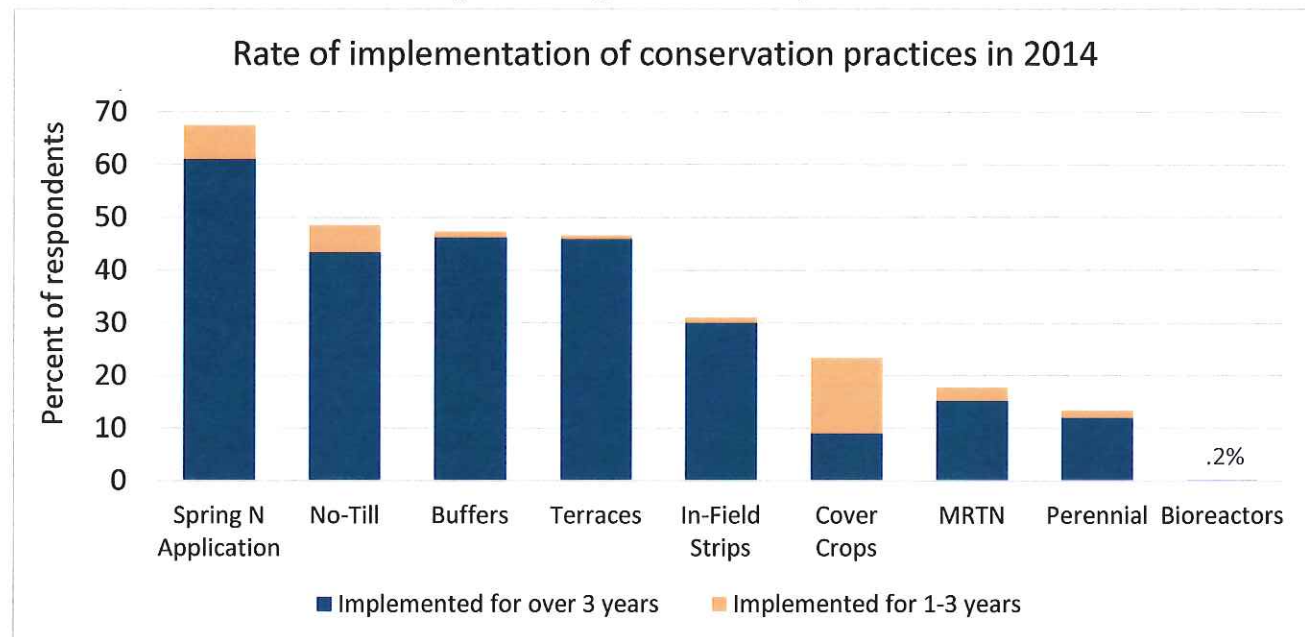


In the 2015 NRS Survey, 69.9% of respondents were at least somewhat knowledgeable about the NRS.

Although the results come from different samples and studies so cannot be directly compared, the NRS Survey showed an increase in overall NRS knowledge compared with the 2014 Iowa Farm & Rural Life Poll.¹

¹ Arbuckle, J. G. and H. Bates. 2015. *Farmer Perspectives on Iowa's Nutrient Reduction Strategy*. Extension Report PM3072. Ames, IA: Iowa State University Extension.

2. To what extent are farmers implementing conservation practices?



Survey respondents in the 2015 NRS Survey were asked whether they implemented various practices in 2014. Of those who used conservation practices pertinent to the NRS, the majority of implementation had been occurring for more than 3 years (see above chart). As an exception, most respondents who used cover crops in 2014 had more recently adopted the practice.

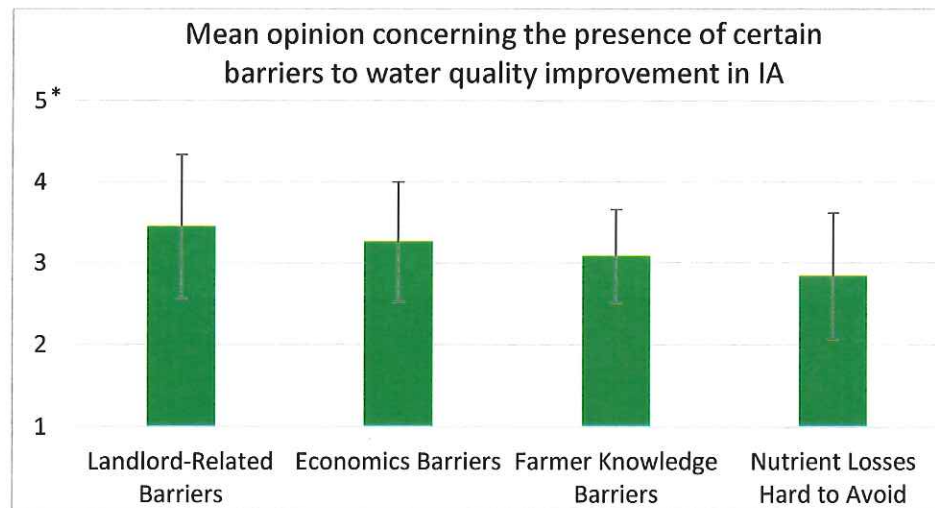
For some practices, 2014 implementation correlated with high knowledge of the NRS

Stream Buffers	Bioreactor ‡
Terraces	Ponds/Basins
No Till	Variable-Rate N
Contour Strips	Strip Tillage
MRTN	Tile / Ditches/ Drainage
Cover Crops	

‡ Small sample size

3. What kinds of barriers do respondents feel are impeding water quality improvements in Iowa?

Farmers expressed their level of agreement with statements related to the barriers to water quality improvement in Iowa. These statements were categorized as shown in the chart (at right). No statistical difference between each type of barrier can be assumed. Thus, each of these types of barriers might be considered when addressing opportunities for water quality improvement.



* **Scale** Responses were analyzed as a summative scale, whereby responses ranging from strongly disagree (low value) to strongly agree (high value) were assigned values and reported as means.



United States Department of Agriculture

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP)

Investing in Iowa - 2016

Created by the 2014 Farm Bill, the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP) is a partner-driven, locally-led approach to conservation. It offers new opportunities for USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to harness innovation, welcome new partners to the conservation mission, and demonstrate the value and efficacy of voluntary, private lands conservation.

In 2016, NRCS is investing up to \$220 million in 84 high-impact projects that impact every state in the nation, including five in Iowa. This investment, which builds on the \$370 million invested for 2014 and 2015, will help conservation partners and agricultural producers conserve natural resources, leading to cleaner and more abundant water, healthier soil, enhanced wildlife habitat and many other benefits.

Honey Bee and Monarch Butterfly Partnership

Proposed NRCS Investment: \$8.3 million (CCA)

Lead Partner: Pheasants Forever, Inc.

Number of Partners: 5

Participating State(s): Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska (**lead state**), North Dakota & South Dakota

Project partners will implement 2,900 EQIP projects on 14,500-acres within the Prairie Grasslands Critical Conservation Areas of Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota and will address inadequate habitat for fish and wildlife natural resource concerns to improve habitat conditions for honey bees and monarch butterflies. Those concerns will be addressed by working to establish high quality habitat projects with landowners on croplands in the area using innovative strategies that directly connect beekeepers, landowners, honey bees, monarch butterflies and high quality habitat.

Improving Working Lands for Monarch Butterflies

Proposed NRCS Investment: \$6 million (National)

Lead Partner: National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

Number of Partners: 12

Participating State(s): Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Oklahoma, Texas (**lead state**) & Wisconsin

Our partnership will restore, manage and conserve wildlife habitat for monarch butterflies on agricultural and tribal lands using four main strategies: conservation planning and assessment; habitat improvement and best management practices; building an adequate seed supply for milkweed and nectar plants; and, enhancing organizational coordination and capacity. To provide the greatest conservation outcomes, the project will focus work within two NRCS Critical Conservation Areas: Prairie Grasslands Region and Mississippi River Basin.

Targeted areas will be identified through a US Geological Survey-led initiative examining fine-scale opportunities for the restoration of milkweed and other pollinator plants. This project will contribute to national goals in terms of habitat and increase the number of monarch butterflies. This in turn will represent the best opportunity to avoid future regulations related to monarch butterflies from being imposed on farmers and ranchers in the future.



USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Midwest Agriculture Water Quality Partnership

Proposed NRCS Investment: \$9.5 million (National)

Lead Partner: Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship

Number of Partners: 40

Participating State(s): Illinois, Iowa (**lead state**) & Nebraska

The Midwest Agriculture Water Quality Partnership has assembled over forty partners and \$38 Million in non-federal funds to build an innovative public-private collaboration aimed at advancing a science-based, non-regulatory approach to reducing nutrient loss and improving water quality, soil health and habitat for at-risk species. The partnership has brought together diverse stakeholders from multiple sectors committed to improving water quality in alignment with the goals of the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy. The geographic focus is Iowa, Illinois and Nebraska, with an emphasis on priority watersheds within Iowa. This proposal seeks to improve water quality through building bridges among the public, private, agriculture and environmental sectors and rural, urban, point source and non-point source communities as well as all segments of the agricultural supply chain to foster greater collaboration, improved coordination, increased alignment and more effective conservation delivery. This proposal merges traditional approaches to deliver conservation through scaling up conservation planning and conservation practices with a non-traditional, highly innovative precision agriculture platform integration component that will lead to greater practice adoption and improved conservation outcomes.

Precision Conservation Management

Proposed NRCS Investment: \$5.3 million (CCA)

Lead Partner: Illinois Corn Growers Association

Number of Partners: 30

Participating State(s): Illinois (**lead state**), Iowa & Kentucky

The Precision Conservation Management program (PCM) is an innovative service program designed to apply hard-nosed financial farm business planning with precision conservation technology to provide a blueprint for conservation decision-making. The goal of PCM is to integrate conservation into the foundational farm management of commodity crop operations. PCM will provide financial impact analysis of conservation practices, technical assistance from trained conservation specialists, supplemental privately-funded financial assistance, data-rich assessment tools to guide producers through NRCS program options, and precision conservation technology to enhance effectiveness and minimize risk associated with conservation practices. PCM is dedicated to helping make the Conservation Stewardship Program the flagship program for producers seeking environmental performance linked to economic sustainability. PCM's founding mission is to use farmer data to serve farmers' interests with specific emphasis on conservation adoption. Upon enrolling in PCM, cooperators create a farm profile using PCM's Farmer Portal, a web interface that quickly, accurately, and securely collects farm data to create a field-by-field inventory of detailed agronomic management practices. After creating farm profiles, PCM specialists offer cooperators a privately-funded incentive to conduct a Resource Analysis and Assessment Plan (RAAP), assessing farm sustainability and identifying natural resource concerns. Using the RAAP, PCM specialists guide cooperators through NRCS program options with a long-term goal of preparing them for the CSP. Finally, cooperators utilize the Conservation Client Gateway to apply for NRCS programs. PCM will succeed in increasing conservation adoption because it approaches conservation from the perspective of the Midwest farmer – protecting business interests while implementing conservation practices that benefit the environment and local communities.



Upper Cedar Watershed Urban-Rural Partnership

Proposed NRCS Investment: \$1.6 million (State)

Lead Partner: City of Charles City

Number of Partners: 14

Participating State(s): Iowa

The Urban-Rural Partnership proposes to leverage existing efforts in the Rock Creek Watershed, where a Farmer Advisory Board is working with local partners to advance practice implementation according to goals set in the Rock Creek Watershed Management Plan. The project will implement conservation practices such as cover crops, bioreactors, and saturated buffers and will also conduct outreach activities through partners to increase adoption of practices.



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