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## **Middle Cedar River Watershed to Benefit from \$96.9M HUD Grant to the State of Iowa**

### **Iowa Watershed Approach Middle Cedar River Watershed Management Authority Meeting Thursday, June 16, at 3 p.m. Farmers Savings Bank & Trust, Vinton, Iowa**

Severe storms in May and June 2013 brought more than 10 inches of rain to the Middle Cedar River Watershed. Three weeks later, torrential rains hit the region again, causing significant damage to infrastructure such as roads, bridges, and recreational areas. In some areas of Tama County, runoff carried away as much as five tons of topsoil per acre. The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship estimates the damage at \$27.4M.



In January 2016, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) awarded \$96.9M to Iowa for a statewide watershed improvement program, the *Iowa Watersheds Approach (IWA)*. The IWA will address issues associated with the devastating and dangerous floods Iowa communities experience year after year.

The goals of the IWA include the following:

- Reduction of flood risk;
- Improvement in water quality;
- Increased resilience;
- Engagement of stakeholders through collaboration, outreach, and education;
- Improved quality of life and health for Iowans; and
- Development of a replicable program.

Nine distinct watersheds across Iowa will serve as project sites for the IWA: Bee Branch Creek in Dubuque, Upper Iowa River, Upper Wapsipinicon River, Middle Cedar River, Clear Creek, English River, North Raccoon River, West Nishnabotna River, and East Nishnabotna River. Each will have the opportunity to form a Watershed Management Authority (WMA), develop a hydrologic assessment and watershed plan, and implement projects to reduce the magnitude of downstream flooding and to

improve water quality during and after flood events. Volunteer landowners may select from a suite of conservation practices such as farm ponds, wetlands, terraces, bioreactors, and perennial crops. Landowners will be eligible to receive up to 75% cost share assistance for the construction of such practices.

Kick-off meetings in each watershed will bring together local landowners, partners, and other interested parties to learn more about the IWA project and the specific details relevant to their communities. The Middle Cedar River Watershed kick-off meeting is scheduled for Thursday, June 16, at 3 p.m. at the Farmers Savings Bank & Trust Community Room in Vinton, Iowa. The kick-off meeting is part of the agenda of the Middle Cedar River Watershed Management Authority (WMA) meeting. The Middle Cedar River WMA will be vital to the success of the IWA project. The meeting is open to the public.

“We all know how damaging and costly flooding has been to homes, farms, businesses, and communities throughout watersheds in Iowa,” said Larry Weber, director of the University of Iowa’s IHR—Hydroscience & Engineering, the Iowa Flood Center’s parent organization.

Iowans have already tried, tested, and approved the concepts of the IWA. In 2010, the Iowa Flood Center at the University of Iowa was awarded HUD funds for the creation of the *Iowa Watersheds Project (IWP)*. The IWP provided funding for five watersheds across the state (Upper Cedar River, Turkey River, Soap Creek, Middle Raccoon, and Chequest Creek) to establish a WMA, develop a hydrologic assessment and watershed plan, and construct conservation practices. As the IWP enters its final year and is completing the construction of over 65 built practices aimed at reducing flood risk, the landowners and community members are noticing the benefits.

“Structures have provided significant savings in federal, state, and local road and bridge maintenance costs to our county,” commented a Supervisor in Davis County.

The WMAs have been able to leverage IWP resources to seek additional funding for continued projects and practice installation.

One landowner stated, “The project has created jobs and outside income for our small communities... The structures have increased the value of ag land, not only for the landowners, but for those downstream as well.”

The IWA program is a collaboration of numerous agencies, universities, non-profits, and municipalities. Partners include: Iowa Economic Development Authority, Iowa Homeland Security & Emergency Management, University of Iowa/Iowa Flood Center, Iowa State University, University of Northern Iowa, Iowa Department of Agriculture & Land Stewardship, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Natural Resources Conservation Service, County Soil & Water Conservation Districts, The Nature Conservancy, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, Iowa Soybean Association, Iowa Corn Growers Association, Iowa Farm Bureau, Iowa Agricultural Water Alliance, local Resource Conservation & Development offices, local Council of Governments offices, Iowa Department of Transportation, Iowa Association of Counties, Silver Jackets Flood Risk Management Team, and many more.

The IWA represents a vision for Iowa’s future that voluntarily engages stakeholders throughout the watershed to achieve common goals, while moving toward a more resilient state. It is a replicable model for other communities where the landscape has lost its natural resilience to floods. This program is not



only about lowans helping lowans, but also about demonstrating lowans' commitment to agricultural stewardship, to the environment, to their neighbors, and to the future.

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