



Agriculture groups, urban water works collaborate on key water quality project

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CEDAR RAPIDS — The city of Cedar Rapids partnered with multiple agriculture commodity groups Jan. 14 as \$2 million in Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) funding was approved for water-quality improvement projects in the Middle Cedar River.

The NRCS announced the funding as part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's new Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP).

The Middle Cedar Partnership Project (MCPP) will receive a portion of the \$370 million in RCPP projects nationwide.

The project will advance implementation of nutrient reduction and flood protection practices in targeted areas of the Middle Cedar, which is part of the larger Cedar River Watershed, according to a news release from Agriculture Water Alliance.

Funds from the project will be supplemented by an additional \$2.2 million from partner contributions.

The city of Cedar Rapids is the lead partner on the project which involves over a dozen collaborating partners, including the Iowa Corn Growers Association (ICGA), Iowa Pork Producers Association (IPPA) and the Iowa Soybean Association (ISA), all focused on improving Iowa's water quality.

The MCPP will focus on specific areas of the Middle Cedar watershed, which covers nearly 2,500 square miles upstream in Benton, Tama and Black Hawk counties.

ALL THREE counties' Soil and Water Conservation Districts have agreed to be collaborating partners along with several others, including the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, The Nature Conservancy, Iowa Farm Bureau Federation, and others.

As part of the partnership, ISA's Environmental Program and Services team, along with other partners, will initiate and complete watershed assessments and planning services in the first year of the project.

ISA is already collaborating upstream with the Miller Creek Water Quality Initiative Project to monitor water quality conditions resulting from conservation practices and tile outlets.

Data collected from the project will be used to track improvements at the field and practice scale, information that will support the MCPP.

Addressing water quality in the Cedar River watershed is a priority at both state and local levels as a majority of the drinking water produced by the Cedar Rapids treatment facilities is distributed to food production users including PepsiCo, Cargill and General Mills.

ADDITIONALLY, IDALS will be receiving \$3.5 million of funding for the Iowa Target Demonstration Watershed Partnership Project through the RCPP program.

This funding will be used to increase available resources through existing demonstration projects in key watersheds, conduct farmer-to-farmer outreach and assist farmers in implementing conservation practices across the state.