

Cost Share Programs available through local Soil & Water Conservation District

COST SHARE

The protection of our land is a collective responsibility. What affects the land affects the public – this single principle underlies the Iowa Cost-Share Program, a unique program through which State funds are made available to landowners to pay a portion of approved permanent soil and water conservation practices.



The Division of Soil Conservation has received state appropriations for conservation cost sharing since 1973. This appropriation is the cornerstone of soil and water conservation practice application in Iowa and evidence of the program's effectiveness can be seen across the landscape in terraces, waterways, erosion control structures and other conservation practice applications.

Funds utilized through this program are matched 50:50 by landowners, spent locally to hire private construction contractors, and reinvested by those contractors in local communities. Local jobs and businesses are supported by these funds, in addition to the principal benefits of soil conservation and water quality protection.

The installation of soil and water conservation practices provides permanent protection of Iowa's soil resources and water quality. Public benefits of clean water for drinking and recreation warrant public investment in conservation practice installation.

In 2002, nearly 2,500 landowners installed practices protecting more than 27,000 acres with terraces, waterways, structures, basins and other measures. Yet, demand for cost share assistance continues to exceed appropriated funds. FY-2003 funding was allocated to districts, leaving more than \$3,000,000 in requests that could not be met.



■ Grade Stabilization Structures	■ Grassed Waterways
■ Terraces	■ Water & Sediment Basins
■ Other	

Fund allocations are made to soil and water conservation districts, commissioners set priorities for their use, and field office staff assure the technical quality of practices built. These practices are also subject to maintenance agreement

Local Water Protection Program

The Iowa Water Quality Loan Fund will now offer low interest loans for water quality projects through a new program – the Local Water Protection Program (LWPP). The LWPP will fund a variety of water quality projects in an effort to reduce the amount of sediment, nutrients, and pesticides negatively impacting Iowa streams and lakes. A few examples of eligible projects are listed below.

contour buffer strips --- filter strips --- windbreaks --- grassed waterways --- terrace --- pasture & hayland planting --- planned grazing systems --- grade stabilization structures --- ponds --- fence --- riparian forest buffers --- waste treatment lagoons - -- water & sediment control basins --- waste storage facilities --- or other projects shown to protect water quality.

LWPP loans can be used as the sole funding source for water quality projects, but they can also be used to compliment other funding sources such as **State Cost Share** or EQIP.

LWPP highlights include ...

- Approximately \$3 million available for water quality projects in 2005.
- The LWPP will provide loans from \$5,000 to \$50,000 for up to 100% of the project costs.
- There are no limits to the number of loans a landowner may receive.
- Loan terms up to 10 years with an interest rate of no more than 3%.
- A linked deposit loan structure allows landowners to work with their personal lender.
- Applications are accepted by local Soil and Water Conservation Districts on a first come - first serve basis.
- Livestock water quality projects under \$10,000 are eligible under the LWPP.

No-Interest Loans

The 1983 State Legislature established the conservation practices revolving loan fund to provide loans to eligible landowners at no interest for the construction of permanent soil conservation practices. Authorized in Iowa Code Section 161A.71, eligible landowners may borrow up to \$10,000 for a 10-year period. Repayment is made in 10 annual payments equal to 10% of the initial loan amount. In the event of land ownership transfer, payment is due immediately.

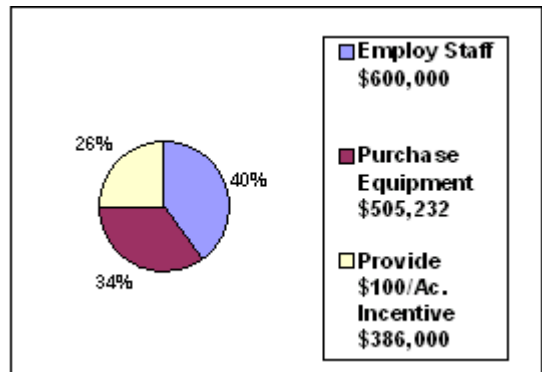


Similar in form to the [Cost Share Program](#), it offers an alternative financial incentive to landowners who either do not have the financial resources to provide their share of the required 50:50 cost share, or those who would prefer to extend their payments over a ten year period without the benefit of cost share. For some landowners, it also provides tax advantages.

Fund allocations are made to [soil and water conservation districts](#), commissioners set priorities for their use, and [field office staff](#) assure the technical quality of practices built. These practices are also subject to maintenance agreements. Unlike the cost share program, management practices are not authorized.

Iowa Buffer Initiative

Program Description: The Iowa Buffer Initiative provides \$1.5 million to accelerate implementation of the continuous sign-up Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) through soil and water conservation district field offices. Through the CRP program, farmers receive average annual rental payments of \$95/acre from United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to establish riparian buffers, grassed waterways, contour buffer strips, field borders and other buffers on private farmlands. Iowa is first in the nationwide ranking in acres enrolled, with 204,374 acres from September 1996 through June 2000.



Program Need: Conservation buffers adjacent to streams and strategically located in crop fields can reduce soil erosion, improve water quality, and stabilize streambanks. Erosion can be reduced by more than 50 percent. Shallow, subsurface water movement into streams can be improved through the removal of nitrates and some agricultural chemicals. Buffers also provide excellent wildlife habitat and increase landscape biodiversity. Fish habitat is improved by providing more diversity in the food chain and reducing sediment deposition.

What Has Been Done: The Division of Soil Conservation met with cooperating agencies and organizations to discuss their interest in the program. The overwhelming priority of the group was to market and assist landowners with options available through the continuous sign-up CRP. As a result of the input of the partner group, soil and water conservation districts have employed additional staff that could set down with a landowner at the kitchen table or in the shop or barn to explain the benefits of the continuous sign-up CRP and associated incentives and costs. Concerns were expressed that many landowners either do not have a needed piece of equipment or service providers are not available. Districts have been authorized to purchase the equipment necessary to apply the practices.



The USDA is providing sign-up incentives for all of the continuous sign-up CRP practices except Contour Buffer Strips, Contour Buffer Strips on Terraces, Shallow Water Areas for Wildlife, and Cross Wind Trap Strips. The partner group believed that these practices are also important for erosion control and water quality; therefore, the same \$100 sign-up incentives have been made available through the Buffer Initiative for these practices.

CONCLUSIONS

- With an annual state investment of \$1,500,000 for the Buffer Initiative an additional \$14,400,000 of federal dollars will be brought to the state of Iowa over the next 10 years.
- The Buffer Initiative has increased CRP sign-up by nearly 28 percent.