

A COMMUNITY EFFORT

Clean water starts with you. When it comes to improving our state's water, individual Iowans make the difference. Getting your community involved in water improvement efforts is critical, because you know your local lake, backyard stream or riverfront better than anyone. By coming together locally, you can make changes that are best for your community and for water quality.

Local leadership and ownership of a project is important, but you're not on your own. Consider applying for a Watershed Planning Assistance Grant from DNR, the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service for help with research, funding, project planning and more. For more on starting a project, look inside this brochure and visit www.iowadnr.gov/grants.html.



TAKING THE FIRST STEP FOR CLEANER WATER

Local efforts for better water in Iowa

PARTNERS FOR CLEAN WATER

We all know we have a lot of work to do in improving our state's lakes, rivers and streams. However, Iowans are making progress towards this goal through locally organized projects.

Starting a water quality improvement project may seem overwhelming, but the steps outlined in this brochure can lead you in creating a strategy for improving your lake or stream. Professional staff from DNR, the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service can guide you through the process and help you get a project started.

For a more technical brochure specific to watershed project planning, visit www.iowadnr.gov/water/nonpoint/brochures.html and click on "Watershed Project Planning Protocol: A step-by-step Technical Guide."



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clean water
starts with you.
IOWA DNR WATERSHED IMPROVEMENT

QUESTIONS?

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LOCAL APPROACHES FOR CLEANER WATER IN IOWA

When it comes to water quality, local groups need to make efforts both on the land and in the water to make a difference. It's not a change we can make overnight, but by coming together on a project – see the average steps below – we can make an impact. Organizations like the DNR, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) can help you get your project on the ground.

IDENTIFY

IDENTIFY CONCERNS, RAISE SUPPORT

Having the support of your local community is the first and most important step in any water quality improvement project.

As you begin, gather together your neighbors interested in creating a project and choose a leader or coordinator. You'll also want to meet with local officials and water quality professionals from resource agencies to create a technical advisory team.

This is also the prime time to start brainstorming a public outreach plan, so you can get the word out to your community. You should hold a couple of early public meetings to get your neighbors involved and hear their concerns about your lake or stream. It's also a great time to form a steering committee of local partners, officials, stakeholders and residents to set goals for improving water quality. Creating a vision statement can also help direct your project.

INVENTORY

SECURE LOCAL SUPPORT, FUNDING

Once you've started drumming up local interest, seek out leaders in your community that can serve as project champions – spreading word about the project and encouraging people to participate. They can help you secure funding for planning your project from local donors and other grant sources. You can also apply for a Watershed Planning Assistance Grant by contacting the DNR or IDALS.

GATHER DATA, ANALYZE PROBLEMS

With planning funds secured, work with a watershed assessment planner to help find sources of problems in the watershed (the land that drains to a lake or stream). A planner can help you identify critical areas for improvement, organize the data you already have and determine the data you need to collect. Plus, a planner can help you create a database for watershed information and use modeling methods to pinpoint problems.

INVESTIGATE

BRAINSTORM SOLUTIONS

With watershed information and data in mind, discuss restoration activities and ways to better manage the land to improve water quality. Ask technical staff, like DNR, IDALS or NRCS, or a private consultant, to help you brainstorm solutions. It's also a good idea to develop a cost benefit analysis of potential solutions and a public outreach plan.

After you create a summary report of problems and solutions, hold a public meeting to gather feedback on proposed options for improving your lake or stream.

CREATE A WATERSHED PLAN

Use the community's input to select solutions to protect and restore your lake or stream. Then develop a plan with goals, schedule, budget, monitoring and milestones. You'll also want to apply for and secure funding to carry out your plan.

IMPLEMENT

PUT THE WATERSHED PLAN IN ACTION

When you have funding to get work started, choose or hire a project coordinator to work with the community on making changes on the land and in the water. A public meeting can introduce your coordinator and discuss strategies to put the watershed plan in practice. You'll also want to develop an ongoing communications plan to report work, successes, opportunities, funding needs and more to your community. Regular, long-term water monitoring can help track your project's progress.

EVALUATE PROJECT, SHARE SUCCESSES

With the help of your technical advisory team and steering committee, evaluate and report the progress of your project. Make adjustments to options, schedule and budget as needed. Don't forget to thank your community by sharing results and successes with press releases, events, celebrations or other public functions.



BADGER CREEK LAKE



LAKE DARLING