

Funding set for watershed projects

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DES MOINES — Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Bill Northey recently announced that eight watershed demonstration projects have been selected to receive \$4.1 million in funding through the Iowa water quality initiative over the next three years.

In addition to the state funds, the eight projects will provide over \$8 million in matching funds to support water-quality improvement efforts.

"We were extremely pleased by the number of high-quality applications and are excited for these projects to get started," Northey said in a news release. "These watershed demonstration projects will play an extremely important role in demonstrating water quality practices and encouraging additional farmer adoption so we can continue to make water quality improvements across the state."

The eight projects are within the large priority watersheds prioritized by the Iowa Water Resources Coordinating Council, which include the Floyd, Boone, South Skunk, Skunk, Middle Cedar and Turkey.

The demonstration watersheds selected cover 605,774 acres. The projects will implement and demonstrate the effectiveness and adaptability of a host of conservation practices including, but not limited

to cover crops, nutrient management, wetlands, terraces, bioreactors, buffer strips, no-till, strip-till, nitrogen inhibitors, extended rotations, conservation cover, drainage water management and manure management.

More than 30 partners from agriculture organizations; institutions of higher education; private industry; the local, state and federal government; and others are working together on these projects with the Soil and Water Conservation Districts serving as the project leaders.

The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship received 17 demonstration project applications. All were reviewed by a committee including representatives from the Department, Iowa State University, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, University of Northern Iowa and the University of Iowa. The committee made recommendations that were used by the department in selecting the projects to be funded.

Additional rounds of funding for new watershed demonstration projects are expected next year.

A short summary of each of the projects in the Cedar Valley region follows here.

Benton/Tama Nutrient Reduction Demonstration Project

■ **Grant award:** \$468,000.

■ **Total project:** \$747,000.

■ **Project leaders:** Benton SWCD.

■ **Partners:** Tama SWCD, DuPont Pioneer, Iowa State University Extension, Benton County Extension Service, Iowa Soybean Association, Practical Farmers of Iowa, Iowa Learning Farms, Iowa Farm Bureau, USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service.

■ **Project Details:** This project will partner with multiple organizations to demonstrate a host of nutrient reduction practices on cropland devoted to seed corn production. Seed corn acres have largely been neglected in traditional conservation practice implementation. Through the use of conservation practice demonstrations, field trials and field days the project intends to prove the adaptability of these practices and how they can be translated across seed corn production industrywide.

Central Turkey River Nutrient Reduction Demonstration Project

■ **Grant award:** \$498,000.

■ **Total project:** \$5,529,924.

■ **Project leaders:** Winneshiek SWCD.

■ **Partners:** Turkey River Watershed Management Authority.

■ **Details:** The Winneshiek SWCD takes a grassroots, producer to producer interactive approach to

marketing targeted watershed projects that will help demonstrate the ability of practices to improve water quality while maintaining productivity. With Northeast Iowa Community College as a centralized location in the project area, the college will serve as a hub to bring together an education and community wide focus to improving water quality.

Miller Creek Water Quality Improvement Project

■ **Grant award:** \$499,530.

■ **Total project:** \$751,501.

■ **Project leaders:** Black Hawk SWCD.

■ **Partners:** Iowa Soybean Association, BMC Aggregates, Tama SWCD, Black Hawk County, USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service.

■ **Details:** The Miller Creek Water Quality Improvement Project addresses the challenge of improving water quality by creating a demonstration watershed so producers within and around the region can learn about the installation and effectiveness of conservation practices to help foster adoption on their farms. The project seeks to broaden awareness of nutrient loading issues and solutions, engage private sector partners, foster adoption of in-field, edge-of-field and off-field practices, and to reduce nutrient loss in the watershed.