

watershed development and planning assistance grants

it's as easy as 1-2-3

Get the planning assistance you need for your watershed project



Water quality improvements don't just happen. They take hard work, cooperation, and most of all, planning. Developing a good watershed plan is critical to improving your watershed.

To improve watershed projects and water quality in Iowa, a new planning assistance program has been developed. This program, the Watershed Development and Planning Assistance Grants Program, allows Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) and other local watershed groups to obtain assistance in evaluating watersheds and developing quality watershed projects.

Under the program, "watershed planners" with expertise in developing watershed projects will be made available to assist your SWCD or local watershed group develop a plan for your watershed. In addition, financial assistance may be offered to support public information activities and other planning efforts.

The local project sponsors will be involved in each step of the planning process, working closely with the DSC regional coordinator and the watershed planner. Once the planning is complete, a draft watershed plan will be developed. This plan can then be used to develop funding applications and, once funded, guide implementation of your watershed project.

Agencies supporting this program are the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the Division of Soil Conservation (DSC) of the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, and USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Building a watershed plan

1 Request planning assistance

Is there a lake or stream of concern to your community? Your SWCD or local watershed group can initiate the planning process by contacting your DSC regional coordinator (see the back page).

Together, you identify general problems. The regional coordinator can help determine the designated use of your waterbody and if it is on the list of impaired waters. You will need

level of landowner and community interest. The application should also provide general information about the waterbody and watershed, such as maps, size and location. The application should then be submitted to the DSC. DNR, DSC and NRCS will meet periodically to evaluate all applications and determine whether development assistance is appropriate and, if so, how assistance will be provided.



to determine if landowners and the general public are interested in participating in a project to improve your lake or stream.

The regional coordinator will assist you in writing a two-to four-page Watershed Development and Planning Assistance Grant application that describes your concerns, your goals, and the

Factors used to evaluate applications for assistance include:

- ◆ Is there willing local leadership?
- ◆ Is the watershed a manageable size?
- ◆ Are there technical solutions?
- ◆ Have landowners and the public demonstrated interest?
- ◆ Is it an impaired water?
- ◆ Is it a publicly owned lake or high use stream?
- ◆ Is the waterbody accessible to the public?
- ◆ Is it a source for drinking water?
- ◆ Is the water threatened with degradation?

2 Develop the watershed plan

If the funding agencies determine that your project merits assistance they will provide a watershed planner and financial assistance to assist with development of a watershed plan. Planning assistance may be provided through DSC regional or watershed project coordinators, NRCS or DSC technical staff, or through private contractors with watershed planning experience.

The watershed planner will help the SWCD or local watershed group complete a detailed assessment of the watershed. As a minimum, this assessment will identify and evaluate:

- ◆ land uses in the watershed
- ◆ existing permanent conservation practices
- ◆ tillage and other crop management practices
- ◆ livestock operations
- ◆ stream, streambank or lake conditions
- ◆ point source wastewater discharges
- ◆ gullies
- ◆ landowner and public interest
- ◆ local financial resources

The watershed assessment will be completed using tools developed by the agencies, such as the tablet computer, stream assessment GIS and GIS mapping programs.

The SWCD or local watershed group will be involved to some degree in each of these tasks.

Once needed data about the watershed has been gathered, the watershed planner will assist the local group to analyze and interpret the collected data. In most cases the sponsors will be asked to form a stakeholder group of people representing a variety of watershed interests. It is important to gather public input prior to, during and after the plan formulation.

A critical piece of an assessment is to identify the priority issues and areas in the watershed. There is never enough money to address every problem within a watershed, but a good assessment will lead to the formulation of alternatives that are politically and socially acceptable, financially sound, and technically feasible. Once alternatives

have been formulated and their effectiveness evaluated, the watershed planner will assist the local sponsors to develop a watershed plan.



A watershed planner uses a handheld GIS unit to conduct a stream assessment.

Once drafted, it is your responsibility, in cooperation with your stakeholder group, to review the plan to be certain it will be embraced by watershed landowners and the community. Once the plan is written, the watershed planner's job is complete.

3 Request funding and implement the plan

With a well thought-out plan in hand, you can now use the plan to prepare applications for funding. A variety of funding opportunities exist, including funding from programs administered by DNR, DSC, NRCS or the Watershed Improvement Review Board. For projects selected for funding, each agency will determine the level of funding it will provide to your watershed.

Once funding is secured, it is time to get the job done. It is up to you to acquire necessary staff, carry out the plan, keep stakeholders informed and complete periodic reporting requirements. Most important is to constantly evaluate the implementation of your plan and determine how the project is performing. Mid-course changes are usually necessary and it is up to you to decide when those changes are needed.



Request planning assistance

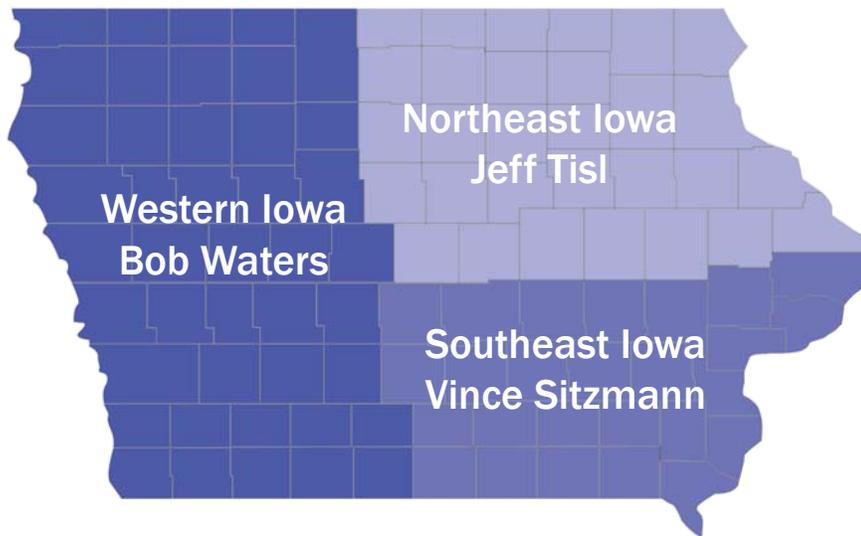


SWCDs and local watershed groups start the process by:

- ♦ determining if there is a lake or stream of local concern
- ♦ determining if there is sufficient landowner and public interest to pursue development of a watershed plan.

If there is local interest in improving a lake or stream, the next step is to request assistance from your DSC regional coordinator in developing a request for planning assistance.

The DSC regional coordinators and the areas covered by each are given below:



Western Iowa

Bob Waters
(712) 243-2913 ext. 207
Bob.Waters@idals.state.ia.us

Northeast Iowa

Jeff Tisl
(563) 422-6201
Jeff.Tisl@idals.state.ia.us

Southeast Iowa

Vince Sitzmann
(515) 242-6008
Vince.Sitzmann@idals.state.ia.us

