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Title Cedar Rapids-led Project Receives USDA Funding to Improve Watershed

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Body

Cedar Rapids City leaders held a news conference today to announce the launching of a \$4.3 million project focused on improving water quality, water quantity and soil health in the Cedar River Watershed. The project will be possible thanks to funding from the USDA's Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). This is one of 100 projects across all 50 states to receive more than \$370 million as part of the new program.

Cedar Rapids Mayor Ron Corbett, City Manager Jeff Pomeranz, and Utilities Director Steve Hershner, joined Bill Northey, Iowa Secretary of Agriculture and Marty Adkins, Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) to celebrate the important achievement and emphasize the need for this effort.

"The City of Cedar Rapids is deeply committed to improving the Cedar River watershed and ensuring the security of our source water," said Pomeranz. "This is an exciting and innovative approach to watershed and soil management and we are grateful to the USDA for helping us in our efforts."

Led by the City of Cedar Rapids, the Middle Cedar Partnership Project (MCP) will focus on working with local conservation partners, farmers and landowners to install best management practices to help improve the Cedar River Watershed.

"It is the hope of the City of Cedar Rapids that the implementation of the Middle Cedar Partnership Project will be the first step towards Cedar River watershed improvements that benefit our community and all other communities connected to the river," said Hershner.

Partners in the project include:

- 1) The City of Cedar Rapids (Lead)
- 2) Benton Soil and Water Conservation District (BSWCD)
- 3) Tama Soil and Water Conservation District (TSWCD)
- 4) Black Hawk Soil and Water Conservation District (BHSWCD)
- 5) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
- 6) Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS)
- 7) Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR)
- 8) Iowa State University Extension Service (ISUES)
- 9) DuPont-Pioneer (DP)
- 10) Sand County Foundation (SCF)
- 11) The Nature Conservancy (TNC)
- 12) Iowa Farm Bureau (IFB)
- 13) Iowa Soybean Association (ISA)
- 14) Iowa Pork Producers Association (IPPA)
- 15) Iowa Corn Growers Association (ICGA)
- 16) Benton/Tama Counties and Miller Creek Watershed Quality Initiative projects

The project will receive \$2 million in funding from RCPP and \$2.3 million from the 16 project partners over five years. The City of Cedar Rapids will contribute \$316,000 (\$125,000 financial and \$191,000 technical "in-kind" support, including project administration and reporting).

"Realizing meaningful progress on nutrient and water quality challenges takes a commitment of leadership with the capacity and capabilities to make a difference," said

Roger Wolf, Iowa Soybean Association's Director of Environmental Programs & Services. "This is why the Iowa Soybean Association is excited about working with farmers and the City of Cedar Rapids as part of the new Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). There is no question the city of Cedar Rapids needs quality source water supporting business and residents. This RCPP project is a fine example of agriculture and the urban water sector taking opportunities to work together in new and innovative ways to reduce nutrient pollution and improve water quality."

"The Cedar River watershed is home to some of the world's most productive farmers and, in the City of Cedar Rapids, a forward-thinking water quality agency," added Joseph Britt, Sand County Foundation's Agricultural Incentives Program Director. "Sand County Foundation is pleased to be their partner in work to reduce the threat excess nitrogen runoff from farmland presents to the people and businesses that depend on the river."

The Middle Cedar Partnership Project will be located on five (5) HUC 12 scale watersheds in the Middle Cedar River basin between Vinton and Waterloo and will expand on the scope, outreach, and longevity of two Water Quality Initiative demonstration projects currently underway in this area.

Project partners will provide outreach to producers and landowners to enhance the adoption of conservation practices on 13,400 acres, including planting of cover crops, nutrient management, bioreactors, saturated buffers, wetland creation, and wetland easements. A primary focus of the project is producer education on the benefits of less widely adopted conservation practices that hold promise for improved soil health and nutrient reduction.

For more information about the Middle Cedar Partnership Project, visit www.cedar-rapids.org. To learn more about other RCPP projects, visit www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov.

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