

Clean Water Starts With Us

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WATERSHED IMPROVEMENT IN IOWA

DNR ♦ DSC ♦ NRCS

WINTER 2009

New basin approach starts with Raccoon River

You know that a comprehensive, long-term plan is critical for a local watershed effort's success. The

solutions," said Allen Bonini, with the DNR's Watershed Improvement Program.

The plan, using the most

ment," said Bill Ehm, DNR water policy coordinator.

The plan, to be created by Missouri and Mississippi Divide Resource Conservation & Development of Carroll, will also likely serve as a model for other basin-wide plans in Iowa.

These master plans tie in with a larger basin approach from the DNR, DSC and NRCS, which has also resulted in new areas for basin coordinators.

Please see page 4 for a new map and below for the introduction of the newest basin coordinator, Adam Kiel, who will work in the Upper Des Moines and Raccoon basins. Kiel will also work closely with M&M Divide RC&D on the Raccoon master plan.

The master plans will also help identify priority sub-watersheds in the Raccoon basin where watershed improvement is needed most to meet water quality goals.



Paddling the Raccoon River

same is true for the health of the larger watershed too.

That's why the DNR and its partners are creating a Water Quality Master Plan for the Raccoon River basin in Iowa, along with a team of agency personnel and local stakeholders.

"The master plan will serve as a road map, showing how to get from today's water quality problems in the Raccoon to tomorrow's

up-to-date and complete scientific information and input from local stakeholders, will identify goals and objectives, the steps needed to meet those goals and the resources required to make things happen.

"We see these plans as the foundation for long-term success in creating environmentally sound and economically sustainable water quality improve-

Kiel named newest watershed basin coordinator



New basin coordinator Adam Kiel is very familiar with Iowa watersheds.

After working on a watershed effort at the Northeast Iowa RC&D for two years, Kiel joined the DNR as the Watershed Improvement Program's lead GIS staffer.

In October, Kiel became the basin coordinator for the Upper Des Moines and Raccoon River basins. *continued on page 4*

clean water
starts with you.

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Does a friend forward you this newsletter? Sign up to have it come directly to your inbox by sending a blank e-mail to join-clean_water@lists.ia.gov.

Start planning this winter for a successful effort with grants

Get started!

The first step in applying for a DNR watershed grant is talking to your basin coordinator or DNR project officer. They can answer any questions about eligibility, requirements, even your effort's goals. They can also lead you through the application process.

Basin Coordinators (map, p. 4)

Adam Kiel
Upper Des Moines/Raccoon basin
(515) 242-6149
Adam.Kiel@dnr.iowa.gov

Vince Sitzmann
Southeast, south central Iowa
(515) 242-6008
Vince.Sitzmann@iowaagriculture.gov

Jeff Tisl
Northeast Iowa
(563) 422-6201
Jeff.Tisl@iowaagriculture.gov

Bob Waters
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(712) 243-2913 ext. 207
Bob.Waters@iowaagriculture.gov

DNR Project Officers

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Northern Iowa
(515) 242-6196
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Rachel.Glaza@dnr.iowa.gov

Get geared up for spring by exploring your watershed improvement grant options this winter.

In early January, the DNR will begin taking applications for both its Watershed Planning Grants and Watershed Implementation Grants.

No matter what part of the process you might be in, give your basin coordinator or DNR project officer a call to discuss your ideas. Our staff can help you move toward the grants and resources you need to have a successful local watershed effort. Additional grants are also available from DSC.

Applications for all are due **April 1**. Find additional info and applications at www.iowadnr.gov/water/watershed/grants.html.

Just starting?

If you're interested in cultivating a local watershed group to improve a waterway on Iowa's impaired waters list, DNR Watershed Planning Grants help your effort get started.

Grant funds go toward developing a Watershed Management Plan (WMP), which identifies problems in the watershed and proposes solutions for better water quality. It also considers outreach and other tools and resources important for a successful watershed effort.

"Having a plan is critical for the long-term success of a watershed improvement effort," said Steve Hopkins, who coordinates DNR watershed grants.

Already have a plan in hand?

If your watershed effort already has a completed WMP, you can apply for a DNR Watershed Implementation Grant to help set that plan in motion.

Formerly known as "Section 319" or "Project" grants, Watershed Implementation Grants are available only to groups with a completed WMP. The grant funds are used to carry out specific actions and activities in the WMP. Call your basin coordinator or DNR project officer if you have questions about eligibility.

DSC's Water Protection Fund (WPF) and Watershed Protection Fund (WSPF) grants can also help watershed efforts get on the ground and running.

Changes to joint application

This year, DNR and DSC have made changes to the joint application for their implementation grants. Now, due to changes in grant requirements and offerings, groups seeking funds from *both* the DNR and DSC will need to fill out only the DNR application (but will need to indicate that they are also applying for DSC's WPF or WSPF funds).

If you're only looking to apply for WPF or WSPF grants, you only need to fill out the DSC application. Groups only applying for a DNR Watershed Implementation Grant need only to submit the DNR application.

For more information on DSC grants: www.iowaagriculture.gov/waterResources/projectApplicationRequest.asp

Philly investigates benefits of long-term planning

Effort will use 20-year plan to produce economic, social and environmental benefits for community

Iowa watershed management planners may want to take notes from the city of Philadelphia.

After years of issues with combined sewer overflows when it rains, the city set out to create a 20-year green storm water plan.

Philadelphia conducted a study about its storm water system and possible alternatives and upgrades,

then melded the findings into a long-term, comprehensive planning effort.

By applying for DNR Watershed Planning Grants, Iowans can take on similar efforts, urban or rural – although likely on a smaller scale.

Over the next five years, the Philadelphia Water Department will lay the foundation for the \$1 billion

project to put the plan in action, with a vision to "unite the city of Philadelphia with its water environment, creating a green legacy for future generations while incorporating a balance between ecology, economics and equity," according to the city's plan overview.

Another \$290 million will go to

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Consider benefits of land donation

Third in our “economics of conservation” series

When working with landowners or while developing your watershed management plan, you may want to give thought to the often untapped option of land donation.

Land donations ensure the integrity of properties for generations to come, help the environment and provide beneficial tax incentives to donors.

Discussing land donation options with landowners in watershed effort areas may provide a sense of security for landowners concerned about who will take care of the land once they're gone.

The DNR and other agencies, like the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation (INHF), provide several options for landowners wishing to protect their property. Land gifted to the DNR and INHF will be permanently protected and preserved.

The DNR's goal in land acquisition is to “preserve, conserve and enhance,” said Travis Baker with the Realty Services Bureau.

Baker said the donation process is not only environmentally beneficial, but it also provides immediate tax benefits to the donor, making it economically viable. Both state and federal tax laws reward donors who protect public values like clean water, scenic views and wildlife habitat.

The following donations qualify donors for Iowa tax credits: conservation easements, land value (through bargain sales to a conservation entity), and land for conservation, scenic



value, open space, outdoor education and/or recreation purposes, or preservation of historically important land or structures.

Qualified donors can get a tax credit of up to 50 percent of the fair market value of the donated real property interest, up to a maximum \$100,000 tax credit.

So, a landowner could donate land worth \$200,000 and get a \$100,000 Iowa tax credit. The tax credit could be used to cover state income taxes for up to 20 years or until the full tax is claimed.

The federal tax incentive involves a tax deduction, which reduces the amount of income on which the tax is calculated.

Not only can landowners be ensured that their land will be protected in the future, they can reap the economic benefits many years to come.

For more information, contact Heather Jobst, INHF Land Project Coordinator, at (515) 288-1846, ext. 32, or hjobst@inhf.org; or Travis Baker, DNR, at Travis.Baker@dnr.iowa.gov.

New video puts focus on land donation

If you're looking for another tool to discuss land donation with residents in your watershed, a new video may help.

Agren, Inc., a Carroll company that works on agricultural and environmental issues, recently produced an informational video in cooperation with INHF and the M&M Divide RC&D about the economic and environmental benefits of land conservation through donations.

To hear land donor stories and learn more about state and federal tax incentives, view the video at www.inhf.org/landownermovie/index.html. Also, look for a Landowner's Options book from INHF at www.inhf.org/landowner.

NRCS awards grant to help planners get new tools

NRCS recently awarded a grant to a western Iowa business to help SWCDs, watershed coordinators and landowners with conservation planning.

Agren, Inc., of Carroll, will use the Iowa Conservation Innovation Grant to improve the use and availability of a suite of online conservation planning tools.

“The grant will help offset the cost for soil and water conservation districts to subscribe to a web-based suite of LiDAR-based conservation planning tools,” said Agren's Jamie Ridgely.

“The first 40 counties to subscribe will receive the planning tools at a reduced cost,” she added.

These tools allow users in Iowa to evaluate and visually represent conservation practices with increased ease, speed and accuracy. They also facilitate the use of high-resolution digital elevation models derived from Light Detection And Ranging (LiDAR) data.

Along with GIS, LiDAR can quickly provide farmers with a visual representation of how their fields might look with different conservation practices applied, with a far more accurate layout and cost estimate for conservation practices, prior to a field visit.

Watershed coordinators and districts interested in using the tools can contact Ridgely at (712) 792-6248 or Jamie@agren-inc.com, or visit www.agren-inc.com.

Kiel to work with Upper Des Moines, Raccoon river basins

Continued from page 1

Kiel joins basin coordinators Jeff Tisl, Vince Sitzmann and Bob Waters, who will also now serve Iowans based on watershed boundaries rather than county lines.

"The filling of this position allows us to take the first step in implementing our partnership's vision for re-aligning resources around major river basins and expanding our commitment to local watershed groups," said Allen Bonini, supervisor of the DNR's

Watershed Improvement Program. "This will provide the additional staff resources watershed groups have told us they need to support their efforts to improve water quality."

Among Kiel's main tasks are helping people with watershed improvement planning and guiding them through watershed grant applications offered by the DNR, DSC, NRCS, WIRB and more.

He said the transition has been relatively smooth. "I've worked with the projects before," Kiel said. "I know

a lot of people in the watershed and they know me."

In addition, Kiel will be the point person this spring on the effort to develop a water quality master plan for the Raccoon River basin (see p. 1).

Prior to working in Iowa, Kiel spent two summers working on GIS projects in Yellowstone National Park and two years as the GIS manager for the city of Onalaska, Wis.

As lead GIS staffer with the DNR, Kiel was responsible for developing and refining assessment tools used in watershed projects, as well as training field staff in the use of technology-based assessment tools.

Locals in the Des Moines/Raccoon River basin interested in learning about their watershed options can contact Kiel at (515) 242-6149 or adam.kiel@dnr.iowa.gov.

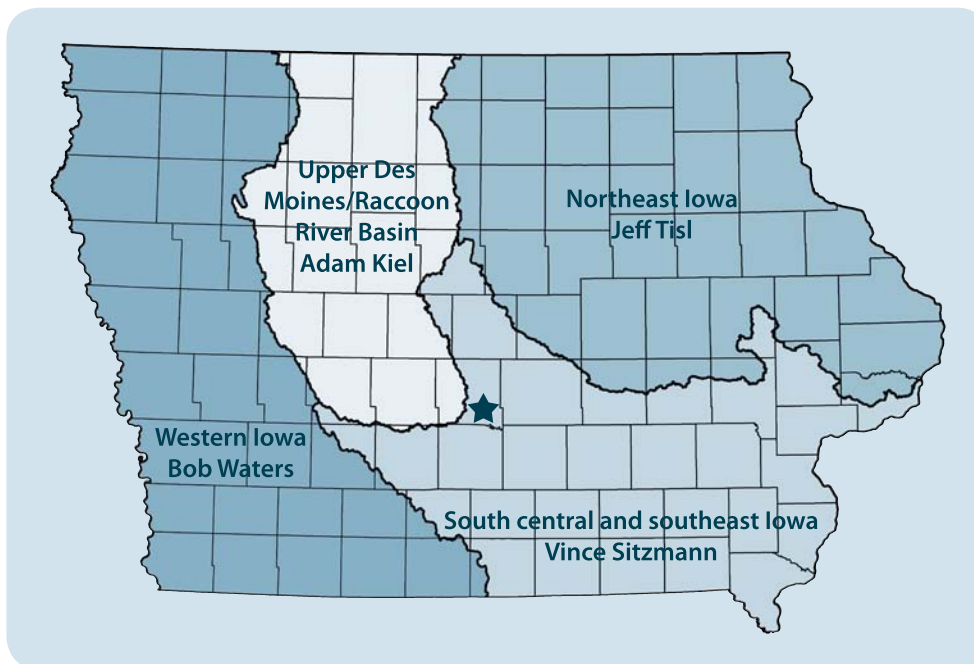
While service area boundaries may have changed from county lines to watershed boundaries, basin coordinators are still here to help you with every stage of your local watershed effort. See the map at left to find your basin coordinator, then look below for phone contacts.

Adam Kiel: (515) 242-6149

Vince Sitzmann: (515) 242-6008

Jeff Tisl: (563) 422-6201

Bob Waters: (712) 243-2913 ext. 207



Long-term plans provide benefits to community, effort shows

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stream corridor restoration and preservation, and \$320 million will upgrade waste water treatment plants.

The benefits of the project are three-fold: economic, social and environmental.

The city estimates that the program will produce \$500 million in economic benefits thanks to the creation of 250 green jobs annually. Another \$1.3 billion will come in the form of social benefits.

These include an increase of more than 1 million recreational user days, an increase of 2 to 5 percent in property values in greened neighborhoods and 140 fewer fatalities in the next 40 years from excessive heat.

Project managers also estimate that the effort will yield \$400 million in environmental benefits from reduced carbon dioxide emissions, air quality benefits, water quality and habitat improvements and energy use reductions.

"If a city as large and old as

Philadelphia can completely revamp its storm water and sewage system, imagine the possibilities for long-term planning in Iowa," said Steve Hopkins with the DNR's Watershed Improvement Program. "Iowa watershed efforts can also benefit from long-term comprehensive planning and create social, environmental and economic opportunities for their communities."

For more information about Philadelphia's effort, visit www.phillywatersheds.org/lcpcu/.

Winter presents unique water quality challenges

As winter approaches, concerns arise about the threat of dangerous, icy roads. Cities, homeowners and landowners prepare snow plows, shovels, sand and deicers to make streets, parking lots and driveways safer.

But some products used to improve safety can have negative consequences for the environment.

Sodium chloride, or rock salt, runs off into storm sewers and urban streams when ice and snow melt, elevating chloride levels in the water.

Chloride levels above the recommended federal level (a four-day average of more than 230 mg/l) set to protect aquatic life were found in more than 40 percent of urban streams tested in the northern U.S., according to a study by the U.S. Geological Survey released in September. Chloride yields were higher in cities than rural areas because of the amount of salt used on urban streets.

Chloride in Iowa

"In Iowa, small urban streams are the most likely to become impaired because of the potential for high salt application rates during winter," said Lori McDaniel, a supervisor with the DNR's Water Quality bureau.

McDaniel said sampling throughout the state at 90 sites on rivers and larger streams tend to be relatively low – median of 23 mg/l and maximum of 170 mg/l. These numbers are well below the federal criteria but are likely higher in urban streams.

Reducing the impact

In an effort to reduce the impact on the environment, Iowa transportation officials are developing innovative new ways to reduce the use of salt but still ensure safety.



Salt brine is one environmentally friendly alternative, said Iowa Department of Transportation Winter Operations Administrator Dennis Burkheimer.

Salt is combined with water to form a wet substance that sticks better to the road. The brine activates the salt and allows it to work more quickly because it doesn't blow away in the wind, ultimately reducing the amount of salt used.

However, Burkheimer said, brine is only really effective before a storm or during a frost.

"We've been testing different alternatives, but we've not found anything that works as well or efficiently as rock salt," Burkheimer said. "We're trying to deal with the budget, safety and the impact on the environment. It's a balancing act."

Since there are no clearly superior alternatives to rock salt, conservation practices are necessary. By being proactive and starting snow removal and deicing procedures before and during storms, the DOT can use less salt per inch of snow.

How you can help

Local watershed groups and others concerned about the amount of chloride in streams can work with local governments and the DOT to ensure that salt storage facilities are built properly to prevent runoff. Encourage local officials to work on development of more effective snow plow

blades and other removal equipment so less deicer is necessary.

For homeowners, there are several alternatives to deicers.

"There is no substitute for elbow grease and common sense," said Bill Ehm, DNR water policy coordinator. "It is best to scoop snow from the drive and sidewalk before traffic packs the snow and develops a layer of ice."

Sand is also useful to provide traction and is the least expensive and damaging to the environment in small amounts.

If the use of deicers at home is necessary, avoid applying too much.

"Use deicers sparingly and uniformly to achieve the best and most economical removal of ice," Ehm said.

DATES TO REMEMBER

Jan. 8: DSC Watershed Development and Planning Assistance Grant applications due

Jan. 13: A Culture of Conservation: The Tools We Need to Grow conference, Ames.
www.extension.iastate.edu/ilf/

Jan. 15: Quarterly reports due for project coordinators

Jan. 15: Watershed Improvement Review Board (WIRB) applications due

Feb. 12: Donald A. Williams Soil Conservation Scholarship applications due. www.swcs.org/en/members_only/scholarships

Feb. 19: WIRB meeting – application review and selection

April 1: DNR Planning Grant, DNR Implementation Grant and DSC (WPF/WSPF) grant applications due

July 18-20: Soil and Water Conservation Society Annual Conference

Giveaways big and small help promote conservation

Watershed effort holds drawing for free rain gardens for homeowners to draw attention

Free notepads, coffee mugs, sure... but rain gardens?

An Oregon watershed effort knew it needed something big to draw attention to stormwater management. So it gave away four free rain gardens in a drawing.



The city of Gresham funded the installation of four rain gardens for local homeowners in the hopes of raising awareness of stormwater issues.

In addition, it invited media and residents of the suburban Portland community to attend those installations so other homeowners could learn how to build their own gardens.

More info: <http://theportlander.com/homeowners-and-experts-will-plant-rain-gardens-on-saturday/>

How to do it in Iowa

It's easy to build on this concept for your Iowa watershed effort.

You can explore different funding sources to pay for the rain gardens – or any other simple practice you'd like to highlight – or partner with local businesses or groups.

Consider including nonprofit or community organizations, churches or schools to be eligible for your drawing. The opportunity here is potentially more people seeing the practice on a regular basis and becoming familiar with it. There's also a built-in audience for education, and the organization can also help promote the practice.

Partner businesses and groups can also help in the giveaway. For example, if your drawing is for rain gardens, a local nursery or home improvement store could promote the drawing in-store (also accepting entries) and possibly donate materials. This allows your partner to promote its services to potential customers, which could result in more rain gardens built in the long run.

Gauging giveaways

You could call project coordinator Leah Sweely's latest outreach effort measurable on a number of levels.

Sweely had rain gauges printed with the Prairie Creek Water Quality



Project logo and asked her watershed advisory group to distribute coupons to landowners and operators.

The coupons – also

on hand at the local USDA service centers – are required to receive a gauge, guaranteeing Sweely face-to-face contact with the landowners in her watershed.

Sweely can track the number of coupons redeemed and gauges given out and the number of conservation practices that result from that initial contact with a landowner.

Prairie Creek Water Quality Project

FREE Rain Gauge

Get a free rain gauge when you present this coupon at the Clinton County SWCD office - just ask what you can do to improve the water quality of Prairie Creek, or call to set up a field visit.

Leah Sweely, Project Coordinator
Clinton County SWCD
Phone: 563-659-3456 ext 3

Must be a landowner or operator in Prairie Creek Watershed

CLEAN WATER STARTS WITH US

WATERSHED IMPROVEMENT IN IOWA

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