

ABANDONED MINE LAND RECLAMATION

The Abandoned Mine Land (AML) Program seeks to reclaim some of the 12,000 acres of abandoned coal sites across the state mined prior to 1977. Completed projects provide improved water and air quality and reduce sediment deposition and clogging of streams off-site. Reclaimed sites function as pasture, hayland, recreational areas, wildlife habitat, and wetlands. New for 2010 was the Watershed Intern Initiative. Five interns located in Marion, Monroe, Wapello, Van Buren and Mahaska counties inventoried a total of 45 sites for reclamation potential.



Division of Soil Conservation



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2010 soil and water REVIEW quality

URBAN CONSERVATION

Our Urban Conservationists are working hard to increase public knowledge of urban hydrology through presentations, workshops, field days, tv and radio coverage. Exciting changes have spread across Iowa's urban areas as universities and colleges installed rain gardens and stormwater wetlands, and residential areas were retrofitted with bioswales, permeable pavers and green roofs to better manage stormwater runoff. Low-cost financing for developers and cities remains available via Stormwater BMP Loans for long term, voluntary practices that manage storm water quality and address non-point source pollution of Iowa streams and lakes. Rainscaping Iowa, a training and certification program for the design and installation of urban Best Management Practices (BMPs) was launched in 2010. Please see www.rainscapingiowa.org for more details.



The **Division of Soil Conservation** is responsible for state leadership in the **protection and management of soil, water and mineral resources**, assisting soil and water conservation districts and private landowners to meet their **agricultural and environmental protection** needs.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Watershed Intern Initiative boosts AML program
- 9 new Watershed Development Grants awarded across 16 SWCDs
- Urban Conservationists key in launch of Rainscaping Iowa
- Iowa Learning Farms launches mobile Conservation Station

CONSERVATION RESERVE ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

Iowa CREP has 72 wetlands that have been restored/developed to date. Strategically located and designed to intercept tile drainage water, these 72 wetlands will remove 53,600 tons of nitrogen over their lifetimes and protect 86,100 watershed acres. CREP wetlands also restore high quality wetland and prairie habitat. A new initiative that builds on the N-removal technology of CREP wetlands continues development. It seeks to optimize drainage systems by redesigning them to reduce surface runoff, erosion, and delivery of agricultural chemicals to surface waters while also increasing agricultural productivity. These systems will be integrated with N-removal wetlands at their outlets to complete the package of environmental benefits. The Integrated Wetland Landscape Systems Initiative has exciting application potential.

AGRICULTURAL DRAINAGE WELL CLOSURE

Agricultural drainage wells (ADWs) were developed in the early to mid 1900s, discharging cropland tile drainage water to underground aquifers. To protect our drinking water, the ADW Closure Assistance Fund cost-shares with landowners to close these wells and develop alternative drainage outlets. There are 296 registered ADWs in Iowa; 92 of these have already been closed by landowners or other funds. Through this program, 132 ADWs have been closed to date, with 21 more closures in planning. Fifty-one ADWs remain in use under DNR continued-use permits.

STATE REVOLVING LOAN FUND

The State Revolving Loan Fund (SRF) provided nearly \$12 million in loans. Loans were used to help manage manure produced by 21,000 animal units (mainly cattle) on 202 different farms. Loans were also used to install conservation practices on agricultural land; protecting more than 10,500 acres. The interest rate charged to the borrower remains at 3% and is made available through four hundred and fifty partner lenders.

FARM AND LIVESTOCK DEMONSTRATION PROGRAM

The Integrated Farm and Livestock Management (IFLM) Demonstration Program demonstrates the effectiveness and adaptability of emerging agronomic practices that protect water resources and provide environmental benefits. Iowa Learning Farms (ILF) continued the campaign to build “A Culture of Conservation,” launching the mobile and interactive Conservation Station which reached an audience of over 4,000 at 50 public events in 2010. A strong program of field demonstration days was maintained, allowing farmers and partners across Iowa to share and evaluate agronomic and economic information.

CONSERVATION COST SHARE

Established in 1973, Iowa’s Conservation Cost Share Program is the cornerstone of soil conservation and water quality protection in Iowa. Practices installed are subject to maintenance agreements to ensure long-term performance. In FY 2010, 1523 landowners installed practices such as terraces, waterways, and water and sediment basins, protecting more than 21,965 acres in Iowa. In FY 2010, \$5,087,000 was expended, providing an average cost-share payment of \$3,340.

DISTRICT INITIATIVES

Part of the Iowa Water Quality Initiative, District Initiatives allow local SWCD Commissioners to prioritize and target sensitive areas by providing funds and resources to enroll CRP and install Federal Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) practices. Iowa leads the nation in the USDA Continuous CRP with 547,909 acres enrolled. Through these funds, 116 acres were enrolled in buffers, 334 acres of trees were planted, and 734 acres of grazing were planned on CRP land, providing permanent cover rather than intensive cropping.

WATERSHED PROTECTION FUND

The Watershed Protection Fund (WSPF) seeks to reduce soil erosion, protect water quality, provide flood control and protect natural resources. Financial assistance is available for both the development and implementation stages of local watershed initiatives. In FY 2010, 50 watershed projects were initiated in 51 SWCDs. Projects have leveraged state funds with approximately \$2,700,00 of EPA Section 319 funds, which are administered by the DNR.

REAP WATER QUALITY PROTECTION PRACTICES & PROJECTS

The Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) *Practices* Program provides SWCDs with financial assistance used to support landowner installation of water protection practices. In FY 2010, 6500 acres were protected by the efforts of over 800 landowners implementing practices such as woodland establishment and protection, native grass and forb seeding, buffer and filter strips, wetlands, as well as rain gardens and bio-retention cells. The REAP *Projects* Program works in conjunction with other project funding sources to protect and improve Iowa’s surface and ground water by developing locally initiated watershed based projects. In FY 2010, 39 projects in 46 SWCDs received financial support from this program, which helped to leverage approximately \$2,500,000 of EPA Section 319 funds, administered by the DNR.