

Water Resources Coordinating Council

Thursday, March 4, 2021
Meeting Notes

Call to Order and Virtual Meeting Logistics

The meeting was called to order at 1:30 PM. A roster showing WRCC members present is included with these notes. A total of 43 participants joined the virtual meeting, including member representatives.

How Long Will it Take to Measure an Improvement in Iowa Water Quality?

Dr. Michael Castellano, Iowa State University, gave a presentation discussing measurement of water quality in Iowa using statistical simulations. A copy of that presentation can be accessed on the WRCC website.

WRCC Member Agency Updates

ISU Extension (Helmets): Getting ready for research season and in-field monitoring. Weekly webinars ongoing through Iowa Learning Farms. IA Nutrient Research Center has an RFP coming out this Spring for new projects that would start in August. ISU is in the process of hiring a water quality program manager as well. The position can be viewed at https://isu.wd1.myworkdayjobs.com/en-US/IowaStateJobs/job/Ames-IA/Water-Quality-Programs---Specialist_R4135

U of Iowa College of Public Health (Thorne): NIH-funded Center for Environmental Health continues research activities on air, water, and soil contamination (EHSRC.org). Working on submission of funding renewal. Water quality research is an emerging field of study at the center.

UNI (Clayton): Gearing up for field work; slower spring thaw is delaying deployment. Focusing on water quality impacts as a result of invasive species.

IEDA (Geerts): New Water/Sewer awards announced. 8 new projects including 4 sewer projects and 4 water supply projects. Also working on disaster recovery applications for housing buyouts and infrastructure improvements.

IFA (Toigo): Lori Beary is retiring on April 15 and has been the WRCC representative. Her replacement will start on March 15. SF512 Water Quality Loan Program applications are out and are due March 15. No applications have been received so far. Review of those applications will occur between IFA, DNR, and IDALS.

DOT (Nicholson): Sustainability Working Group has been established in the past year. Working with an internal research group to develop a more sustainable project development process. Will be reviewing practices in other state agencies to inform recommendations. DOT resiliency working group is also working on long-term flood recovery and has been active since 2019 flood events. This group is also in the process of establishing a flood resiliency index to determine which projects to implement and when.

NRCS (Hubbert): 2020 Farm Bill programs are being implemented with more than \$60 million in funds for new programs and contracts. 2019 Disaster Recovery programs are also ongoing, with more than \$64 million in easements and \$14 million in repairs pending.

EPA Region 7 (Tate): Michael Reagan has been nominated as the Administrator for EPA. Has moved out of committee and is awaiting full Senate approval. Currently is administrator of North Carolina DNR. Radhika Fox is awaiting confirmation as the principal deputy administrator for the EPA Office of Water and Wetlands. Fox will also co-chair the Hypoxia Task Force. Ed Chu is currently serving as the Acting Region 7 EPA administrator. New administration is looking to emphasize improvements to rural infrastructure through programs.

USGS (Rydland): Normal to above normal flows on most stream gauges so far this Spring. Some below normal flows above Des Moines, however. Expecting to see some spring river rises but lower than normal flood risk. Still some risk for ice jams as temperatures increase. Seasonal nitrate monitors should be coming back online as well. Report on turbidity on the Turkey River is being finalized and a link to the report can be found at <https://pubs.er.usgs.gov/publication/sir20205131>. USGS Next Generation water observation services were highlighted as well- current focus in Midwest is along the Illinois River. Researchers are also looking at soil holding capacity of nitropryrin.

USACE (Sattinger): Reaching out to congressional delegation to promote NESP and restore funding levels for projects forthcoming. Hoping for increased support in a new infrastructure bill. WRDA reauthorization included increased funding for habitat projects and monitoring activities. Still waiting for final appropriation but optimistic. Public meetings on Coralville Reservoir regulatory plan are ongoing as well. Staff is now turning some focus to levee protection and flood recovery/preparedness activities. IDALS, NRCS, and USACE met on March 1 to begin the process of renewing Regional Permits 34 and 39, both of which deal with nutrient reduction wetlands. Changes to those permits should be minor overall and the goal is to reissue those permits before they expire on July 31.

DNR (Schneiders): PFAS Action Plan is in progress to identify presence and mitigation strategies statewide. Initial outreach is underway. Working between point source permittees and watershed producers in Soil and Water Outcomes Fund to get practices on the ground and certified. University of Iowa and DNR are partnering to look at wastewater treatment system design optimization that will reduce operating costs for smaller communities. IDALS and DNR are working on outreach around drought vulnerability and current conditions. Materials will be available on the DNR website.

IDALS (Kozak/Hansen): Secretary Naig has worked with the Hypoxia Task Force to author a letter to the Biden administration urging continued support for the Task Force, along with a summary of recent meetings and activities of the group.

IDALS staffing remains focused on full statewide coverage with additional staff in targeted watersheds. Looking to add engineering and technical assistance as our program funding continues to ramp up. There has been promising discussion regarding adding soil health language to Iowa Code. Information on the IDALS WQI and IFIP annual reports was shared. IDALS is also seeking nominations for the Iowa Farm Environmental Leader Awards, to be recognized at the 2021 Iowa State Fair.

Last Fall, IDALS solicited applications for funding through the Urban Conservation demonstration program. 12 projects were invited to submit full applications, and those projects have requested approximately \$1 million, which will leverage nearly \$7 million in other funding to install projects over the next 18 months. Final decisions on funding will be announced later in March. The Polk SWCD is in the process of implementing an edge-of-field blitz that will result in installation of more than 100 saturated buffers and bioreactors in the county. The effort is also being expanded into Boone and Dallas Counties, and we are working with staff in Story County to replicate the project in the South Skunk River watershed. We are also working to increase voluntary participation in our buffer programs.

Comprehensive Wastewater Treatment Strategies Pilot Project

Jeff Geerts, Iowa Economic Development Authority, introduced Jim Patchett with Conservation Design Forum, who gave a presentation on a pilot initiative supported by IEDA to evaluate comprehensive wastewater treatment strategies. A copy of the presentation can be accessed on the WRCC website.

HUD Iowa Watershed Approach

IWA watershed projects have submitted more than 775 projects to date with approximately 200 more remaining for 2021. The project is scheduled to expire in September 2021, although guidance on a time extension has been released to grantees. Housing and infrastructure projects are nearing completion and should be wrapped up in 2021. Information on field days will be shared at future WRCC meetings.

Public Comments

There were no requests by members of the public to provide comments.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:28 PM. The next meeting will be scheduled for late May or early June and will be held via GoToMeeting.

	WRCC Representative	Position	Organization
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1 Mike Naig	Secretary (WRCC Chair)	Iowa Department of Agriculture & Land Stewardship
<input type="checkbox"/>	2 Kim Reynolds	Governor	Governor's Office
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Nate Ristow</i>	<i>Designee</i>	Governor's Office
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3 Kayla Lyon	Director	Iowa Department of Natural Resources
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<i>Adam Schneiders</i>	<i>Designee</i>	Iowa Department of Natural Resources
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4 Susan Kozak	Director	IDALS - Division of Soil Conservation & Water Quality
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<i>Jake Hansen</i>	<i>Designee</i>	IDALS - Division of Soil Conservation & Water Quality
<input type="checkbox"/>	5 Kelly Garcia	Acting Director	IA Department of Public Health
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Kenneth Sharp</i>	<i>Designee</i>	IA Department of Public Health
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Vacant</i>	<i>Designee</i>	IA Department of Public Health
<input type="checkbox"/>	6 Paul Trombino	Director	Iowa Homeland Security & Emergency Management
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Larry Giofreddi</i>	<i>Designee</i>	Iowa Homeland Security & Emergency Management
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7 Dan Robison	Dean	College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, ISU
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<i>Jamie Benning (Matt Helmers on)</i>	<i>Designee</i>	College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, ISU
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	8 Edith Parker	Dean	College of Public Health, University of Iowa
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<i>Peter Thorne</i>	<i>Designee</i>	College of Public Health, University of Iowa
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	9 John Fritsch	Dean	College of Humanities, Arts and Sciences, UNI
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<i>Maureen Clayton</i>	<i>Designee</i>	College of Humanities, Arts and Sciences, UNI
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	10 Scott Marler	Director	Iowa Department of Transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<i>Tamara Nicholson</i>	<i>Designee</i>	Iowa Department of Transportation
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Ken Brink</i>	<i>Designee</i>	Iowa Department of Transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	11 Debi Durham	Director	Iowa Economic Development Authority
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<i>Jeff Geerts</i>	<i>Designee</i>	Iowa Economic Development Authority
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	12 Debi Durham	Executive Director	Iowa Finance Authority
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<i>Tony Toigo</i>	<i>Designee</i>	Iowa Finance Authority
<input type="checkbox"/>	13 Alec Scranton	Dean	College of Engineering, University of Iowa
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Larry Weber</i>	<i>Designee</i>	College of Engineering, University of Iowa
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	14 Jon Nania	Acting Director	USGS, Iowa-Illinois Water Science Center
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<i>Paul Rydlund</i>	<i>Designee</i>	USGS, Iowa-Illinois Water Science Center
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	15 Jon Hubbert	State Conservationist	USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Scott Cagle</i>	<i>Designee</i>	USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
<input type="checkbox"/>	16 Bob Wegand	Acting State Executive Director	USDA, Farm Service Agency
<input type="checkbox"/>	17 Grant Menke	State Director	USDA, Rural Development
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Kate Sand</i>	<i>Designee</i>	USDA, Rural Development
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	18 Edward Chu	Acting Regional Administrator	EPA-Region 7
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<i>Mike Tate</i>	<i>Designee</i>	EPA-Region 7
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	19 Colonel Steven Sattinger	Rock Island District Commander	US Army Corps of Engineers Rock Island District
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Jason Smith</i>	<i>Designee</i>	US Army Corps of Engineers Rock Island District
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<i>Matt Zehr</i>	<i>Designee</i>	US Army Corps of Engineers Rock Island District
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Jeff Zogg</i>	<i>Designee</i>	National Weather Service