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Cover crops help diminish damage from floods



By Allie Arp, ISA research communication specialist

Cover crops are making an impact in Cedar Rapids.

Yes, you read that right. In a city known for its industry, cover crops upstream are helping diminish the damaging impact floods can have.

During a meeting of the Cedar River Watershed Coalition Iowa Senator, and co-chair of the coalition, Rob Hogg and others discussed the progress that has been made since the disastrous floods of 2008 and the impact the watershed has had on Cedar Rapids. Since the floods more cover crops have been planted along the river allowing the soil to retain more water and top soil throughout the year, meaning less will make its way down the river to cause problems for Cedar Rapids.

The watershed is made up of sub-watersheds including Miller Creek and Rock Creek where staff members have been hard at work reducing runoff and erosion through practices like no-till and cover crops.

"We're offering incentives for new producers who haven't been no-tilling or haven't been using cover crops," said Shane Wulf, watershed project coordinator for the Miller Creek Water Quality Improvement Project. "The more we can do to reduce nutrients lost, the more we can do to help farmers and the cities downstream."

As part of the Nutrient Reduction Strategy, the Iowa Soybean Association's Environmental Programs & Services team has been working the Upper Cedar watershed on a Watershed Improvement Plan. The plan is still being finalized but it lays out steps for the watershed to increase water quality.

The coalition's next initiative is to educate all Iowa commodity and city groups. On Friday November 14 they will show how different flood mitigation practices work and begin an urban-rural partnership so everyone can work together.

"Our main goal is to educate people," said Hogg. "Counties and urban leaders, we welcome everybody to become involved. We're all in this together. We want solutions for everybody. What works for farmers, can work for cities too."

For more information about the Cedar River Watershed Coalition and their efforts visit their website. To learn more about ISA and their water quality practices, or to get involved with your local watershed contact Adam Kiel akiel@iasoybeans.com.



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