

# Defining the Clean Water Alliance

Iowa's natural treasures are diverse and unique - among them, one of the most significant is the Iowa Great Lakes region," said Gerry Schoepf, Executive Director of the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation.

With nearly one million acres drawn to the Iowa Great Lakes each year, it is imperative that the people who work and play here understand the importance of water quality to the region. The Iowa Great Lakes are an economic resource as well as a natural treasure. This region of north-west Iowa was once covered by wetlands and grasslands which kept the lakes clean and blue by capturing sediment and nutrients before they could enter the lakes. But with runoff of the wetlands drained, with much of the grassland converted to rowcrops, and with the extensive urban development around the lakes, the water quality has become threatened.

As a result, many individuals, organizations and agencies become concerned. A year and a half ago, this concern fostered the creation of the Clean Water Alliance for the Iowa Great Lakes, a cooperative effort throughout the watershed to enhance and maintain water quality. While these organizations had already been in cooperation for quite a number of years, they felt if they formally joined together they could increase their effectiveness as individuals and as a group. There are approximately 20 organizations which comprise

the Clean Water Alliance. While each member has joined the Alliance for various reasons, the overall goal is to enhance lake water quality for the near future and protect it in the long term. The Alliance does this by addressing restoration and education projects within the watershed, by implementing ongoing educational programs for the urban and rural communities, by implementing voluntary restraint program for farmers and homeowners encouraging the reduction of fertilizer (especially phosphorus) applied to fields and lawns, and focusing and enhancing available public and private resources in order to improve water quality. "As a homeowner of West Okoboji, I care deeply about the future of the lake," said John Odenow, President of Odenow Bancorporation. "The Clean Water project for the Iowa Great Lakes is a comprehensive creative effort to protect lake water quality. This broad-based leadership to improve the environmental health of the Iowa Great Lakes area. I endorse the effort 100 percent." While the Clean Water Alliance is still young, progress already is seen. A brochure about the project has been produced, a column called the Clean Water Alliance News is sent each week in the Spirit Lake Beacon, and many presentations have been made to city groups and school children. Recent wetland and grassland restoration projects also mark a

good start for the Alliance. 18 land projects have been completed or near completion. These projects have protected over 1759 acres of grasslands and wetlands. Each of these projects exemplifies the strength of the Clean Water Alliance. The funding and expertise came from numerous individuals, local, state and federal agencies working in a joint venture of public/private partnership. "The uniqueness of the Alliance lies in the fact that each member can bring to a project a piece of the puzzle whether it is technical expertise or necessary funding," explained Karmin Blunt, a project coordinator with the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation. "Without each piece, a project might not see success." While clean water is the Alliance's goal, its land projects are beneficial in many other ways as well. They provide the essential habitat for animals such as deer, mink, fox and muskrat. And while the nation's waterfowl populations are at or near an all time low, they provide additional spots for migrating birds to rest, feed and raise their young. Most of the land projects have created many new recreational spaces for activities such as hunting, fishing, canoeing, photography, and bird and wildlife viewing. This comes at a time when Iowa ranks almost last in the nation as a state with open spaces, such as parks and natural areas, for



Clean Water Project environmental specialist Roger McGinnis and project coordinator Karmin Blunt test water samples from one of the many wetlands in the lakes region. (Photo by Dave Schwarz)

people to enjoy. These areas also provide additional economic support to our community through expenditures for items such as food, lodging, sporting good equipment, and licenses. In addition, these areas provide "natural laboratories" for many schools by offering educational experiences with natural resources. Few communities have that

opportunity for their youth to gain hands-on learning in the natural world. "The future of our water does not need to be bleak. Although we have already done an incredible amount of damage to our lakes, we must realize that to lose or further pollute what remains would be an even greater tragedy," said Roger McGinnis, Environmental

Specialist with the Clean Water Project. The Clean Water Alliance cannot do it alone. The mechanisms are in place and need your support. All those who enjoy the lakes are invited - and needed - to participate in Clean Water Alliance activities. Only with personal help and financial contributions will the Iowa Great Lakes make even

more beautiful memories for generations to come. The Clean Water Alliance meets on a quarterly basis to discuss projects and concerns in the lakes region. For more information about the Alliance or what you can do to help, you can contact Karmin Blunt at 336-9774 or Roger McGinnis at 336-2604.

## EOLIC is set on pollution control

Incorporated in Feb. 1988, the East Okoboji Lake Improvement Corp. (EOLIC) has dedicated itself to the preservation and enhancement of East Okoboji Lake. As stated in its by-laws, the purpose of the EOLIC is to promote the water quality, preservation, and purification of the natural water of East Lake Okoboji and other associated lakes through the control of pollution, siltation, and other forms of contamination. With a current membership of approximately 175 members, the EOLIC continues to actively pursue its purposes in the Iowa Great Lakes Region. Since its formation, the EOLIC has been involved in a number of water quality related projects. Within the watershed, the organization has participated in various soil control projects by helping to grass the building of terraced grassed waterways, sedimentation basins, and farm ponds. The most recent of these projects was on the lake. Also in the farm area of the lake, the EOLIC is the driving force behind the passage of the silt screening ordinance in Dickinson County. In the area of pollution control, the EOLIC was instrumental in

going the city of Spirit Lake to update the city storm sewer system and the sanitary district to complete the sanitary sewer along the last shore of East Okoboji Lake. The EOLIC has also supported water quality monitoring by contributions to the Hickok Stud in the early 1970's and by sponsoring college scholarships for students water quality monitors enrolled in the Environmental Science Program at Iowa Lakes Community College. Other activities that the EOLIC has worked on include the Highway 71 project, the rural water project for East Okoboji Lake residents, the lake shore alteration ordinance, the Adopt-A-Highway program, and most recently, projects associated with the Clean Water Alliance for the Iowa Great Lakes. As a member of the Clean Water Alliance, the EOLIC will continue to support and sponsor activities which will lead to the preservation and enhancement of the natural resources of the Iowa Great Lakes Region. For more information concerning the East Okoboji Lake Improvement Corp., feel free to contact Gary Phillips at 362-7364 or Ruth Jahn at 336-4270.

## EPA has role in area Clean Water Alliance

As a partner in the Clean Water Alliance, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and its Region 7 Office in Kansas City, KS, want to enhance water quality in the Iowa Great Lakes for the future and protect it in the long term. EPA Region 7 includes Iowa, Kansas, Missouri and Nebraska. In addition to providing technical guidance, EPA Region 7 has provided grants through its Wetlands Protection Section to help finance public outreach efforts such as posters and brochures. Funding provided through EPA's Water Planning and Evaluation Section helps the local soil and water conservation districts to coordinate improved management of pesticides and lakes monitoring project is financed by EPA's Clean Lakes Program through the Dept. of Natural Resources contract with the Northwest Iowa Planning

Commission. Through its partnership with the public and private organizations of the Clean Water Alliance, EPA hopes to minimize the destruction of wetlands caused by draining and filling. The filling of wetlands, along with improved residential, municipal and agricultural management of nutrients and chemicals, can help improve water quality throughout the Iowa Great Lakes. Additional information about EPA participation in the clean water project for the Iowa Great Lakes may be obtained by writing the Clean Lakes Program or the Wetlands Protection Section, EPA Region 7, 726 Minnesota Ave., Region City, KS 66101. Information is also available by calling Region 7's toll free Environmental Action Line at 1-800-221-0425.

## U of O supports CWA cause

The University of Okoboji Foundation, its mission and its contribution to the Clean Water Alliance are outlined in the following. We are a non-profit organization whose mission is to encourage dreams (and dreams) of making the Iowa Great Lakes Region a better place to live and work. We support believers of projects which improve the quality of life in our Lakes Region. Our support takes two directions: first, grants awarded for projects in the Iowa Great Lakes Region which are not fulfilled by

either government or "for-profit" enterprises. Our second form of support is the energy of our membership. We are an "activist" organization which makes things happen. We are a catalyst for worthy ventures in the region. Our support is generally directed, but not limited to, environmental, cultural, recreational, educational, or life-saving needs. Our support specifically for the Clean Water Alliance projects has included grants totaling approximately \$25,000 to the Okoboji Protective Association, Ducks Unlimited and Dickinson County Pheasants Forever to

purchase wetlands and help control drainage and pollution into the lakes. The Foundation's environmental protection support has gone beyond the monetary grants through the efforts and energy expended by our members. You can be sure that our support in this area will grow as the Foundation grows. If you would like additional information on the Foundation, its resources of time, talent, energy, and grant money or if you would like to tap into its dreams and dreams, please give V. Gerry Giddings a call at 332-7177.

## DU protects area wetlands

Ducks Unlimited was founded in 1937 to help restore and enhance critically needed waterfowl breeding habitat in Canada, where nearly 70 percent of North American waterfowl are produced today. Ducks Unlimited is at work in the breeding, staging and wintering grounds of Canada, the United States and Mexico. In addition to habitat restoration and waterfowl propagation, Ducks Unlimited focuses on the needs of the wild and domestic life as well. Stabilized wetlands are for hundreds of species of wildlife and also provide ample water for the needs of livestock. During dry years, wetland serve as oases to

farmers and municipalities who depend on fresh water resources. And when floods threaten, many of the projects serve as reservoirs to control destructive runoff. Ducks Unlimited multiple benefit projects help maintain the necessary balance between the demanding needs of man and the basic needs of wildlife. Iowa Ducks Unlimited spent in excess of \$300,000 on acquisitions and development of state wetlands during 1990. Cooperation with other private conservation groups, the state DNR, and County Conservation Boards has never been better. The awareness of the wetland problems compounded by

the drought of the past five years has galvanized the conservation community into a plan of action. Ducks Unlimited has also played a significant role in conservation locally. Ducks Unlimited, in conjunction with the Okoboji Protective Association and other members of the Clean Water Alliance, was instrumental in spearheading the Okoboji Wetland Restoration Complex which is comprised of four tracts of land totaling 265 acres in the Okoboji watershed located between Center Lake and West Okoboji. Locally, questions regarding Ducks Unlimited can be directed to Dr. John B. Synhorst at 712-262-7350.

## Okoboji Protective Assn.

The Okoboji Protective Association (OPA) was founded in 1905 "to plan, coordinate, and administer a program for the protection and preservation of the waters of West Okoboji Lake." The OPA's activities are wide and varied. It monitors water quality and has participated in the acquisition of wetlands. It has litigated and it has lobbied local, state and federal governments on issues that affect the environmental quality of the Iowa Great Lakes. A recent example, is its active support for the Iowa Lakeside Laboratory. It encourages compliance with rules, regulations, and ordinances that promote

environmental quality. It seeks to promote awareness of potential hazards to the quality of our lakes. Recently, it has emphasized the threat of Eurasian Water Milfoil. It will soon be focusing on the use and application of fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides in the Okoboji watershed. As part of its activities, the OPA actively participates in the Clean Water Alliance and the Inter-Lake Protective Association. The OPA publishes a quarterly newsletter for its members. Annual dues are \$25. Call Barb Mendenhall 332-2900, OPA Secretary, for membership information.

## NIPDC helps Alliance

The Northwest Iowa Planning and Development Commission is a regional governmental organization whose mission is to provide economic, environmental, and community development services for the nine county area. These counties include Lyon, Sioux, Osceola, O'Brien, Dickinson, Clay, Buena Vista, Emmet and Palo Alto. The agency's full-time staff assists the member counties and municipalities in such areas as community planning and zoning, federal and state grant preparation and administration, economic development activities, general government administration, and job training. Partnership Act administration. In effect, the NIPDC staff functions as an extension of member governments' staffs, providing the specialized administrative services and technical assistance that it would not be financially feasible for each governmental entity to provide on its own.

Contributions to the Iowa Great Lakes to date include the current development, with assistance from Iowa Lakes Community College, Estherville, of a Water Quality Monitoring Study for the Iowa Great Lakes Watershed. This study will be completed in the Spring of '92. Future efforts would be to assist the C.W.A. with any service assistance that we could provide at the time of need. For more information please contact Ted Kourousis at 712-262-7225, or at N.W.I.P.D.C., 800 Grand Ave., Box 4143, Spencer, IA 51301.

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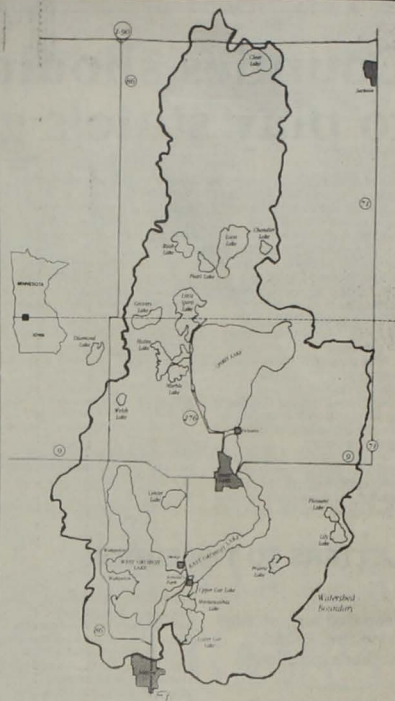
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# CLEAN WATER ALLIANCE

The Clean Water Alliance is composed of the following groups and agencies:

- Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service
- Dickinson County Soil and Water Conservation District
- Dickinson County Board of Supervisors
- Division of Soil Conservation, Iowa Dept. of Agriculture and Land Stewardship
- Ducks Unlimited
- East Okoboji Lakes Improvement Corp.
- Inter-Lake Protective Assn.
- Iowa Dept. of Natural Resources
- Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation
- Iowa State University Extension Service
- Jackson County Soil and Water Conservation District
- Minnesota Dept. of Natural Resources
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
- Northwest Iowa Planning and Development Commission
- Okoboji Protective Assn.
- Pheasants Forever, Inc.
- Spirit Lake Protective Assn.
- University of Okoboji Foundation
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- U.S. Soil Conservation Service

## Iowa Great Lakes Watershed



A lake watershed consists of the lake and all of the surrounding land which drains toward the lake. Any area of land within the watershed - no matter how far away it is from the lake - may contribute water and associated pollutants to that lake.

## Events triggered idea for Alliance

By Orville Berg  
Everyone dreams that just once in our lifetime, we could have an idea that catches fire and expectations beyond our wildest dreams. For Orville Berg, the idea of the Clean Water Alliance was born in 1988. Berg, who lives in Spirit Lake, was one of 100 people who attended a meeting in Spirit Lake to discuss the idea of a watershed protection program. Berg, who is a member of the Clean Water Alliance, said that the idea of a watershed protection program was born in 1988. Berg, who lives in Spirit Lake, was one of 100 people who attended a meeting in Spirit Lake to discuss the idea of a watershed protection program. Berg, who is a member of the Clean Water Alliance, said that the idea of a watershed protection program was born in 1988.

## Heritage works to protect water, land

The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation is Iowa's largest non-profit, privately supported organization dedicated to the protection and enhancement of Iowa's natural resources. The Foundation's vision is harmony with the natural world, essential to our quality of life and a sustainable economy. In partnership with government, individuals, businesses and organizations, the Foundation initiates ideas and actions that secure Iowa's natural heritage "For Those Who Follow."

The Foundation has helped to protect and enhance over 30,000 acres of woodlands, wetlands, prairies and other natural, recreational and cultural resource lands in Iowa. These places provide habitat for wildlife, relief for the eye, and renewal for the soul.

The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation has focused a great deal of attention on the Iowa Great Lakes. We have worked to protect over 1700 acres of wetlands and grasslands in Dickinson County, produced a Clean Water Alliance brochure with grant money from the EPA, developed a video about the lakes, and hired Karin Blunt to work as the Foundation's coordinator for Clean Water Project on a full-time basis.

## ASCS programs benefit everyone

Since the 1930's, USDA's Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service has actively promoted the wise use of land and water in partnership with farmers through cost shared conservation practices.

Conservation practices to prevent soil loss and water pollution have public benefits that justify cost sharing and technical assistance by the Federal government. These practices are not immediately profitable to the individual farmer or rancher, but help all of the general public by maintaining the productivity of agriculture. The Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS) administers a variety of programs to help rural land owners and operators conserve land, maintain the fertility of the land, keep the water of the land clean, and protect wildlife and streams and lakes clear and usable and promote a flourishing wildlife.

As a member of the Clean Water Alliance...

## Clean watershed is vital to Iowa Great Lakes survival

The Iowa Great Lakes Clean Water Project was proposed by the commissioners of the Dickinson County Soil and Water Conservation District. The project is funded through the district and by the U.S.D.A. Soil Conservation Service, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources through a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the Division of Soil Conservation, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship.

The goal of this project is the improvement and enhancement of water quality in the lakes region, and the protection of that quality for the long-term. The strategy of this non-point source pollution project is to stop pollutants before they enter "our" lakes.

Landscape restoration and protection within the 64,000 acres of the Iowa Great Lakes watershed will be one of the keys to long-term water quality protection. This landscape restoration and protection consists of:

1. seeding of filter strips--these

areas of grasses will slow running water as it drains from farmland and lawns. A portion of sediment, organic matter, and nutrients are captured by the soil filter strip before entering streams, wetlands or "our" lakes.

2. the establishment of trees and grasslands on the most erodible land on critical drainage areas within the watershed.

3. the seeding of critical slopes--these areas produce a major portion of sediment and chemical run-off.

4. the restoration and protection of wetlands in "critical" drainage areas--these wetlands are particularly good water filters. They intercept soil run-off and trap phosphorus, nitrogen and other contaminants before they enter "our" lakes. These natural filters will be protected by a conservation easement.

Information and educational assistance for landowners in the watershed will play a critical role on the protection of water quality of "our" lakes. These efforts include:

## Lakes area is part of 'duck factory'

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal agency through which the Federal Government carries out its responsibilities to conserve, protect, and enhance the Nation's fish and wildlife and their habitats for the continuing benefit of people. The Service strives to accomplish this mission through a variety of programs from land management such as national Wildlife Refuges to regulations for waterfowl hunting, endangered species, and wetland habitat changes.

The Iowa Great Lakes watershed has experienced drastic land use changes over the years, primarily conversion of wetlands and adjacent habitat to cropland. This has contributed to a major decline in waterfowl populations in recent years. The Iowa Great Lakes is a high priority project in the U.S. Prairie Pothole Joint Venture. Combined with the Canadian Prairie Habitat Joint Venture, they are the "duck factory" for North America, and valuable habitat for all other wetland related wildlife.

In addition to providing the leadership in the U.S. for the Plan and the Joint Ventures, the Service's role is to implement existing programs in project areas. For the Iowa Great Lakes project this involves acquisition and restoration of wetlands in a cooperative effort with Iowa's Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Ducks Unlimited through the Waterfowl Production Area program, part of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Due in part to the successes in Iowa, the Service's wetland restoration program is evolving into a broad-

based private lands initiative known as the "Partners for Wildlife" program. This initiative is designed to work directly with private landowners, local and state governments, and private conservation habitats on private lands. All species, from warblers to woodpeckers, will benefit from the "Partners for Wildlife" program. For more information on the "Partners for Wildlife" program contact Union Slough National Wildlife Refuge, 1710-360th Street, Tionkka, IA 50480.

More specific to the Iowa Great Lakes project, the Service contributed an Inter-Governmental Personnel Act assignment for eight months to assist with organizing the project and contributed \$20,000 towards acquisition of a critical tract of land at Center Lake.

Acquisition and development of the Meinking/Krummen tract by Iowa DNR and Iowa Prairie Pothole Wetland Easements are the two projects that have been approved to date in the watershed. The Service believes that the Clean Water Alliance can successfully restore water quality and recreational values to the Iowa Great Lakes and make a significant contribution to the goals and objectives of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. Both efforts require the same techniques, putting back some of the original water storage capacity and making significant improvements in land use practices.

For more information contact Jerry Schotzko, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Federal Building, One Federal Way, Fort Snelling, MN 55111, or phone 612-725-3313.

## DNR protects, enhances and restores environmental areas

Iowa Department of Natural Resources has as its mission the protection, enhancement and restoration of our state's many natural resources. With DNR's large holdings of lands and waters around the Iowa Great Lakes, and its interest in providing quality outdoor recreation, the agency is an important participant in the Clean Water Alliance.

Within DNR's Fish and Wildlife Division, many programs exist which directly relate to natural resources in the Lakes Region, especially regarding water. Land acquisition and proper land treatment may be the most important functions served by DNR in assuring improved water quality for the area's lakes. Of nearly equal importance is the agency's program to restore wetlands on private property, thereby contributing much to filtering out sediments and other pollutants before they reach our major lakes. While the money used for such private wetland enhancements is aimed primarily at improving waterfowl and wildlife habitat, ancillary benefits to water quality are a direct result.

DNR's Environmental Protection Division also fills an important role by monitoring and policing surface runoff, groundwater, and other potential sources of water-borne contaminants that might otherwise reach our famous lakes. This division also oversees permitting of construction or development in wetlands, along with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, to assure important wetlands are not compromised in their function of water quality protection.

Iowa DNR plans to continue its land acquisition program in select locations around the Iowa Great Lakes. It will also continue offering assistance to landowners wishing to restore wetlands or



Education is an important goal of all Clean Water Alliance members. The annual Outdoor Classroom program, shown above, is an example of educational programs in the lakes area.

otherwise enhance wildlife habitat, all of which contribute to clean water, on private lands. Anyone interested in the agency's goals, programs or assistance may contact the Fish and Wildlife Division Regional Office, at the Spirit Lake Fish Hatchery, RR Box 7722, Spirit Lake, Iowa 51360. Telephone 712-336-1840.

## Soil conservation leaders - think SCS

Providing leadership in the conservation and wise use of land and water is a critical part of the mission of the Soil Conservation Service. That is why our involvement in the Clean Water Alliance has been very natural and has resulted in some very positive results.

The Soil Conservation Service (SCS) is an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The local field office is located in Spirit Lake and serves all of Dickinson County. The SCS is responsible for carrying out federal soil and water conservation programs at the local level. This includes providing technical consultation to the public on issues of soil erosion and water quality.

For 48 years the SCS has assisted conservation minded individuals in solving soil erosion problems and preventing sediment from filling and polluting Dickinson County lakes and streams.

As a result of membership in the Clean Water Alliance, the SCS has focused more of its efforts in the Iowa Great Lakes Watershed. More time has been spent in assisting and educating landowners in the watershed on proper water quality activities. Funds have been provided for water quality improving practices such as erosion control structures and wetland restorations.

The SCS also assists the Dickinson County Soil and Water Conservation District with their "Iowa Great Lakes Clean Water Project" by providing office space, a vehicle, technical assistance/training, and day to day supervision.

For additional information or assistance from the Soil Conservation Service, contact Leo Preston, District Conservationist at 712-336-2604.

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