

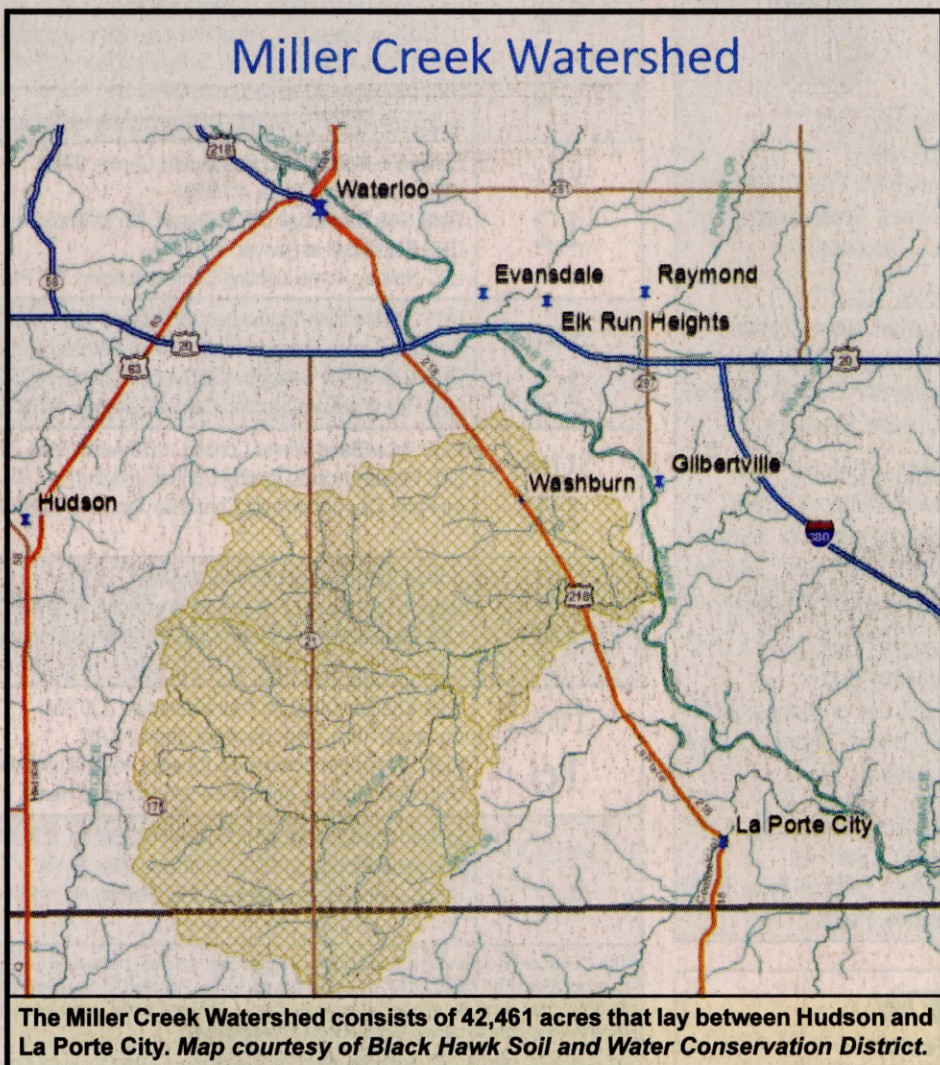
Webinar to Feature Strip-Till/No-Till Practices

It's been a busy first year for Shane Wulf, project coordinator for the Miller Creek Watershed. Working for the Black Hawk Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) in Waterloo, Wulf was brought on board in 2014 to oversee the Miller Creek Project, a watershed consisting of more than 42,000 acres located between Hudson and La Porte City.

The project supports the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy, which strives to improve overall water quality by reducing the amount of nutrients in surface water. It is the presence of these nutrients in the Gulf of Mexico that lead to algae growth and a condition known as hypoxia, which results in a large area of water unable to support marine life due to low oxygen levels. In 2008, the Mississippi River/Gulf of Mexico Nutrient Task Force issued an action plan that called upon the 12 states along the Mississippi River to develop their own nutrient reduction strategy plans.

During the past year, Wulf has been active in the field, meeting producers and sharing conservation practices that help soil retain valuable nutrients. Through the use of conservation practices such as cover crops, buffer strips and nitrification inhibitors, producers can make a significant

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impact on the amount of nutrients, nitrogen and phosphorus, for example, their fields retain. Working with other agencies like the Iowa Soybean Association, Wulf is eager to review data that continues to be collected regarding the impact conservation efforts are having on overall soil health. One such measure is the Haney Soil Health Test, which is designed to help answer three basic questions: What is the soil's condition? Is the soil in balance and what can be done to help the soil? Acknowledging that significant changes in soil health typically take a long period of time to register, Wulf is encouraged by the number of producers who have expressed interest in learning more about the various programs available to support their operations.

The numbers related to soil conservation cost share programs throughout the state confirm the commitment individual producers have made in 2014. In addition to \$9.5 million contributed by the state, 2,382 Iowa farmers invested \$13 million in cost share to incorporate conservation practices into their operations.

As Wulf continues to extend outreach efforts designed to educate producers in the Miller Creek Watershed about the practices and programs available to them, he expressed his appreciation

for the area farmers he's met and worked with in 2014.

"The producers I've met are good stewards of the land, willing to listen and take a look at their operations," he said.

The next outreach event for area producers is a Strip-Till/No-Till Webinar hosted by the Black Hawk SWCD and Iowa State Extension and Outreach on Tuesday, December 16th at 9 AM. Participants may view the webinar online by logging on to <https://connect.extension.iastate.edu/waterquality>. Audio for the webinar is provided via telephone at 866-809-4014. When prompted, enter the passcode 2947801#. The webinar can also be viewed at the Waterloo USDA Service Center, 2950 Southland Drive, where light refreshments will be served. If planning to attend at that location, please RSVP to Shane Wulf at 319-296-3262.

Miller Creek Water Quality Improvement Project Goals

Demonstration Practice	Target Level
Cover crops	4,500 acres
Strip- or no -tillage	4,000 acres
Buffer strips	18 acres
Drainage water management	3 systems
Nitrification inhibitors	2,500 acres
Nitrogen application rate management	1,000 acres
Denitrification bioreactors	4 installed