APPENDIX A

Creating a public outreach plan

To have a successful outreach program, you must know and understand your different audiences, researching and strategizing how to best reach them. Public outreach goes beyond just informing the public and moves them to action. It takes a social science approach to water quality goals. The key to increasing participation in water quality improvement efforts is to gain an understanding of community, create incentives and motivate people to take action.

Public outreach efforts are most effective when they are:

- based on what is known about the audience
- planned ahead of time
- evaluated and refined for future efforts

Creating a public outreach plan is part of developing a larger Watershed Management Plan. The outreach plan will provide tools to reach water quality goals. An effective outreach plan should follow these six steps:

- Identify your project's goals, as listed in your watershed management plan
- Determine target audiences
- Research those audiences
- Use research to develop an outreach plan
- Carry out plan
- Measure successes and evaluate

A template for a public outreach plan follows on the next few pages.

A. SET YOUR PLAN GOALS

Take your plan goals and brainstorm how public outreach can help.
Make sure goals are measurable:

EXAMPLE GOALS:

1. Increase public and landowners' awareness of and participation in Watershed Management Plan implementation
2. Reduce nutrient delivery by 40 percent
3. Reduce sediment delivery by 50 percent
4. Install five wetlands in targeted areas
5. Reduce number of residents using fertilizer on lakefront lawns by 50 percent

B. DETERMINE YOUR TARGET AUDIENCES

"General public" should not be your only audience. For your messages and outreach to be the most effective, they should reach the people you need in order for your plan to be a success.

IDENTIFY YOUR TARGET AUDIENCES: *(add spaces if necessary)*

- Who do you depend on to make changes to the land?
  -
  -
  -
  -
  - *Examples*: row crop landowners, livestock producers, lakefront residents, non-farming rural residents, confinement operators in Washington Township

- Who do you depend on to keep your project afloat?
  -
  -
  -
  -
  - *Examples*: partners and stakeholders, funding sources, local and state officials, Legislature, Congress

- Who do you depend on to spread your message to these people?
  -
  -
  -
  -
  - *Examples*: media, citizens, partners and stakeholders, local landowners, anglers and hunters

C. RESEARCH YOUR TARGET AUDIENCES

Once you've decided who you need to reach, you'll need to determine how to best reach them with your messages and lead them to action. Knowing what landowners consider to be benefits and addressing their concerns is critical to make conservation practices appealing to the landowners. Research is important because what drives landowners' decisions may be different than anticipated or assumed.

EXAMPLE

Research indicated the following results on "what changes your mind on environmental issues?"

- News coverage (57%)
- First-hand experiences (49%)
- Conversations with other people (40%)
- Public meetings (15%)
- Financial issues (9%)

The survey results were surprising to this watershed group. They assumed financial issues would rank highest.

For each target audience, research:

- Barriers to adoption, what incentives work
- How they like to receive information
- How they make decisions regarding their land, water
- Their feelings on and knowledge of water quality and conservation

Collect this data through:

- Pre-project surveys
- Face-to-face meetings
- Advisory boards
- Public meetings
- Third-party research
- Other methods

Using the following format may be helpful in organizing this data.

TARGET AUDIENCE #1: *(repeat for each target audience)*

- Barriers:
  -
  -
  -
  -
- Motivators/incentives:
  -
  -
  -
  -

- Preferred ways to receive watershed project information:
  -
  -
- How they make decisions regarding their land:
  -
  -
- Perception of current water quality:
  -
- Perceived value of waterbody:
  -
- Most familiar conservation practices:
  -
  -
  -
  -

D. USE RESEARCH TO DEVELOP YOUR OUTREACH STRATEGY

- For each goal, use audience research results (surveys, etc.) to determine:
  - Barriers
  - Possible solutions
  - A "take-home" message
  - Ways to deliver that message
  - Measurable ways to evaluate the effectiveness of message delivery

EXAMPLE GOAL:

Establish no-till on 1,000 acres

BARRIERS:

- perceived cost
- would be seen as "sloppy" by neighbors
- rumors of lowered yields

SOLUTIONS/BENEFITS:

- cost-share and grants
- actual reductions in input and energy costs
- provide examples of no-till in use
- increases in yields

MESSAGE:

- No-till can save you money, time and soil

MESSAGE DELIVERY:

- face-to-face contacts with targeted landowners
- create fact sheet on no-till to leave with landowners
- host field days so farmers can see how neighbors have used no-till successfully
- list benefits of no-till in newsletter article
- work with local reporter to highlight a landowner successfully using no-till in newspaper
- ask landowners using no-till to place a sign in field

EVALUATION MEASURES:

- Keep contact log of calls received from landowners, why they called, how they heard about your effort or no-till options, and followup contact information (phone, e-mail)
- Keep track of number of face-to-face meetings and if those meetings result in no-till being applied (also track number of acres using no-till)
- Number of news stories in local media on watershed effort's and landowners' no-till efforts
- Attendance numbers at field day (also use sign-in sheet to capture contact information)
- In newsletter, offer free ball cap as incentive to those who call about using no-till on their land ("mention this newsletter and receive a free watershed ballcap")
- Number of signs installed

E. CARRY OUT THE PLAN

Work with trusted community partners to spread your message. Time outreach efforts to tie in with other newsworthy events and stagger efforts to stay on the radar. Not all efforts and tasks must be scheduled and planned at the beginning of the process. It will be important to adapt as the plan progresses. Use the following template as a rough timeline for the first part of the schedule. Create one of these schedules for each year of your implementation plan. This will be used to fill in the implementation schedule in Section 9.

YEAR 1

First quarter
-
-
-
-

Second quarter
-
-
-
-

Third quarter
-
-
-
-

Fourth quarter
-
-
-
-

F. MEASURE AND EVALUATE EFFECTIVENESS; PROMOTE SUCCESSES

Evaluate public outreach efforts continuously to find the most effective approaches. Include an evaluation at the end of any outreach project to gather information that can be used in future projects. Many Watershed Management Plans will have multiple phases and last long periods of time. It will be a learning experience to find out what works and what does not. Encouraging participation in any way possible throughout implementation of the plan can increase participation and help to improve water quality.

Ideas on how to refine an outreach process:

- Keep track of how stakeholders heard about the Watershed Management Plan plan/effort
- Ask how landowners you've worked with made the decision to participate in your project – look for trends that can help you adjust your outreach efforts
- Conduct surveys (pre-, mid- and post-project)
- Offer incentives to encourage contacts
- Track the number of people that attend a field day; number that then sign up for the practice
- Track media coverage

Everyone likes to be part of a winning team. Have a plan in place to promote successes with enthusiasm and creativity. Fun and success are a good combination for increasing future participation in water quality improvement efforts.

APPENDIX B-1

Public Speaking

There is no such thing as a captive audience. Presentations, public speaking and speeches need to capture the minds of your audience. The audience should be "grabbed" in the first three minutes of a talk or it is lost. This can be done with an interesting statement or idea. After a rapport is established the next task is to maintain it.

Here are eight steps that can be helpful when making a presentation:

1. **Purpose** - definite objectives should be determined before following the other steps.
2. **Planning** - implies the thought processes necessary to organize points into a logical presentation.
3. **Organizing** - write an outline of important topics and sub-topics.
4. **Developing** - add details as necessary and obtain any important visual aids such as compiling supporting statistics, contracts, journals, statements, PowerPoint presentations or photos. *(See Appendix G-1,Visual Aids, on page G-1 or Appendix G-2, Slide Shows, on page G-3.)*
5. **Practicing** - the quickest way to become good at speaking is to do it often and strive for improvement. There is no such thing as a captive audience; if you are ill-prepared, the audience will know.
6. **Presenting** - a good speaker tells something, explains what was said, then summarizes what he or she talked about. Be clear and use language your audience understands. At the end of the presentation, attention should be focused on the main points with a summary. The summary should be short and forceful. Also, remember to end on time and stay on schedule.
7. **Evaluation** - for future reference, determine whether you had success or failure during your presentation.
8. **Record and Store** - filing of materials and ideas for future efforts will save you time in the long run.

A speakers list can do much for your water quality project and agency. Capable individuals with certain abilities and expertise are scheduled by someone else in the organization to give presentations. Requests are handled and scheduled through one person. Get the word out that your agency is available for presentations and speaking engagements. On the following page are a few tips for working with public groups.

1. Identify the potential audiences in your area such as service clubs, churches, business associations, schools or agricultural groups. Chambers of commerce may have listings of such organizations in your area.

- farm groups
- civic leaders
- outdoor sports groups
- environmental groups

2. Develop a list of speakers involved in your watershed project.
3. Send a notice of your desire to speak to the groups.
4. Develop a comprehensive checklist or worksheet for each speaking assignment including the date, exact location, specific start time, whether to expect questions and answers, audience size, program length, and the name of the contact person.
5. Provide materials and support for your speakers including visual aids, handouts, and transportation if needed. *(See Appendix B-2, Public Meetings, on page B-3.)* Adapt your presentation as needed to speak to different audiences.

Public speaking has the potential of making an impact if done properly. However, you need to focus on those audiences that can be of most help with your project. Try to avoid spending too much time with groups which will have little or no impact on the project in the long run.

Many courses are offered in public speaking. See your local college, university or community college for course descriptions. Also interested individuals can participate in Toastmasters International, an organization dedicated solely to practice public speaking. Contact your chamber of commerce for more information.

APPENDIX B-2

Public Meetings

Meetings should be held in facilities that are clean and neat with comfortable chairs, good ventilation, adequate lighting, good acoustics and ample room. An uncomfortable person will not be able to concentrate on what is being said, and that can detract from the overall effectiveness of the meeting. Plan stretch breaks and coffee breaks to allow for informal discussion and offer the audience and presenters a chance to relax.

Advance publicity of a coming meeting is essential. Success depends on attendance, so reach as many people in your target audience as possible. This can be done in many ways, including use of posters and brochures. A news release should be issued at least one month before the meeting and then again one week before the event and newspaper deadlines.

Remember to follow up with publicity after the meeting. Photographs or speakers add human interest. Results and highlights of presentations are publicized for those who could not attend. This late publicity also sets the stage for the next effort.

1. Be clear about the goals for the meeting. Announce how long the meeting will last and what subjects will be discussed. Identify three or four main ideas you want to convey and make sure the details support those points. Finally, make sure to address people's concerns rather than just giving the facts. If the meeting's goals or ideas are not clear, the meeting probably should not be held.
2. Listen to people when they express their values and feelings. Acknowledge people's feelings about an issue. Try restating what people have said so that they know you have heard them:*"I can tell that you are concerned about this project because..."*When people are speaking emotionally, respond to their emotions. Don't follow with data and statistics. Acknowledge the feelings and respond to the concerns in addition to providing information.
3. Recognize and be honest about the values incorporated in your project's decisions and be aware of your own values and feelings about the project. Recognize that your own feelings may cause you to resist modifications of a project or to react strongly to a community group. Don't mislead the community.
4. When you speak at a public meeting, tell people who you are, what your background is, and why you are there. Give people a sense of why you are qualified to discuss a topic and what you can and can't do for them. Example: *"I'm John Smith, the project coordinator. I'm here to provide farmers access to voluntary, affordable technology which can help them improve water quality in our watershed."*
5. Let people see you are human. People will treat you as a person if you act like one. If you act like a bureaucrat, you will be treated accordingly.

6. If speaking makes you uncomfortable, work on it until it gets easier. Prepare as thoroughly as you can. Practice your presentations. Role-playing can also help.
7. The agency representative should be consistent throughout the life of the water quality project, if possible. Trust takes time to build.
8. Know your audience and gear your presentation to its level. When explaining technical information, it can help to imagine that you are talking to an intelligent but uninformed friend and speak at that level.
9. Be sure to give people sufficient background. Don't assume that condensing information is the same as making it clearer. Beware of the tendency to oversimplify and give only data that support your point. People know when you are using ammunition for your argument as opposed to presenting information.
10. Use down-to-earth language as much as possible. Watch jargon and acronyms.
11. Choose supporting graphics or visual aids that illustrate your message clearly and simply. Be cautious about using graphics intended for technical audiences. Hastily or ill-conceived graphics can be worse than none. Even well-executed graphics will not go over well if they do not deal with people's concerns.
12. Be aware of body language and other signals your audience gives you that they're lost. Slow down, back up, or ask questions.
13. Have background material available at meetings.
14. Always have question-and-answer periods after your presentations.
15. Critique your presentation afterward, so you can learn from the things that went right as well as those that did not.

APPENDIX C-1

Workshops and Training

Workshops and training sessions are one of the most valuable techniques to teach landowners and other interested persons in the community. Training gives them a sense of ownership in the project and an important feeling of participation.

1. Each workshop or training session should have only one theme. It is better to concentrate on one subject than to try to cover multiple themes. The chosen topic can involve research, installation of conservation practices, any phase of management, or other problems that are addressed by water quality projects.
2. Notify individuals well in advance of the meetings so as not to conflict with other agency schedules. Recruit outside specialists from other agencies for guest leaders. It gives your workshop credibility.
3. Have colleagues and your agency employees participate in conducting the workshop. This will give them the feeling of ownership in the project.
4. Speakers from within the agency should be treated with the same respect given to those from outside the agency. This includes proper introduction and help finding room and board.
5. Sessions can range from one to two days. Depending on how long your session is, you should provide frequent breaks.
6. Try to schedule a wide variety of presentation types. For example, follow a standard presentation with an interactive session. Lectures should be mixed with laboratory work, field tours and demonstrations.
7. Give ample time for questions and answers following each presentation. Discussion should be stimulated as much as possible. It gives participants a chance to take part and keep the program from dragging.
8. Some type of evaluation or exam should be given at the close of the session. It increases concentration and attention during the workshop and can give you a record of the knowledge participants received while attending. This can help with future sessions.

EXAMPLE

A workshop, training session or other event means nothing if there aren't participants. Getting the public involved in planning your event can help increase participation later, according to Lake Macbride coordinator Amy Bouska.

"Local participation creates a sense of ownership that can far greater sell participation that anything we can achieve by ourselves," says Bouska. "Creating and maintaining partnerships has been the key to our success. "

APPENDIX C-2

Demonstrations & Field Tours

Demonstrations and field tours must be adequately and carefully planned. Arrangements should be made for transportation, rest stops, lunch, hot drinks on cold days and cold drinks on hot days. People should be briefed before the trip starts. A written itinerary aids in reviewing background and concentrating attention where desired. Every stop must be coordinated with distances, time and roads known. Enough time should be allowed to do the job, but events must not be allowed to drag. Minor things, such as rough roads or too much dust, can put accent on the hardship rather than on the tour or the idea being presented.

One common problem with any outdoor tour is people often cannot see what is going on or hear what is being said. Small groups and a loudspeaker will help. A group discussion at the end of the tour serve to bring all parts together with a common agreement and understanding. Additional questions can be asked and answers given while events still are fresh in the participants' minds.

If you're using **self-guided** tours, the secret to success is clarity with all signs and directions. An attractive brochure or fact sheet, readily available at the starting point, is an absolute necessity. It should contain a map and complete description of each stop.

These suggestions on demonstrations come from the Integrated Farm Management Demonstration Programs booklet, *Evaluation of Effectiveness of Field Demonstration Programs*.

1. Demonstrations and field tours should provide visual examples of new farming approaches that reduce environmental contamination while maintaining farm profitability.
2. Demonstrations should include farmers who actively participate in federal farm programs. These demonstrations provide physical and economic evidence of the effects of reducing farm chemical use within the constraints of these programs.
3. General information about these demonstrations could also be disseminated to a larger audience through newsletters and brochures at ISU Extension and other agencies' offices.
4. In a survey of why demonstrations are used as information sources, farmers reply that field demonstrations increase knowledge, they provide assistance in adopting new practices, demonstrations have been used in the past, and they have provided proven information in the past.

APPENDIX C-3

Special Events & Open Houses

A special event or open house is usually a promotional venture to increase public awareness of your water quality project. It is a staged event for delivering news about the project. The public often attends to witness the event rather that the entire effort of the project. These events are useful for informing groups such as governmental officials and the community. If conducted correctly, they will prove to the community that the agency is a thoughtful neighbor and good citizen of the community. It should also draw attention from the media.

For example, a new lake will soon be completed, with the project costing the agency and community thousands of dollars to build. The agency plans an event to attract an audience and to get publicity for the project. There might be contests, scavenger hunts, free coffee and doughnuts, and prizes for the winners. While people are at the event, there should be free materials available showing the efforts by the agency and community in the project.

Advantages can be numerous if the special event or open house is done properly. Here's a few suggestions for your event.

1. Plan in advance. Little things are important, such as availability of parking space, toilets, refreshments, a photographer. You should start at least two months in advance.
2. Publicity is necessary before and after. News releases and announcements should be sent out six to eight weeks before the event, invitations at least three weeks before. Hard-sell publicity, such as posters, articles and PSAs, should be used one to two weeks before. Think as well about scheduling on-the-spot publicity and follow-up articles after the event.
3. Develop a schedule for the event. Print it as a handout or program and distribute one week before the event. This can also be used during the event.
4. Use guides, agency employees or the project advisory committee to explain things, give tours or answer questions. A special guide should be available to the media for interviews and questions.
5. If you decide not to use guides, have a small presentation to explain the reasoning behind the event, the accomplishments or goals of the project.
6. It's a good idea to give a small souvenir and serve refreshments. However, *public funds may not be used to provide souvenirs or refreshments at your events.* Solicit private sponsors to cover these costs.

APPENDIX D-1

Working with the Media

Working with the media may seem daunting at first, but can be simple when you understand how the media works.

Working with the press can enhance your public image and promote your water quality project for *free*. Cooperating with the media results in more fair and balanced stories. To get the best results, respect reporters' needs and deadlines. Keep these things in mind when dealing with reporters:

- Reporters want a quick reply, easy access to sources and an understanding of their deadlines. Be easily accessible to reporters and promptly return messages.
- If you give reporters facts, they will use them and continue to seek you out as a source.
- Most reporters do not have a science or water quality background. Put concepts into everyday terms.
- They can ask tough questions and always want more information. Their main questions, though, are who, what, where, when, why and how.
- Reporters and editors look for stories that are local, significant, timely, unique or greatly affect their community.
- Treat all media outlets equally, even if one gives you less than stellar coverage. Favoring certain outlets can end up creating a lot more negative coverage. Make sure your news releases are sent to all your local newspapers and broadcast stations.

Tips for giving interviews to reporters:

- Remain calm and in control; be aware of any nervous habits you may have, such as using a filler phrase repeatedly or touching your hair, especially if your interview is being recorded for radio or television.
- Avoid jargon, technical terms and acronyms, and explain things as you would to an intelligent friend without a science background.
- Keep your answers short and positive.
- It's fine to say "I don't know," but try to direct the interview back to something you can talk about in more detail, or direct the reporter to someone else who can give the needed information.
- Never say "no comment." Instead: "let me look into that, and I'll get back to you" or "I can't discuss that because…but I can

EXAMPLE

Don't ask to read a story before it goes to print; most journalists feels this can affect the story's objectivity. But they do want to get things right, and will often read back your quotes to ensure they have things correct. Storm Lake coordinator Kim Proctor often e-mails her quotes to reporters to make sure nothing is lost over the phone.

tell you…"

- For television: 70 to 90 percent of all communication is non-verbal. Be aware of your posture and any nervous habits you may have, and maintain eye contact with the reporter. Dress appropriately, such as a polo shirt with your water quality project's logo. It may be helpful to always have an "interview shirt" on hand at the office to be prepared whenever a TV reporter may call for an interview. Don't wear sunglasses or tinted lenses.
- For any interview with any reporter, whether on-camera, on the radio, in person or just over the phone, always remember you are **never** off the record, even if the reporter says you are. Never assume an interview is over because the camera or tape recorder is off.

Everyone makes mistakes, including reporters and editors. If there is a mistake, act immediately. Do you let the error slide, or do you ask for a correction? If it was a major mistake, contact the reporter and politely explain why it was an error and work with them to help them avoid that error in the future. Make sure to maintain a positive relationship with the reporter - if you get angry, it could affect any future media coverage. If the mistake involved something like an incorrect time or location for an event, or an incorrect name, politely ask the reporter or his or her editor to run a correction.

APPENDIX E-1

Writing & Correspondence

Because your goal is to be understood, consider these ideas about easy-to-read writing for letters and correspondence:

1. **Be conversational.** Write like you talk. If you catch yourself writing a vague or complex phrase ask yourself, "how would I say that?" This is also handy if you get "stuck" or have "writer's block."
2. **Use short, familiar words.** Question every word of three syllables or more that you are tempted to use. Avoid using jargon and extra words that aren't needed. Simpler is better. When a technical word must be used, explain it as simply as possible.

Modification	Change
Utilization	Use
Initial	First
Optimum	Best
Encounter	Meet
Demonstrate	Show
Objective	Goal
BMPs	Conservation practices
ACRONYMS	If you need to use acronyms or initials, spell them out on first use. For example, Hydrologic Unit Area (HUA)

   When in doubt, take an extra sentence to explain something more clearly using general terms. This is especially useful when defining conservation practices. A good resource for these definitions is *Conservation Choices* or the *Conservation Catalog* produced by NRCS.
3. **Use personal words.** Words like "you," "we," a person's name, direct quote, give your letter a more human characteristic.
4. **Use short sentences.** This is the best technique and the easiest. Sentences averaging between 15 to 20 words are considered easy reading. Any long sentences can be broken up.
5. **Create short paragraphs.** Keep paragraphs short, and vary their length from one to five average sentences.
6. **Don't ask readers to unscramble your ideas.** Place thoughts in logical order. State your major point in one sentence. Tell why it's important, then list other appropriate information.
7. **Use a letterhead with a project logo.** Make your correspondence and press releases quickly recognizable by using a standard letterhead with your project's name and logo (not the district, DSC, DNR or NRCS letterhead). *(See examples of letters on the following pages)*

PRAIRIE CREEK WATER QUALITY PROJECT

Clinton County Soil & Water Conservation District
1212 17th Ave., DeWitt, Iowa 52742
Phone: (563) 659-3456 ext 3 Fax: 563-659-2288

Leah Sweely, Project Coordinator ◆ leah.sweely@ia.nacdnet.net

February 20, 2007

[*Recipient Name*]
[*Address*]
[*City, State Zip/Postal Code*]

Dear [*Recipient*]:

[*Type the body of your letter here*]

Sincerely,

[*Your name*]
[*Your position*]

[*Typist's initials*]

Enclosure: [*Title and Number*]

cc: [*Name*]

APPENDIX E-2

Printed Materials

When planning a publication you must consider the purpose, audience, message and outline of the material to be included. Then you must write the material, decide on a basic style for the manuscript, draft it, rewrite it, then edit and polish it. Finally, you must decide how it will be produced. Determine the format and design, set the manuscript into type, prepare the layout and then print it.

Printing can be a large budget item, but it is also an area where you can save money.

1. Get others to help pay for your publications. Ask local companies and printers to do the work free, or at a reduced cost, giving them appropriate credits in the publication.
2. Shop around. Obtain bids from several vendors.
3. Check with printers on specifications to avoid confusion on printing requirements.
4. Paper is sold by the pound. Consider switching to a lighter sheet, which cuts your paper and postage costs. Ask for bargains in discontinued paper and closed-out stock. Few readers can distinguish between grades of paper.
5. Desktop publishing is the most common way of getting materials ready for printing. Desktop publishing programs can be purchased and used on your own computer, or contract with someone to do it for you.
6. Print posters on both sides for double visibility in store windows.
7. Publications funded with state or 319 funds must be printed on recycled paper (30 percent post-consumer content) and feature a specific logo and statement regarding recycled paper. Check with your funding agency for specific requirements for paper and inks.

Avoid expensive extras in printing through good layout and design. Embossing, color separation, die cuts, odd sizes, unusual folds, gold or silver stamping, special scoring or binding can be avoided with simple layout and design techniques.

The major function of **layout and design** isn't to win an art contest, but to gain and hold the reader's attention. A good heading or drawing is interesting to look at and moves the reader's eye down into your printed message. Here are some tips for effective design *(see Appendix E-6, Graphic Design on page E-13):*

1. Use readable typefaces, with serif types, stay away from sans-serifs. Avoid fonts that are difficult to read (such as *scripts*) or are too casual and less professional (i.e. Comic Sans MS).
2. Consider larger type for sight-impaired audiences.

3. Avoid using light text over a dark background (called "reverse type") in body copy (your main text section).
4. Investigate potentials for a self-mailer publication with address and label surfaces planned in layout and design of the publication.
5. Remember that photographs provide credibility. Try to remove the date stamp if possible.

APPENDIX E-3

Press Kits

Press or media kits can be a good way to formally introduce your project to local media. Kits give more background and detail about the project to the media. What is the purpose of the watershed project? What different conservation practices might landowners use, and how do they work?

Press kits are best at the beginning of your project, but can be given to anyone asking for more information on the project. They do not replace news releases.

Press kits should include:

1. Background information
   Often a one-page fact sheet on the project and its goals.
2. More detailed information

   For example, water quality problems and how possible solutions (like conservation practices) work, in plain language. Also explain funding and list project partners.
3. Contact information
   Who should the media contact for more information on the watershed project? Make sure these contacts know the media may be calling them.
4. Glossary of technical terms and jargon

   For those terms that can't be avoided in the text. Remember, journalists don't always have a science background. The kit can be a resource for them to better understand your project.
5. Good design

   A press kit should not be a large text document; place it in a layout with graphic elements and photographs to make it visually appealing. *(See Appendix E-6, Graphic Design on page E-13.)*

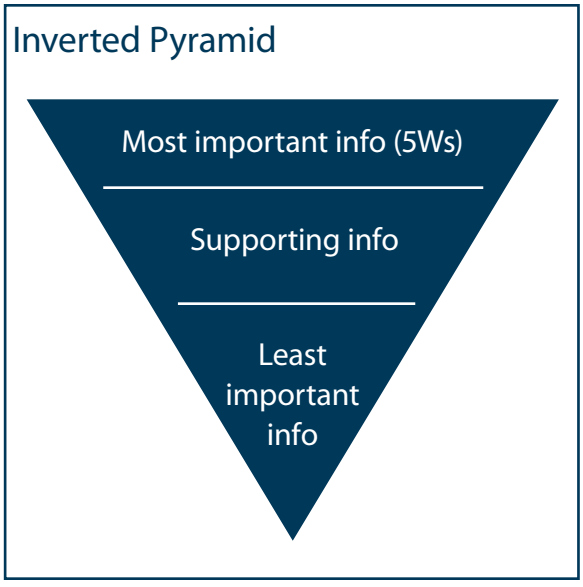
APPENDIX E-4

News Releases

There are many different types of writing, like scientific, fiction, technical, and so on. Journalists have a unique writing style as well. It allows for creativity, but follows a concise style that makes it easy for readers of any background to understand.

When writing a news release, remember that your first audience is reporters and editors. These people ultimately decide if your news release is newsworthy or not. If your news release is already written in journalistic style and is easy to understand, your release stands a better chance of becoming a published news story.

Journalists write in an "inverted pyramid" style, which means putting the most essential information for the reader in the beginning of the release and following with information of diminishing importance. The first two paragraphs should answer these questions about the story: who, what, when, where, why and how. If a reader stops reading halfway through the article, or an editor decides to crop your release down for space reasons, the most important facts remain. In addition to the writing tips regarding letters, remember these ideas when writing news releases:



1. **Length:** The release should be brief, meaning not more that two double-spaced typewritten pages (using one side only). If your release must be more than one page, don't split paragraphs or sentences in the middle, and never break a word and continue it on the next page. If more copy follows, type the word "MORE" with dashes on either side. Signify the end of your release by centering either "-30-" or "# # #" at the bottom of the page.

2. **Paper:** Standard letter size paper should be used. Use a letterhead that is quickly recognizable by your contact in the media or community leaders, such as one with your project logo.

3. **Support Information:** On the left side of the page, below "News Release," the words "For more information contact:" along with your name, title and phone number should appear. Make sure the contact will be readily available for a possible interview when the release is sent. On the right side of the paper, at the top, the date of the release should be typed.

4. **Body of the Release:** A headline for the release should be visibly typed across the top with the body directly under the headline. A short headline is all that's needed. Use one space between sentences. An editor cuts from the bottom, so don't bury important information in the latter half of your news release. Edit your material tightly. A seven-line paragraph is sure to turn reporters off. Keep paragraphs to one to three sentences – smaller

paragraphs are easier to read when the story's placed in newspaper columns. Always proofread the final product carefully. Remember to write to your audience – that includes reporters. Avoid technical jargon and write as if you're talking to an intelligent friend who doesn't have a science or farming background.

5. **Photos:** If digital photos are available, note this at the end of the release and provide contact information. Do not send photos unless editors or reporters request them; photo files can bog down some e-mail programs. Photographs should be at 300 dpi resolution at 5" x 7". They must depict their own story and must be able to "stand alone" or be self-explanatory. If the media requests a photo, also include a caption for the photo.
6. **Timing:** If announcing a scheduled event, the release should be dated for the week before the event. The release should be in the hands of the editor at least one week in advance of the event, and earlier if needed to meet a newspaper's publication schedule. Do not give a release to an editor more than two weeks before the event, it may be placed aside and forgotten. However, many papers that publish weekly, rather than daily, need two weeks advance notice to meet their deadlines. Ask your local media outlets what their publication deadlines are and work within those timeframes. If possible, avoid sending news releases at the end of the business day.
7. **Distribution:** Your media mailing list should be extensive. Use e-mail (unless FAX is requested) to send to the editors of newspapers, news directors of broadcast stations, organization newsletters, conservation trade journals and community newspapers. In most instances, target distribution of the news release to those who will give you the most coverage. Call your local media to ask who is the best person to receive your news releases and ask for their e-mail address.
8. **Follow-up:** Call two to three days after sending the release to see if your media contacts got it. On the day of the event, someone should call each person who received the release as a reminder. Repeat the time and place of the event and give some additional information which might make the event more interesting.

Other submissions to local media:

Consider writing a guest opinion or letter to the editor for your local newspaper to promote your project or event. Use this option sparingly when it's directly written by you; however, partners and participants should be encouraged to write letters to the editor.

Journalists also follow certain style rules when writing an article. Here are some examples of common writing style rules you should follow in a news release:

1. Acronyms and initialisms: Spell them out on first reference and then always use the acronym after that. Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) on first reference, DNR after that.

2. Text alignment: Use "align left," not "justify."

3. Punctuation: Goes inside quotation marks. Like "this," not like "this".

4. Symbols: Do not use % and &. Spell them out.

5. Spacing: Journalists usually use only one space between sentences. It creates room when you write in columns.

6. Numbers and figures: Spell out numbers zero to nine; numbers 10 and above use figures (example: There were four of us that traveled 30 miles to the fair). The exception: percentages always use figures. 7 percent, 98 percent. Same for dollar figures (see below). Avoid starting a sentence with a number or figure.

7. Money: use the dollar sign. Use figures for most amounts: $30,000, $900,000. For amounts involving a million or billion: use $1 million, $2.6 million, $10 billion, etc. Writing $4 million dollars is redundant, since you already used the dollar sign ($).

8. Dates: If you use just a month's name, spell it out (The landowner installed terraces in October). If you use a full date, like September 22 or September 22, 2007, abbreviate the month: Sept. 22; Sept. 22, 2007. Do not use superscript: May 21, not May 21st.

9. Apostrophes: they signify possession of something.
"I went to visit the Smith's." This is incorrect, what possession of the Smiths did you visit?
"I went to visit the Smiths." This is correct; it says that you visited more than one Smith.
"I went to see the Smiths' house." This is correct; the house belongs to the Smiths.

10. Its and it's: Remember, "it's" is a contraction for "it is." "Its" signifies possession.
Example: It's a shame that the dog can't find its way back home.

11. Use simple words: For example, "use" instead of "utilize." A good list of words with simpler alternatives can be found at:
http://process.umn.edu/groups/ppd/documents/information/writing_tips.cfm
From the University of Minnesota. Scroll to the "Keep it Simple" section.

Ensign Hollow II Watershed Project
PO Box 547, 117 Gunder Road NE
Elkader, IA 52043

Ensign Hollow Watershed Project News Release

For More Information Contact:
Eric Palas, Project Coordinator
563/245-1048

Streambank Protection Halts Erosion, Improves Trout Habitat

when *who* *what*

Elkader, IA. – This summer, Mace and Kristin Klingman completed a unique streambank protection project on their property near Volga. In addition to stabilizing over 200 feet of eroding streambank, the Klingmans installed a series of seven lunkers (artificial habitat structures) to improve the available cover for trout in Hewett Creek.

where *why*

The habitat that trout require is fragile. They find safety in pools more than two feet deep and in areas that provide a break from the current. Overhead cover provided by root wads, logs, boulders, and long stemmed grasses protects trout from predators like herons and mink. Lunkers are designed to provide additional habitat for trout when the natural cover is lacking.

The Klingmans' property is in close proximity to the state-owned portion of Hewett Creek. From 1990 through 1992, nearly 95 lunkers were installed on 15 sites along the state property by the Department of Natural Resources and the Hawkeye Fly Fishing Association. Installation of the lunkers contributed to a significant increase in the trout population. In one particular stretch of the stream, trout population estimates increased from 1 in 1991, to 302 in 1999.

Streambank erosion was a very visible problem for the Klingmans following the heavy rainstorms that flooded the Volga area in the spring of 1999. High winds that had toppled buildings during the fall had also felled many of the trees that had helped to keep the stream channel stable. When the creek waters rose, a bank near a new fence began to slough. As the bank eroded, both the fence and some very productive land in an adjacent crop field were threatened.

DNR Fisheries Biologist Bryan Hayes viewed the Klingmans' site shortly after the storms. "The damage from the storms was obvious, but there were also several deep pools and good sites for habitat improvement," noted Hayes. "We saw trout swimming in the stream at the time of the initial site visit, and during construction."

The Ensign Hollow Watershed Project, through the guidance of the Clayton Soil and Water Conservation District, provided funding for a portion of the cost of the project. While the watershed project's efforts are primarily focussed on controlling soil erosion in the upland portion of the 6,000-acre watershed, the potential for a direct reduction in sediment delivered to Hewett Creek by stabilizing the eroding streambank was obvious.

Brehme Construction, Wadena, completed the project during the last week of August. The eroding streambanks were reshaped to a 2:1 slope to spread out the force of the flowing water, and were then armored with the placement of rock rip-rap. DNR Fisheries personnel installed the lunkers as

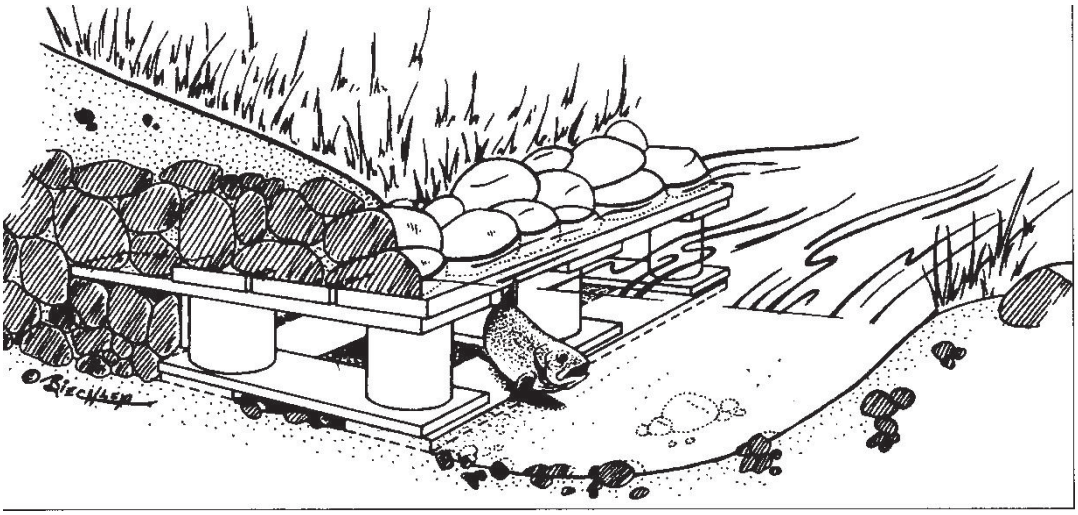
the heavy construction work progressed. In addition to the habitat improvement, the inclusion of the lunkers also reduced the amount of rock required for the project. The Hawkeye Fly Fishing Association contributed to the effort by purchasing the rough hewn oak lumber that was used to construct the structures.

The benefits of the streambank protection project will be long term. The sloughing that had threatened the new fence and the cropland has been eliminated, and it is estimated that sediment delivery to Hewett Creek will be reduced by nearly 38 tons per year. DNR Fisheries personnel plan to document in-stream improvements that occur by sampling and measuring trout numbers and sizes.

The unique coldwater stream resources that are found in northeast Iowa are limited in number and worthy of our protection. "There's a delicate balance between crop and livestock production and the effects on our natural resources," commented Eric Palas, Ensign Hollow Project Coordinator. "The cooperation demonstrated by the individuals and groups involved provides an excellent example of what is necessary to achieve long term water quality benefits."

# # #

As shown in this diagram, Lunkers provide a source of cover and protection for trout.



BLACK HAWK SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
2950 SOUTHLAND DRIVE WATERLOO, IOWA 50701 319-296-3262

January 31, 2007

What's in OUR water? IOWATER "snapshot" monitoring can help find out.

Three city-wide monitoring snapshots planned for 2007

CEDAR FALLS – Area volunteers are needed to take part in three "snapshot" monitoring events in 2007. Black Hawk Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) is partnering with IOWATER, Iowa's statewide volunteer water quality monitoring program, to produce three city-wide "snapshot" water quality monitoring events in Cedar Falls.

2007 IOWATER Snapshot Monitoring Dates:

- Saturday May 12
- Saturday July 14
- Saturday Oct 13

On the day of the snapshot, volunteers are asked to meet between 9:00 and 9:30 a.m. outside the Cedar Falls Tourism & Visitor Center for a brief program on the days' events. The Cedar Falls Tourism & Visitor Center is located at 8510 Hudson Road in Cedar Falls. Details will include background on the Dry Run Creek watershed project currently managed by the SWCD. Information will also be available that day on sites to be monitored and instructions on how volunteers can collect the data needed for the snapshot.

After the program, volunteers will depart and collect water samples for analysis from assigned sites. Sites will be marked where volunteers are to sample. Teams will then collect the samples and follow detailed instructions on how to analyze the samples. Once data sheets are filled out and samples are taken, groups then return to the Tourism & Visitor Center for refreshments and to turn in the data sheets.

Area residents who are IOWATER certified are encouraged to participate in the snapshot. However, IOWATER certification is not required. Volunteers are asked to RSVP, however people may also simply show up the day of the snapshot to participate. If groups want to monitor specific locations or want to work as a group, a call to participate is requested.

Water quality monitoring includes physical, chemical, biological, and habitat assessments. Physical assessments document the physical attributes of a water body, such as temperature and water clarity. Chemical testing includes pH, nitrogen, phosphate, chloride and dissolved oxygen monitoring. Biological monitoring includes identification of "benthic macroinvertebrates," or organisms that live in streams, rivers, and lakes. Habitat assessments can be used to document the suitability of water bodies to sustain aquatic life.

"The condition of Dry Run Creek determines the environmental health of our community and also contributes to the health of the Cedar River," says Rebecca Kauten, watershed coordinator for Black Hawk SWCD. "The more we know about our community watershed and water bodies, the more we can do to maintain a healthy community for ourselves and also to help others downstream."

For more information or to RSVP for the snapshot contact Rebecca at 319-610-7507 or rebecca.kauten@ia.usda.gov. For information on IOWATER, snapshots and IOWATER certification visit www.iowater.net.

-30-

USDA is an equal opportunity employer and provider.

APPENDIX E-5

Magazine Articles & Feature Stories

A magazine article can be considered about the same as a feature story in a newspaper. Instead of the climax or "lead" being in the first one or two paragraphs, as in a news story, the reader is taken along gradually, until the climax at the end.

If you're writing the article, the style needs to be in the same style as the magazine or journal you're writing for. Style includes: length, use of illustrations, method of citation, level of knowledge of the reading audience, and general appearance. Good grammar is necessary.

It generally is best to write from an outline. The following six parts are suggested:

1. Attract attention with a title or "head" and the first sentence or two, or a "hook."
2. State the subject, introduce the problem or situation involved.
3. Define the subject, explain further the main points. Contrary views can be stated.
4. Discuss the subject. This portion is usually the main body of the article. Include examples, details, observations and experiences.
5. Apply the subject, give results and make comparisons.
6. Summarize, restate the important points in a new and fresh way.

If you're "selling" the story idea to a reporter or editor for a publication, you have to remind the news contacts that you exist.

1. Send periodic letters to reporters and editors in your watershed and county, include your name and address with a short description of your project and services, accomplishments, special events and daytime phone number.
2. Consider letters to the editor or opinion articles. Ask for editorials to be written on issues related to your project.
3. Encourage supporters to write letters to the editor about your project.

(See sample magazine articles and feature newspaper stories on the following pages.)

EXAMPLE

David Knoll, the coordinator of the CLEAR project at Clear Lake, earned his project a front page story in the Sunday Des Moines Register by following up with a reporter.

"Previous articles regarding lake water quality that were the result of phone interviews had been predominantly negative," Knoll says.

"When we were able to convince the reporter to actually come to Clear Lake and meet with local people working on the project and see first hand the activities being accomplished, this much more positive article was the result."

Iowa Farmer Today

Improving water quality one watershed at a time

Print Page

By Hannah Fletcher, Iowa Farmer Today

BRIGHTON -- As several groups work to improve Iowa's water quality one watershed at a time, landowners are vital to success.

Watershed projects were developed after the state designated impaired waters in 1998. The list was updated in 2002 and 2004.

Officials are working on the latest impaired waters list, says Ubbo Agena, Iowa Department of Natural Resources non-point source pollution program coordinator.

Lake Darling in Southeast Iowa is among four or five other projects that have been recommended for removal as a result of successful efforts in the watersheds, he says.

"Lake Darling is one example where we are seeing changes in water quality as a result of the watershed activities that are being done," Agena says.

LEFT: Roy Rogers, left, and Stan Simmons relax on a park bench at Lake Darling State Park. Rogers has farmed in the Lake Darling watershed since the lake was built in 1952. Rogers, and other landowners, helped improve the lake's water quality through a variety of conservation efforts. Simmons is the watershed projects coordinator. He helped develop a comprehensive watershed plan and united area landowners. RIGHT: The results of the watershed efforts are clear. These samples of Lake Darling's water were taken by DNR officials in April 1999 and April 2005.
IFT photos by Hannah Fletcher

"We are seeing a change in soil conservation, and these are being reflected in the water quality."

The results at Lake Darling project are clear — literally.

Water clarity has improved, says Stan Simmons, Lake Darling watershed coordinator. The beach is open and many anglers have returned.

Organizers hope they have curtailed the shrinking lake. Since the lake was built in 1950, it began to fill in and shrunk from 305 acres to 267 acres, Simmons says.

Improvement is good news for those who live here. Many were tired of being an example of bad water quality and helped in the clean-up, says Simmons.

Donnie Dickinson of Brighton is a farmer who is happy about Lake Darling's new reputation.

"It used to be, every time you'd pick up the Des Moines Register there would be something about the water quality being bad, the beach was closed and you shouldn't fish there. We were kind of getting sick of all the bad publicity," he says.

"But, it's really turned around now. You can see the water is clear. It looks better, and it tests better."

Similar to many farmers in the tri-county area of Keokuk, Washington and Jefferson counties, Dickinson had practiced conservation methods, such as no-till, before the project begin in 1999.

But, the project offered higher cost-share values and an opportunity to do more.

"It made it more feasible. As much as everything costs, it's hard to do things on your own," he says.

Dickinson made improvements to his property and on his rented acres. His landlord, Dorothy Schultz was happy to cooperate.

The two worked with the county engineer to construct a sediment-control pond that ends along a county road, using it as the dam.

"Even though you're just the landlord, you have to go along with what's best for the land," Schultz says.

Simmons says cooperation among landowners, farmers and local agencies from the tri-county area were key to success.

"There's a lot of talk about partnerships. That word kind of gets thrown around. But, we really have a true partnership," he says proudly.

When Simmons, a retired Natural Resources Conservation Service employee, began coordinating the effort, he looked at the map of the entire watershed that affects the 1,200-acre state park.

He assigned conservation-plan recommendations for landowners regardless of fence lines.

"I decided not to look at the fence lines as set backs, but opportunities, instead," he says.

Partnership stories are a common thread throughout the watershed.

Simmons worked with farmer Craig Wright, a hog and cattle producer, and his neighbor Bob Adrian to build a sediment-control pond just outside the park.

For Wright, the pond was about more than improving Lake Darling's condition. The pond offers recreational opportunities for his three children: Amanda, Macy and Brett.

"We keep saying we should build a cabin out here," says Macy Wright.

The Wrights typically camp at Lake Darling twice a year and are happy conditions improved.

However, the pond they built to help improve water quality at the lake offers them another recreational area. The family stocked the pond with fish last year.

"It should provide good fishing next year," Wright says.

There was also an educational component in the project, Simmons says. The group received a grant from the Iowa Pork Producers Association (IPPA).

Although bacteria from animal sources was highlighted as a problem, there are few livestock operations in the watershed, he says.

For example, Wright raises hogs but his animals are outside of the watershed.

"But, you don't have to have hogs in the watershed to have their manure in the watershed when it is applied as fertilizer," Simmons says.

The IPPA taught area hog producers about better manure management.

Roy Rogers has lived in the Lake Darling watershed his entire life. After watching the lake's quality decline and fill in, he needed to try to help.

"I remember riding a boat out there," he says, pointing to the area where the lake has filled in.

For Rogers, conservation was always a priority.

Improving the lake's water quality was an added bonus.

"I did some conservation work before the lake was even built," he says.

This project and his past practices, such as no-till and terraces, allowed him to maintain and improve soil.

"If we lose our topsoil, we are going to have a lot of hungry mouths to feed," he says. "The way I look at it is we need to take care of the land first and then the lake will take care of itself."

The Lake Darling project will probably come to a close next year, Simmons says.

He is confident their accomplishments will continue to protect the lake's water because he focused mostly on permanent practices, and the landowners have shown enthusiasm and dedication.

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APPENDIX E-6

Graphic Design

Good graphic design draws people in to a display, gains attention for flyers and posters, and invites people to read a newsletter. Layouts can make a piece more interesting and easier to read. Poor graphic design can turn someone away and keep them from receiving your message. The following are standard design tips to consider when creating a communications product:

1. Consider contacting your local college or university to see if there's an opportunity for students to design your materials or create a template as part of a class project.
2. For newsletters, break up text into two or three columns. Use short paragraphs - generally one to three sentences long.
3. Use fonts that are easily readable. Serif fonts (which have "hooks" on the end of letters, like this font) are generally best for main paragraph text. Sans-serif fonts (like Arial, Verdana and Franklin Gothic that are straight, block letters) work well for headlines. Avoid casual fonts, such as Comic Sans MS. They are generally difficult to read and look less professional. Posters, however, can sometimes make good use of a mixture of casual and professional fonts.
4. Standard font size is 12 pt; avoid smaller than this, especially if your audience is older. Headlines are generally 18-30 pt. Font size can make your stories easier to read.
5. Boldface and italic type should be used to bring attention to important points, but use it sparingly. Using boldface or italics too frequently loses the effect of emphasizing important points and makes a story hard to read. Think of the fable of the "boy who called wolf."
6. Photos, graphics and bulleted lists are great ways to break up text in a newsletter or flyer. Breaking up text makes a piece seem more manageable to the reader and will help keep their attention. However, strike a good balance between these visuals and text blocks. Too many graphics or photos can make the page look crowded and uncoordinated. Choose photos over clip art as much as you can, as photos add credibility.
7. Choose colors that fit your theme, like blue for water quality or earth tones. Bright colors, like neon shades, can draw attention but can also be hard on the eyes.

APPENDIX E-7
Project Newsletters

Every newsletter is different. In general, they maintain your relationship and project awareness with your audience and provide a call to action for your audience. Newsletters can tell of recent developments in the watershed, report research and other findings of interest to the readers, answer frequently asked questions, carry success stories of the project, promote upcoming events, and relay useful practices and ideas.

1. When doing an article for your newsletter, start with a brief, to-the-point paragraph. Vary the length of your opening sentences, but generally speaking, keep sentences and paragraphs short for easy reading and more attractive appearance. Keep it simple. Avoid long introductions. Use familiar words. Speak the language of your readers.
2. Have an easy-to-remember title and heading design, with a simple, clean-cut outline of your watershed or your project logo. A customizable newsletter template is available for project coordinators from the DNR. Use the title and color scheme for your newsletter every issue to increase recognition with your readers.
3. Add color by printing your newsletter on colored paper if you are printing in black and white. The difference in cost between this and white paper is very little. When using colored paper, keep in mind whether or not you'll be photocopying the newsletter. Some papers do not photo copy well.
4. If you print or duplicate on both sides, use a paper with enough weight so that there will be no "show through."
5. You can save time and money by designing the newsletter with a self-mailer address panel on the back cover. It cuts out the need to "stuff" envelopes and can limit the cost of envelopes and postage weight. Contact a printer or post office for size regulations.
6. Use a two- or three-column format for easy reading.
7. You can break the monotony of the column by occasionally indenting statements, quotes or other material you'd like to have stand out.
8. Make good use of white space by not cramming too much on one page. If it is a "tight"" one page issue, make it a two page issue with white space instead.
9. Create a one-year production schedule to help you plan ahead for story ideas rather than scrambling at the last minute. Write your own "canned stories" when the idea strikes and keep them on hand for when you need to fill space in a newsletter.

Finally:

EXAMPLE

Nikki Pratt, coordinator of the Muchakinock Creek watershed project, keeps a running list of story ideas and works on the newsletter when she has down time. This helps her fill newsletter space with great stories without scrambling when the printing deadline draws near.

10. Your extra effort in writing, editing and rewriting your copy will mean less effort for your readers. Make **clarity** the main goal of your editing and your readers will stick with you through many newsletters.
11. Remember you can lend **credibility** to your newsletter by inserting visual aids such as photos.
12. Make sure your newsletter is **dependable**, reaching the right people at the right time.

The following is an outline for newsletter format and things to avoid when producing your project newsletter. The DNR can provide a template for a two or four page newsletter. Generic newsletter format:

1. Print in four-page, 8 1/2" x 11", two- or three-column format.
2. Publish on a regular schedule, but only as often as necessary. If you don't have enough information to fill a newsletter every two months, do quarterly newsletters, for example.
3. Feature policy announcements, new contract sign-ups, description of conservation practices, landowner success stories and general information on water quality issues in the watershed.
4. Edit by project staff or other cooperating agency. Always have more than one person proofread. Have a friend with a non-science background proofread to see if you have explained technical terms clearly.
5. Develop under supervision of a water quality project coordinator and/or advisory committee.

Things to avoid:

1. Crowded or cluttered appearance.
2. Poor writing style, inaccuracy and typos.
3. Small or hard-to-read type. (What are your audiences' sight capabilities? 12 pt. is a normal size for readable type.) Use an easily readable font, like Times New Roman. Do not use more than two to four fonts. Keep bold and italics to a minimum.
4. Conflicting colors and poor reproduction (some recycled or colored paper does not copy well).
5. Bad graphics. (If a photo is too dark, busy or pixelated, don't use it.)
6. Cumbersome folds.
7. Undependable production schedule.
8. Using "filler" stories that do not directly deal with the water quality project.
9. Using stories from other sources. Original content seems more credible. If you use stories or images from other sources, make sure it directly applies

to your project and **always** get copyright permission to reprint the story or image. This includes articles and images accessed online as well as from the local newspaper.

The secret to dependability is to set deadlines by working backward from the delivery date to the starting point:

1. Delivery date	October 1
2. Mailing date	September 26
3. Printing date	September 16
4. Printer's proof	September 13
5. Final draft complete	September 10
6. Art and copy corrections	September 6
7. Proofreading	August 28
8. Layout	August 26
9. Copy editing	August 20
10. Stories due to editor	August 15
11. Assignments	July 15
12. Planning meeting	July 15
13. Last issue delivered	July 1

(See samples of the Elk River and West Tarkio newsletters on the following pages.)

ELK RIVER WATER QUALITY PROJECT

Elk River Newsletter

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2006

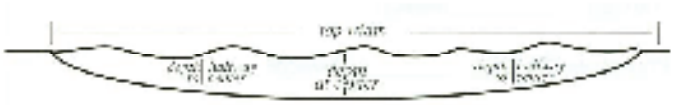
INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Last Year of Project Funding...

This federal fiscal year (Oct. 1, 2006 - Sept. 30, 2007) is the last scheduled year of the three year Elk River Water Quality Project. After this time funding will no longer be available to producers at a cost share rate of 75 percent for construction of sediment basins for manure, filter strips to treat liquid runoff leaving the sediment basin, gutter systems, and grade stabilization structures for erosion control in the watershed. Without the project, cost share will only be available through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program at a cost share rate of 50 percent. Anyone interested in any of these practices or anyone with questions should contact Leah, Elk River Watershed Coordinator, ASAP at 563-659-3456 ext 3 in order secure these additional funds. If we've worked options up for you this is your last chance to make a commitment.

Working Waterways

A correctly shaped waterway has a parabolic or bowl shape. When you see gullies starting down the side or a ditch etched out of the middle, it is time to do a little repair work. A general rule for shaping a waterway is that the depth halfway to the center should be 3/4 of the depth at the center. After shaping and smoothing a waterway it is important to get a seeding established before heavy rains form new rills or gullies. Fabric checks should also be used to help prevent rills or gullies. Fabric checks are placed perpendicular across the waterway after it has been seeded and aids in keeping soil in place until the seeding becomes established. Financial assistance is available at 50 percent cost share to reshape and seed grass waterways.



Shape a parabolic waterway so that the depth halfway to the center is 3/4 of the depth at the center. Example if center depth is 1 ft., depth halfway to center is .75 ft.

Many Projects Available Utilizing REAP Funds

Resource Enhancement and Protection Program (REAP) funding is received by local Soil and Water Conservation Districts on a yearly basis with the goal of protecting Iowa's resources. The following list includes eligible REAP practices and cost share rates.

- ⇒ **Farmstead Windbreak:** 75% of the actual cost not to exceed $15/tree & $2.25/shrub to establish or restore farmstead windbreaks.
- ⇒ **Field Windbreak:** 75% of the actual cost not to exceed $365/acre.
- ⇒ **Timber Stand Improvement:** Approved forest management plan required, 75% of the actual cost not to exceed $75/acre for thinning, pruning crop trees, or releasing seedlings or young trees.
- ⇒ **Tree Planting:** Approved forest management plan required, 75% of the actual cost not to exceed $365/acre including establishing ground cover, trees, tree planting operations, weed and pest control, and site preparation.
- ⇒ **Riparian Forest Buffer:** 75% of actual or estimated cost.
- ⇒ **Prescribed Grazing System:** 75% of actual or estimated cost. Fencing limited to $8/rod. At least two paddocks of native grasses.
- ⇒ **Conservation Cover:** 75% of actual or estimated cost.
- ⇒ **Stream bank Stabilization:** 50% of actual or estimated cost.

Contact your local Soil & Water Conservation District for more information on these practices

Display this roadside sign next to your completed REAP project

Be on the Lookout Next Spring For:

An ag waste system consisting of a sediment basin and filter strip being built by operator Mark Petersen on Rich Rathje's farm

Another sediment basin and filter strip being built at Ron Gray's open feedlot

A wetland restoration project on Elk River bottoms by owner Tom Stevenson near the Hwy 67 bridge and Elk River

This project is supported in part by the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Division of Soil Conservation, through funds of the Water Protection Fund, Watershed Protection Fund, Watershed Improvement Review Board, and by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources through a grant from the EPA under Section 319 of the Clean Water Act. Technical assistance provided by NRCS. Federal regulations prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, or handicap. An Equal Opportunity Employer.

Clinton County Soil & Water Conservation District
1212 17th Ave
DeWitt, IA 52742
Leah Sweely, Watershed Coordinator
Phone: 563-659-3456 ext 3
E-mail: leah.sweely@ia.nacdnet.net

Montgomery Co.
SWCD Office
Red Oak
(712) 623-9680

Page Co.
SWCD Office
Clarinda
(712) 542-5484

West Tarkio Watershed Priority Area

February 2007
Ron Sanson, Coordinator WTW Priority Area (712) 542-5484

In this issue:

Sign up time for future conservation work

If you're a landowner in the priority area of the West Tarkio Watershed (WTW), it's time to start thinking about conservation practices for the coming year.

If you are interested in cost-share funding to do conservation work in the priority area between July 1, 2007 and June 1, 2008, contact the Montgomery County or Page County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) office **by Feb. 26.**

The WTW project needs to know the interests of the landowners and the amount of conservation work needed to apply for 2008 grant funding. The project is working on the grant application and is unsure at this time if it will receive funds for fiscal year (FY) 2008.

The present WTW cost share rate is 65 percent. The FY2008 WTW grant funds will probably be allocated on a ranking system similar to FY2007.

For FY2007, the WTW project received $150,000 in grant funds from the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship – Division of Soil Conservation.

These funds are from the Environmental First Fund, which comes from Iowa gambling dollars.

If you have questions about the sign up or ranking system, please contact Ron Sanson at the Page County SWCD office at (712) 542-5484.

Above: The West Tarkio Watershed Priority Area is 32,800 acres in size.

Buried tile intakes for terraces demonstration

This demonstration is being done on the Jim O'Hara Farm in Page County. It is designed to help evaluate practical ways to reduce the potential direct route of pesticides and fertilizers from entering surface water through the terrace tiles.

Water samples will be taken starting this spring to evaluate the quality of the water that is exiting from the tile lines. Rock, corncobs and soil have been used above the buried tile intakes.

If you have questions about the demonstration, please contact Dave Tackett or Ron Sanson at the Page County SWCD office.

Nitrogen Usage Rates

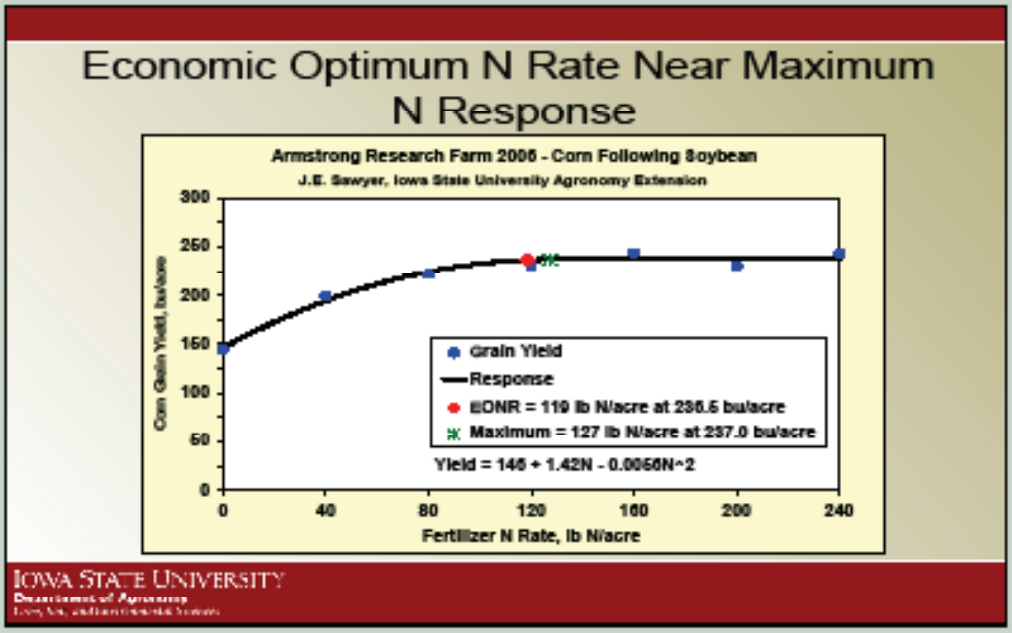
Over the past several years, emphasis has been on the amount of actual nitrogen applied per acre to corn in a corn/soybean rotation. The above chart prepared by John Sawyer at Iowa State University is based on research data from the Southwest Iowa Armstrong Research Farm near Lewis.

EONR = Economic optimum N rate; the point where the last increment of N returns a grain yield increase large enough to pay for that N unit.

The graph shows that the 120-127 pounds of actual nitrogen per acre to be the most efficient use of nitrogen in this research project. Remember, a significant amount of the nitrogen that the corn plant uses comes from the soil and plant residue, so it is important to maintain high soil quality in your fields. Conservation practices help you in maintaining your valuable soil and in keeping plant residue on the land.

Nitrogen rates are very important for water quality but they also impact your bottom line on economic returns to the crop.

For those who are considering continuous corn, Sawyer indicated you may need an additional 50 to 60 pounds of N to offset the lost "benefits" of soybeans in a corn/soybean rotation. Fertility levels of P and K are also very important items to consider.



This slide provided by Dr. John Sawyer, Associate Professor of Agronomy and Soil Fertility Extension Specialist at Iowa State University

No-till still important for continuous corn

We have had a few producers comment that they felt it would be difficult to grow continuous corn in a no-till situation. However, there is information available and producers who are doing this successfully.

I encourage you to visit with long-time no-tillers and the NRCS office before you change from a no-till system and lose the benefits of no-till to your valuable soil.

2001—2007 WTW accomplishments

Since 2001, 77 landowners have completed permanent conservation work to qualify for $743,145 in cost-share funds from WTW grant funds (based on Feb. 1, 2007 data).

The permanent practices have included 482,345 feet (91.3 miles) of terraces and water and sediment control basins and one grade stabilization structure.

WTW landowners have combined Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) dollars to add additional permanent practices. These practices have included waterways, contour buffer strips and filter strips.

These conservation practices all combine help to reduce the movement soil from the land.

In April of 2006, the watershed project started using a new software program on the completed conservation projects which provides an estimation of the amount of soil that actually moves from the field to a stream. This measurement is being used in Iowa to evaluate the impacts of the various conservation practices on water quality in surface waters.

Over 40 people attended the "Buried Tile Intakes For Terraces Demonstration" field day on a cold, muddy day in late October 2006.

WTW Citizens Committee

The WTW Citizens Committee has been an important group since it was organized in the spring of 2001, and makes presentations about the WTW project.

In October 2006, committee members made a WTW presentation to the Page County Board of Supervisors and to State Representative Richard Anderson of Clarinda.

In December, a WTW presentation was given to the Montgomery County Board of Supervisors.

Both presentations centered on the interest shown by WTW landowners to do permanent conservation work.

The committee also emphasized that the WTW conservation work helps in keeping soil on the land and out of the county road ditches.

The Citizens Committee members are: Knute Hallquist of Stanton, Chairperson; Fred Hossle of Red Oak, Vice Chairperson; Randy Wenstrand of Essex, Secretary; Kirk Johnson of Red Oak; and Jim Long of Essex.

Committee members, (L-R): front: Fred Hossle, Jim Long, and Randy Wenstrand back: Knute Hallquist and Kirk Johnson

Montgomery County SWCD Office
2505 N. Broadway
Red Oak, Iowa 51566

Page County SWCD Office
1003 S 8th. Street
Clarinda, Iowa 51632

WEST TARKIO WATERSHED
PRIORITY AREA

West Tarkio Watershed Priority Area Updates

West Tarkio Watershed Priority Area Newsletter prepared by Ron Sanson, Coordinator, West Tarkio Watershed Priority Area.

Phone (712) 542-5484

E-mail:
Ron.Sanson@ia.nacdnet.net

Template provided by Iowa DNR

Since October of 2001, the West Tarkio Watershed Grant funds have helped to provide conservation benefits to an estimated 2,468 acres of farmland in Montgomery and Page Counties.

This is a picture of the "Environmental Pit," which is filled with corn cobs. The cobs serve as a filter and this is a part of the "Tile Intakes For Terraces" Demonstration.

The West Tarkio Watershed Priority Area is supported by the Division of Soil Conservation, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship. The water sampling is supported by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources through a grant with the Iowa Hygienic Laboratory. Montgomery County and Page County SWCD Commissioners are the project's sponsors.

APPENDIX E-8

Brochures & Fact Sheets

Brochures and fact sheets are an attractive addition to any successful project and may be of particular value for self-guided or field tours. They can help clarify the project issues and give people a starting point for asking questions. Brochures are most useful when given out in a face-to-face meeting. such as leaving a project brochure with a landowner after a meeting at his or her home. Fact sheets and brochures work well as additional information for public meetings. Before creating a brochure, think carefully about how it will be used and if it is the most effective medium for sending your message to an audience. *(The DNR may be able to assist with development of introductory project brochures or success story brochures. Speak to the nonpoint coordinator for more information.)*

1. Brochure design should be on an 8.5" x 11" sheet of paper. The paper can be folded once or twice to produce four to six panels. Legal size paper (8.5" x 14") can also be used and folded into three places to create eight panels.
2. Brochure copy must be brief and to-the-point. Only the most important information should be included. Remember the key is to keep the reader's attention. If extra space is available, do not use filler information, instead use a graphic or blank space to make it more visually appealing.
3. A fact sheet is usually an 8.5" x 11" piece of paper, printed on one or both sides, but not folded. A fact sheet delivers basic facts and ideas in a clear-cut way, and can include graphics and photos.
4. Brochures are printed in the same manner as newsletters. Fact sheets can also be printed professionally or with a copier.
5. For self-guided or field tours, the printed materials should define the tour locations and a map of the entire watershed or area.

(See following samples of brochures from the CLEAR project at Clear Lake and the Burr Oak and Turtle Creek watershed project.)

EXAMPLE

The CLEAR project at Clear Lake placed the lawn care brochure on the following page as an insert in local telephone bills. An agreement with the phone company allowed the project to send the brochure practically for free – the only cost was printing the brochures, according to project coordinator David Knoll. The brochure reached more than 6,000 households. While not everyone reads bill inserts, Knoll said he received positive feedback from the mailing.

Metro Watershed Partners in Minnesota developed the brochure and gave the CLEAR project permission to modify the brochure to fit its needs.

You are fertilizing more than your grass.

The storm drain in your street is a direct link to our lakes and rivers. The choices you make when caring for your lawn directly affect water quality.

A common cause of lake and river pollution is phosphorus runoff. Though phosphorus is important for grass growth, levels in most Clear Lake lawns are naturally high enough and do not require additional fertilizer. Have your lawn tested it you believe it needs phosphorus.

Phosphorus turns lakes and rivers green. Phosphorus stimulates the growth of algae in lakes and rivers. This crowds out other water plants and reduces oxygen available to fish. The result is unattractive, foul-smelling water that is bad for fish, wildlife, and humans.

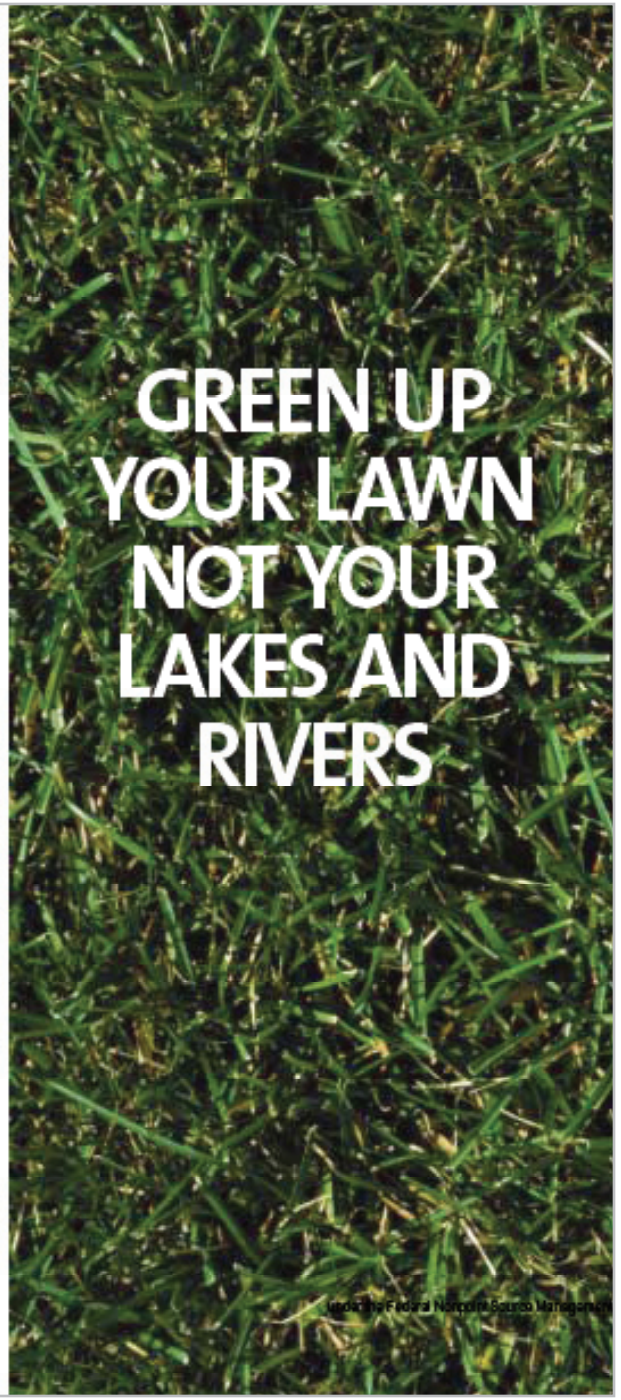
Nitrogen, not phosphorus, greens up grass. Phosphorus-free lawn fertilizer still contains nitrogen, the plant nutrient that greens up grass.

To keep our lakes and rivers healthy, we need to manage phosphorus carefully. Read on to learn how you can reduce phosphorus runoff from lawn fertilizers and other sources!

The publication of this document has been funded in part by the Division of Soil Conservation, Iowa Department of Agriculture & Land Stewardship, and by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources through a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency under the Federal Nonpoint Source Management Program (Section 319 of the Clean Water Act.)

Clear Lake Enhancement Project

Metro WaterShed Partners



Anything that enters a storm drain goes directly to a local lake or river.

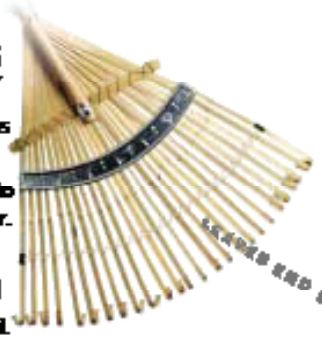
It does not go to a waste water treatment facility.

Do you know you live on waterfront property? You do if there is a storm drain nearby! Storm drains carry runoff water directly to lakes and rivers. Whatever washes off your yard and street runs directly into these waters. That includes lawn fertilizer, grass clippings, pet waste, and tree leaves and seeds—all sources of phosphorus, the plant nutrient that turns lakes and rivers green with algae.

Keep your runoff clean!
Keep our lakes and rivers clean!

REMOVE LEAVES FROM THE STREET

- Rake leaves, seeds and grass clippings out of the street and gutter.
- Compost on site or bag and take to the Yard Waste Collection Center.



LEAVES END UP IN THE STORM SEWER

PREVENT EROSION

- Phosphorus attaches to soil. Keep soil from washing into the street.

FERTILIZE THE LAWN, NOT THE LAKES AND RIVERS

- Choose a zero-phosphorus fertilizer. The majority of Clear Lake lawns are naturally high in phosphorus and will remain healthy without adding more.
- If you think your lawn needs phosphorus, test your soil first. For information call Frontier Lakes at 357-7845 or your county ISU Extension office.
- Sweep spilled fertilizer off paved surfaces.
- Remember, compost and manure contain phosphorus too.

FERTILIZER

CLEAN UP AFTER PETS

- Scoop the poop. Pet waste contains phosphorus as well as harmful bacteria.
- This is a Clear Lake ordinance.

ANIMAL WASTE END UP IN THE STORM SEWER

KEEP THE PAVEMENT CLEAN

Sweep up grass clippings and fertilizer from driveways, sidewalks, and streets.

GRASS CLIPPINGS END UP IN THE STORM SEWER

Practices Eligible for Cost-Share (CS) or Incentives Through the Project:

- *Nutrient Management: $4 per acre*
- *Pest Management: $4 per acre*
- *Pasture Management: 75 percent CS*
- *Filter Strips: Up to 90 percent CS for seeding, plus yearly rental payments for up to 15 years.*
- *Streambank Stabilization: 75 percent CS*
- *Grassed Waterways: Up to 90 percent CS*
- *Wetland Creation: 75 percent CS*
- *N-Split Application: $6 per acre*
- *Septic System Upgrades: 50 percent CS*

Practices Eligible for Cost-Share (CS) or Incentives Through Other Avenues:

- *Ag Waste Structures: 50 percent CS*
- *Strip-till / No-till Planting: $10 per acre*
- *Complete No-till Planting: $10 per acre*
- *Fish Hides/Pool and Riffle Structures: Up to 100 percent CS*
- *Riparian Buffer Strips: Up to 90 percent CS for seeding, plus a yearly rental payments for up to 15 years.*

Riparian Buffer Strip planted along Turtle Creek north of St. Ansgar.

Partners:

- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Iowa Dept. of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Division of Soil Conservation
- Iowa State University Extension Service
- Iowa Dept. of Natural Resources
- USDA Farm Service Agency
- Mitchell County Soil and Water Conservation District
- Mitchell County
- Pheasants Forever
- Mitchell County Conservation Board
- Cedar Valley RC&D

Mitchell County Soil and Water Conservation District

What's a watershed?
A watershed is an area of land

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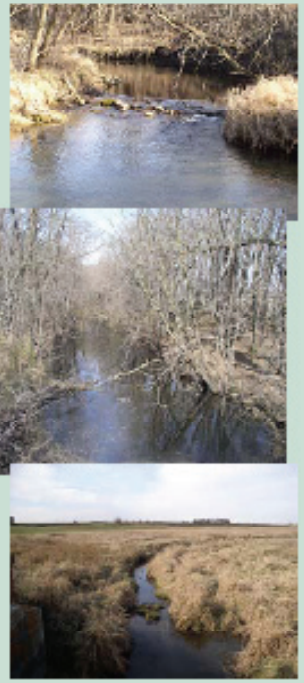
The publication of this document has been funded in part by the Division of Soil Conservation, Iowa Department of Agriculture & Land Stewardship, and by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources through a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency under the Federal Nonpoint Source Management Program (Section 319 of the Clean Water Act). All SWCD programs and services are offered on a non-discriminatory basis without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, marital status, or handicap.

Help our streams:

Join the Burr Oak and Turtle Creek Water Protection Project



Mitchell County Soil and Water Conservation District

Overview:

The Burr Oak/Turtle Creek Water Protection Project was started to improve water quality in two highly sensitive streams in Mitchell County. Burr Oak and Turtle Creeks are classified as cold water streams and have the potential to support the natural reproduction of trout through more water protection efforts.

Map of the Burr Oak and Turtle Creek Watersheds in Mitchell County, Iowa.

The Burr Oak Creek watershed drains 19,800 acres. Turtle Creek drains 14,600 acres. The Project has established a priority area within 1.25 miles of the stream corridor. This land is eligible for additional cost-share dollars for the installation of Best Management Practices (BMPs). There is also added incentives for the use of management BMPs.

Over 85 percent of the land in these watersheds is in continuous row crop production. The majority of grazing land is located along the stream and livestock have unlimited access to the stream. In these areas the streambanks are steep, bare, and very susceptible to streambank erosion.

Concerns:

The primary resource concerns in the streams are excess nutrients and sediment. Nutrients come from farm fields and city streets through runoff and/or tile lines. Sediment is primarily delivered to the stream through streambank erosion and erosion in farm fields.

Unlimited livestock access to streams can lead to streambank erosion. Up to 90 percent of sediment in streams can be contributed to streambank erosion alone.

Notice the banks are stable from the permanent grass on the banks. Livestock are not present to remove the vegetation. There is also a good buffer between the cropland and the stream.

Manure is another concern in the watershed. Besides the excess nutrients manure adds to the stream, there is also a decrease in dissolved oxygen. This directly affects the health of aquatic life, like fish, in the streams.

What's a watershed?
A watershed is an area of land that drains water to the lowest point, like a stream or lake.

Project Objectives:

1) **Reduce sediment delivery by 30 percent through the installation of BMPs such as: grassed waterways, streambank stabilization, buffer strips, livestock exclusion and terraces.**
2) **Limit excess nutrients and manure from reaching the stream through management practices such as: nutrient management, pest management, manure management and N-split application. The goal is for 40 percent of the cropland to be enrolled in some sort of management system.**
3) **Conduct field days and demonstration plots to increase awareness of the impacts agriculture has on water quality. There are ways to be more conservation-minded without limiting profitability.**
4) **Prepare landowners for the Conservation Security Program (CSP). Provide education on what steps individual farms need to take to get the most out of CSP.**
5) **Project long-term water quality protection. Ensure that producers will make the effort to preserve the land even after the Project is over.**