Farmer-Led Efforts to Improve Water Quality

Spring Regional, District 2
Dakota City, IA
March 2, 2016
SECOND PRIZE color, taken by E. J. Weigle, county extension director from Winneshiek County, shows contour strips on the Wilbur Stoan farm about 16 miles northeast of Decorah. The contour strip-cropping was laid out with the technical assistance of V. A. Edwards, work unit conservationist for the soil conservation service. A four-year rotation of corn, oats, meadow, meadow, is being followed, except for the more gently rolling areas, where Stoan has used second-year corn.
Iowa Agriculture Water Alliance

• Mission
  – Increase the pace and scale of farmer-led efforts to improve water quality

• Founding organizations
  – Iowa Corn Growers Association
  – Iowa Pork Producers Association
  – Iowa Soybean Association
Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy

• *Transformational change* will be required to meet targets (41% N, 29% P)
• No single practice will meet these reductions
For nitrate, it’s the system...

- Data overwhelmingly points to the combination of:
  - Intensive row crop production
  - Highly productive soils (rich in organic N and C)
  - Tile drainage
  - Long fallow period
  - Climate (it rains, nitrate will move)
Solutions!
What is RCPP?

1. **Regional Conservation Partnership Program**
   - A new program that mobilizes partnerships to multiply investments and reach common conservation goals.

2. **More Partners**
   - Bring innovation, new ideas, resources, and local expertise to solve problems.

3. **RCPP Funding Options**
   - 40% National (multi-state projects)
   - 25% State (State projects)
   - 35% Critical Conservation Areas (areas designated by Secretary)

4. **USDA plans to invest up to $1.2 billion**
   - USDA Goal: Partners match investment to equal — $2.4 billion for conservation through 2018

Visit [www.iowaagwateralliance.com](http://www.iowaagwateralliance.com)
Midwest Water Quality Partnership Project (RCPP)

• Co-led by IAWA and IDALS
• Implementation of Nutrient Reduction Strategy
• One of largest RCPP projects nationwide
• Focused & complimentary to other projects
• Private partners working on unique platform integration with parallel sustainability efforts
Watershed Focus

Headwaters of the North Raccoon WQI*
Rock Creek WQI
Squaw Creek WQI
Elk Run WQI
Squaw Creek WQI
North Raccoon
South Skunk
Lake Red Rock
Walnut Creek WMA*
Upper Cedar
Benton-Tama WQI
Miller Creek WQI
Four Mile Creek WMA

WQI – Water Quality Initiative
WMA – Watershed Management Authority
Practices

Farmers & agribusinesses are working together for clean water by using

- Cover crops
- Nutrient management
- Strip-till and No-till
- Drainage water management
- Bioreactors
- Saturated buffers
- Wetlands

For more information see: www.iowaagwateralliance.com or www.cleanwateriowa.org
Valued Partners
Headwaters N. Raccoon – NRCS Contribution Agreement
Business Planning

Identify areas with <0 ROI

Conservation Planning

Plan and implement practice(s)
Subfield Profitability Analysis

http://mesonet.agron.iastate.edu/GIS/apps/profit/

www.iowaagwateralliance.com
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

• Business planning as entry point to conservation planning and water quality practices
NFWF Project Target Watersheds
Other Watershed Partnerships – Rock Creek and Elk Run

Initial Estimated Costs
Initial Cost: $5.0m ($117/ac)
Yearly Cost: $750k ($45/ac)

*Update – after completion of watershed plan, Mitchell SWCD applied and received WPF/WSPF funding from IDALS. $174K/year one; $962K total request.
Summary

• Water quality challenge is daunting, but ag and many partners are stepping up
• Solutions will be *watershed by watershed, farmer by farmer, field by field*
• Rural-urban collaborations
• Public-private partnerships