

Water Resources Coordinating Council

Tuesday, March 3, 2020

Meeting Notes

Welcome & Call to Order

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

Secretary Naig indicated that the draft of the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy Annual Report was distributed, and ISU will accept comments through March 11. Following that time the co-authors will review and respond to submitted comments and publish the final report this Spring.

WRCC Member Agency Updates

IEDA (Weisenbach)- 23 CDBG Water/Sewer applications submitted. Decisions will be made in mid-march. Going forward all storm water projects must be green infrastructure and will be accepted on an open cycle.

IEDA is working to secure disaster recovery funding through the Economic Development Administration for planning activities and CDBG Disaster program (\$97 million) for recovery activities in SW Iowa.

FSA (DeJong)- Several active conservation signups underway. Continuous signup is in progress with more than 1000 offers submitted since December. Also brisk activity in general signup as it is the first one in four years.

SHIPP pilot program is underway in 5 northern Great Plains states including Iowa. SHIPP signups are capped at 50000 acres and contracts must be for perennial plantings with duration of 3-5 years. Aim is to restore soil health in less productive land. Also, FSA is in the early process of paying out ECP payments in southwest Iowa.

DNR (Schnieders)- Director Lyon was confirmed by the Senate in February. DNR has worked with DOT, IDALS, USACE, and EPA to interpret the final rule that has been pre-published by EPA headquarters. Anticipate final rule taking effect sometime in May. DNR and IDPH are working together to submit comments on cyanotoxin criteria proposed by EPA. DNR is working with City of Dubuque on an MOU to register flood reduction practices in nutrient reduction exchange. Department has also finalized a PFAS action plan which is published on the agency website.

EPA (Tate) - EPA's final Water Reuse Action Plan was released last week in conjunction with DOI and USDA. Emphasis on water reuse where appropriate throughout all agency initiatives.

HSEMD (Gioffredi)- To date, approximately 1000 open Public Assistance requests have been submitted. \$36 million has been obligated to date with another \$30 million under review. This means that \$5-\$10 million in hazard mitigation will be available, primarily for property acquisition. Nearly all of the acquisition requests so far (\$41 million) have come from southwest Iowa.

Administration of the Flood Recovery Fund is ongoing with another \$21 million awarded in February. Funding is supporting levee repairs and local match for federal recovery projects.

NWS (Zogg)- Second spring flood outlook has been released. Third release will come on March 6th. Low concern on stream flooding within Iowa but greater concern on larger boundary rivers. Concern remains on Missouri River south of Platte River. Entire Mississippi River is at risk for a prolonged major flood which will depend on precipitation and pace of snowmelt/runoff. Major flooding also anticipated on Big Sioux River in northwest Iowa.

IDPH (Schmitz)- IDPH has grant funds available for grants to counties for private well testing. Starting to look at PFAS contamination through program in addition to other tests typically conducted.

ISU (Benning)- Mentioned efforts associated with assembling NRS Annual Report. INRC has been meeting to look at research priorities and to discuss potential future proposals that could be submitted. A map showing locations of INRC projects can be found at: <https://www.cals.iastate.edu/news/releases/iowa-nutrient-research-center-launches-online-water-quality-research-map>. An RFP for new proposals is expected later this Spring. ISU Extension is wrapping up a long-term cover crop research study after 10 years of trials. Study has looked at long-term yield impacts. The Iowa Water Conference will be held in Ames on April 8 and 9. Registration is now open.

USGS (Nania)- Some above average streamflows persist in western Iowa but ice is easing out, so ice jam risk is currently decreasing. USGS staff is currently out working to calibrate spring streamflow measurements. Water quality monitors are also being reinstalled for the 2020 season since ice is coming out on gauge sites. Working with ISU to update 80-96 baseline models on nutrient transport and will present at Iowa Water Conference.

DOT (Nicholson)- Scott Marler has been named new DOT director, with background in water resources and worked in Office of Location and Environment. DOT continues to work on flood recovery and emergency response in impacted areas, holding some preparedness meetings to anticipate needs in 2020. DOT is finalizing work on a Missouri Valley bypass on Highway 30 that might incorporate a ring levee in partnership with USACE. If undertaken the project would be a dual purpose bypass/levee. Additional federal funding is being pursued to implement the project.

IDALS (Hansen)- Naig reported that the Hypoxia Task Force met in early February in Washington DC. Key outcomes of the meeting were discussions between state and federal stakeholders on common measures of progress and issues to be addressed collaboratively.

IDALS has added three new field-based environmental specialists in the last two months, bringing the total number of IDALS watershed coordinators working on WQI projects to six. Two coordinators each are located in the North Raccoon and Middle Cedar watersheds and there is a coordinator in the Floyd and Boone River watersheds. We are also providing support for an ISU Extension-based coordinator in the South Skunk River watershed.

We have a total of 34 wetland projects that are under development between CREP, WQI, and SF512 funding. Six sites have been completed and three more sites are nearing completion now. Additionally, we have eight construction packets out for bids and opened bids on those projects in February. Another 23 sites are in various stages of preliminary design and permitting, and we are continuing to identify new sites for development, and 25 more have been identified through partnership efforts.

Staff is in the final stages of reviewing full applications for Urban Demonstration WQI funds. Final decisions will be announced in March with projects starting in April. There are 13 full applications being reviewed. These projects have requested \$1.2 million in WQI funding and are proposing to leverage that funding with nearly \$9.6 million in other funds.

2019 Report on Iowa Nonpoint Source Management Plan

Steve Hopkins, Iowa DNR, will give a presentation on annual progress under the Nonpoint Source Management Plan. A copy of the presentation can be accessed on the WRCC website.

Iowa Energy Office Program Update

Stephanie Weisenbach, Iowa Economic Development Authority, gave a presentation on grant and loan programs administered by the Iowa Energy Office. A copy of the presentation can be accessed on the WRCC website.

HUD Iowa Watershed Approach

Weisenbach reported that many of the watershed projects are underway and are progressing toward their practice goals. Projects will wrap up in September 2021 and IEDA is working with lead counties to reallocate funding from projects that will not be completed.

Public Comments

There were no requests by the public to address the Council.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:21 PM. The next meeting is set for the afternoon of Thursday, June 4th and will be back at ISU Extension in Altoona.