



Iowa DNR County Creek Sign Grant 2024

General Information

Funding Source: EPA Section 319 funds awarded by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Water Quality Improvement (Section 319) program

Application Due Date: April 1, 2024

General Purpose: To enhance awareness of creeks, rivers, and watersheds in Iowa.

Specific Purpose: To provide funding for Iowa counties to install creek signs, river signs, river watershed signs, and/or related signs at creek or river bridges or at the entrance to river watersheds on paved county roads, city roads, or on designated trails (for more information, see "Specific Information" section below).

Why? Naming and labeling things matter. Knowing the names of creeks and watersheds connects those who live, work, and play in them in a stronger way, enabling citizens to take ownership over caring for their land and the water that runs through it. It also serves to connect the community with ongoing research projects, water quality projects, and water monitoring efforts taking place in the watershed to better inform the community. Ultimately, this project will raise people's awareness of and more directly connect people to their waterways.

Background: In 2014, Iowa DNR began working with the Iowa Department of Transportation (DOT) to install creek signs in priority watersheds to enhance citizen awareness of creeks and streams as part of a water quality education campaign. In 2022, DNR began the "County Creek Sign Grant program" to expand the educational effort by funding the installation of creek, river, and/or watershed signs on paved county and city roads and on designated trails (eligibility for signs on trails is new in the 2024 application).

Creek Sign Assessment: A 2021 creek sign assessment conducted by Iowa State University of residents from Iowa watersheds with creek signs and from an Iowa watershed without creek signs concluded that creek signs help reinforce people's interest in and their connection with local water bodies. In watersheds with creek signs, people surveyed were almost twice as likely to know the name of their local waterbody than in watersheds without creek signs. The assessment results are being used to guide the style of creek signs this grant program will fund (see "Specific Information" section below). The full assessment may be found at: https://www.conservationlearninggroup.org/files/page/files/creek_sign_assessment_report.pdf

Size of Award: \$5,000-\$10,000 per county.

Match: No funding match is required.

Duration of Award: 2 years from notification of award to project completion.

Applicant Eligibility: Iowa County Conservation Boards (CCBs), Watershed Management Authorities (WMAs), Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) agencies, Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs), or counties (including county engineering departments).

Awards Per County: No more than one per county.

Multiple-County Applications: An applicant may apply on behalf of more than one county.

2024 Application Due Date: April 1, 2024.

One Application Per County: DNR will accept only one application per county. Therefore, eligible applicants will need to collaborate to determine which entity will be the designated applicant for each county. Awarded applicants will need to obtain written pre-approval from their county engineer's office (the entity responsible for county roads) on the construction and installation of all signs awarded through this grant program.

Selection Criteria:

Primary selection criteria include the number of signs to be installed within priority areas per county.

Application Materials:

Application materials include: Cover page, short narrative, list (spreadsheet) of proposed creeks, rivers, and/or watersheds to be signed, a map showing sign locations, a proposed budget, and a support letter from the county engineer's office.

Applications must be accompanied by letters of support from the county engineer for creek, river, and/or watershed signs to be installed on county roads, or by a public works department for creek, river, and/or watershed signs to be installed on city (or town) roads.

Proposed Budget:

Applicants should prepare a budget request that includes costs per installed sign or per installed dual sign, and the costs should be shown on a spreadsheet of proposed sign installations. Eligible expenses include materials and labor for sign construction and installation, but these costs should be built into the cost per installed sign.

Awards and Contracts:

DNR will notify applicants and counties whether their application has been awarded. After awards have been announced, DNR will enter into contracts with awarded applicants and/or counties.

Project Management: Successful awardees will be required to manage all aspects of the project and complete a final project report to the DNR Water Quality Improvement (Section 319) program. The final report will include photos of all signs installed (usable by DNR) and a final budget of expenditures.

Reimbursement:

DNR will provide funding on a reimbursement basis after a contract has been executed with the responsible entity.

Unique Entity ID Number: Successful awardees who will be carrying out project work through a contract with Iowa DNR and submitting invoices for reimbursement must first obtain a "Unique Entity Identification" (UEI) number (formerly called a "DUNS" number), as required for federally-funded projects. If the contracted entity already has a UEI, then it's not necessary to obtain a new number. For more information about obtaining a UEI, see the following federal webpage:

<https://sam.gov/content/duns-uei>

Application questions may be submitted by email to the following Iowa DNR email address:

watershed.improvement@dnr.iowa.gov

For more information, contact:

Steve Hopkins, Nonpoint Source Coordinator
Iowa DNR Water Quality Improvement Section
Work Cell: 515-505-0140

Applications must be submitted by April 1, 2024 at 4:30 pm to:
watershed.improvement@dnr.iowa.gov

Specific Information for 2024 Application

Creek Sign Preferences:

The 2021 ISU Creek Sign Assessment identified two types of creek sign combinations as the favorites among the people surveyed through the assessment. A dual sign (two signs on one set of posts) that provides a creek name at the top and a river watershed name below was the top preference of survey respondents from the watersheds that already have creek signs and from male survey respondents. This style of sign was also recommended by the watershed coordinators surveyed, as this type of signage can help people associate a geographic land area with water bodies, reinforcing the connectedness of land and water. Due to these results, this type of creek and watershed sign combination will be given a preference through this grant program.

A dual sign with a creek name at the top and that identifies the water body as a drinking water source below was the top preference of survey respondents from the watershed that does not have creek signs and among female survey respondents from all watersheds. Since creeks are rarely used directly as drinking water sources in Iowa, this type of sign combination is unlikely to be used in this grant program.

Sign Examples: Following the sign style preferences identified by Iowans surveyed in the ISU Creek Sign Assessment, this grant program will offer similar style preferences for the installation of the creek and watershed signs, as shown below.

Option 1: Creek Signs and River Watershed Dual Signs:

Preference will be given for dual signs with the top sign labeling the creek and a bottom sign labelling the river watershed in which the creek is located (see Example 1 below). Preference is given for this type of dual sign when a creek flows into an interior Iowa river, but not when a creek flows directly into the Mississippi River or Missouri River, which may create confusion since all waters in Iowa eventually flow to these rivers.

Example #1:



Option 2: Creek and “Source of Lake” Dual Signs:

A second option for dual signs is for the top sign labelling a creek and a bottom sign saying “Source of ____ Lake”, when the creek is a tributary of a lake located immediately downstream (see Example 2, below). The “source of lake” sign is especially important when the creek has a different name than the lake, such as Yeader Creek, which is the source of Easter Lake, to enhance awareness of the connection between the creek tributary and the lake.

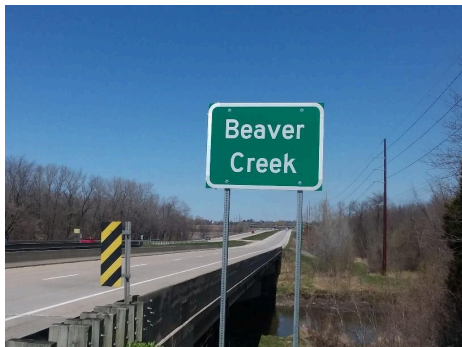
Example 2



Option 3: Creek Sign only:

For creeks where it's not practical or advisable to install dual signs, a single creek sign may be installed (See Example #3 below). There may be bridges where it's not practical to install dual signs due to lack of space, or where it's not advisable to install dual signs—such as creeks that flow directly to the Mississippi River or to the Missouri River.

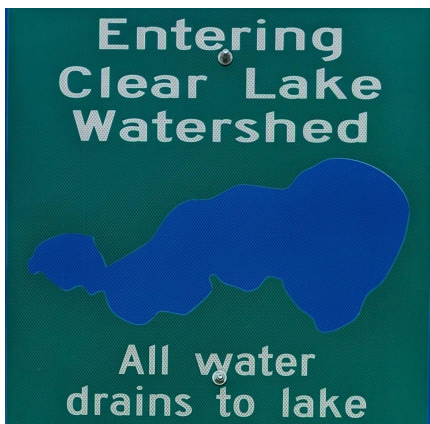
Example #3.



Option #4. River or Lake Watershed Sign:

A watershed sign may be installed at the watershed divide at the entrance to a river or lake watershed. The word "Entering" should be included on the sign to help inform people that a watershed is an area of land, not a water body (see Example #4). The sign should spell out the entire name of the watershed, rather than abbreviating a word. Graphics may be added as long as the words are large enough to be easily read.

Example #4:



Option 5: River Sign only.:

Although this grant gives preference for creek and watershed signs, river signs may also be installed (see Example 5).

Example #5:



Sign Locations: Creek and river signs (and dual signs) should be installed in both directions of the road (a sign pair) at a creek or river bridge, preferably on the right side of the road in front of the bridge guardrail, as approved by the county engineer (on county roads) or by the city public works department (on city roads). Watershed signs should be installed at the river watershed divide at the entrance to the watershed (one direction of the road).

Priority Creeks and Watersheds:

Since this grant will fund the installation of signs for priority creeks and watersheds, applicants should explain how the proposed creeks and watersheds were selected for the grant. Prioritization criteria could include current and former watershed projects areas, creeks within TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Load) watersheds, approved Watershed Management Authority watersheds, or state Water Quality Initiative (WQI) watersheds, creeks of special significance—such as trout streams, creeks on Iowa’s Outstanding Waters list, or creeks used for recreation, as a drinking water source, or crossed by roads with high traffic volume or high visibility. Gravel roads should not be included in this grant unless they are heavily traveled, or located within a priority watershed, or located near a park or a unique feature.

Named Creeks Only: For creek signs, this grant is meant for named creeks only, which means creek names officially recognized by the U. S. Board of Geographic Names. If a creek has more than one locally-recognized name, the applicant should exclude it from this grant program, to avoid confusion. For clarity, DNR recommends that signs spell out the full name of a creek, such as “North Fork Blackhawk Creek”.

DNR recommends that applicants use the Iowa Geographic Map server website (below) to check on the approved names and locations of creeks and watersheds:

<https://isugisf.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=47acfd9d3b6548d498b0ad2604252a5c>

Sign Specifications: Applicants must follow Iowa Department of Transportation (DOT) specifications for signs, which should be metal signs that include a minimum letter size (for names) of 4 inches high on roads with speed limits of up to 35 mph, minimum letter size of 6 inches on roads with 55 mph speed limits, and a minimum letter size of 8 inches high on divided, limited access 4-lane highways with 65 mph speed limits. This allows signs to be easily seen and read at normal driving speeds.

Sign Colors: Creek signs should be green with white lettering and bordering, to match the standard DOT color scheme for river and creek signs. If signs are to be installed within a county park or city park, then the signs may be brown with yellow or white lettering and bordering, to match park sign color schemes. Watershed signs may be green or may be a different color than green. Pre-approved graphics may be allowed on signs provided that the words on the sign are large enough to be easily read at normal driving speeds for the road receiving the signs. All sign styles and colors must be pre-approved by the county engineer’s office.

Posts and Hardware: Signs should be installed onto metal posts, which are less likely to be damaged by vandalism or by fire compared to wooden posts (many counties use fire for vegetative roadside management). Anti-theft hardware should be used, especially in remote locations, to avoid theft.