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Farmers, conservationists look at ways to control runoff and flooding

By [Dave Franzman](#), KCRG-TV9[Video](#)[Photos](#)

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 Story Created: Mar 20, 2015 at 5:29 PM CDT
 (Story Updated: Mar 20, 2015 at 7:30 PM CDT)

BLACK HAWK COUNTY — Flood control involves more than just building walls and berms. And conservationists interested in seeing how farmers can help reduce runoff from fields and flooding downstream got a chance to do just that on Friday.

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the Iowa State Extension Service and other groups hosted a bus tour of several Black Hawk County farms to show what's being done to control flooding and protect waterways.

Last January, Cedar Rapids and state leaders announced a \$4.3-million dollar program to help farmers pay for conservation methods that could reduce water runoff into the Cedar River and improve water quality for people living downstream. The Middle Cedar Partnership Program is looking for land owners between Waterloo and Vinton. The program is designed to help rural and urban interests work together to make water cleaner.

The first stop on the Friday tour was Lanehaven Farms south of Waterloo.

An underground bioreactor system both slows and cleans water running off a 75-acre field and into a small stream. That stream eventually flows into the Cedar River. The system reduces nitrates leaching into the stream by up to 40 percent.

Rob Hogg, a state senator from Cedar Rapids, said he was encouraged simply to see the number of participants on the trip and feels it's a sign of progress.

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"The enthusiasm is growing. People believe these are issues we can address now and that's really exciting to me," Hogg said.

But tour leaders pointed out it will take both enthusiasm and money to attack the watershed issues farm by farm enough to make a difference for cities like Cedar Rapids.

The bioreactor system showed on the trip was about a \$10,000 investment.

Steve Hershner, Cedar Rapids Utilities director, said this trip was an opportunity for him look for potential partners in the watershed project.

"Some of the people here, absolutely they may be partners we want to work with. But, again, we're just at the front end of the project," he said.

Hershner said the city is almost finished with the rules for the grant program. And that means the search for partners will begin in earnest soon.

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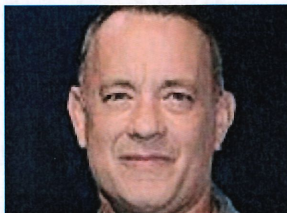


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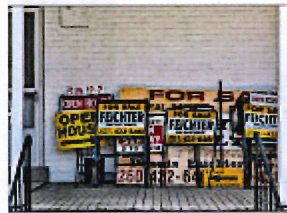
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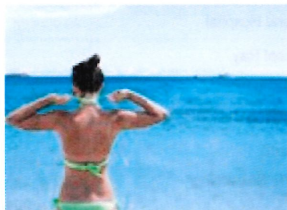
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