

OPPORTUNITY FOR IOWA'S WATERSHED MANAGEMENT AUTHORITIES:

NUTRIENT REDUCTION STRATEGY DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

In 2013, lawmakers initiated the Iowa Water Quality Initiative (WQI) to implement the goals of the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy (NRS), a statewide framework to reduce nutrient loads in surface water. In the years since, an array of projects have been implemented through the WQI.

Most recently, the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) announced a new funding opportunity—Nutrient Reduction Strategy Demonstration Projects.

Proposals must be submitted electronically by 4:30 p.m. on Nov. 18. Program details can be found at iowaagriculture.gov/dscwq/requests-proposals.

The announcement presents an opportunity for Iowa's 27 Watershed Management Authorities (WMAs) to receive funding for project implementation and staffing. This resource provides guidance for WMA leaders considering applying for the program.



Program overview

The objective of the Nutrient Reduction Strategy Demonstration Projects is to increase adoption and implementation of conservation practices as described in the NRS, which include edge-of-field, erosion control, in-field nutrient management, and land use best practices. IDALS describes:

“Selected projects will utilize monitoring, assessment and planning tools that will prioritize and coordinate implementation efforts around the installation of conservation practices in their targeted project areas.”

Eligible project expenses include:

- Technical assistance (salary/benefits/travel/training) needs for project implementation
- Outreach/education components (field days, publications, signs, informational meetings, etc.)
- Contractual costs for assistance with project implementation components (engineering, monitoring, etc.)
- Cost-sharing funds for NRS-approved practices

It is anticipated project funds will be available Jan. 1, 2023, and applicants may request up to three years of funding.

All project proposals will be evaluated on the following criteria (points in parenthesis represent a portion of 150 total points):

- Scope and objectives correlation to the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy (30)
- Collaborative outreach/education efforts to increase practice adoption and disseminate information broadly including robust evaluation plan to report progress and accomplishments (30)
- Innovative and targeted delivery of most effective practices to areas providing most benefit (25)
- Demonstrated ability to implement the project/practices in an efficient manner; ability proceed quickly upon project approval (25)
- Demonstrated strong partnerships and landowner willingness/participation levels to commit financial and in-kind support to the project (25)
- Project is located in a priority HUC 8 watershed (15)
 - Select HUC-8 watersheds with existing demonstration projects will be reviewed with priority consideration. They are the Floyd, East Nishnabotna, West Nishnabotna, North Raccoon, Boone, Middle Cedar, Skunk, South Skunk, and Turkey watersheds.

Program guidance states that applicants must collaborate with their IDALS regional coordinator to put together a proposal. Contact information can be found on the map below.

Selections will be made by Dec. 16. If funded, project reports and assessments will be required.

Other considerations

WMAs are listed as an eligible entity for the program. In addition, Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs), counties, county conservation boards, cities or other units of government, nonprofits or non-governmental organizations authorized by the secretary of state, and public water supply utilities are eligible to apply.

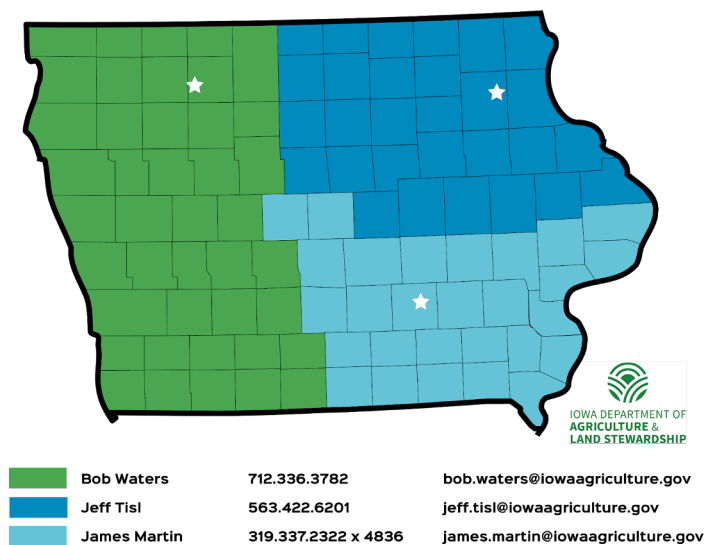
When putting together an application, consider the following:

- Who will be the WMA's fiscal agent for the project?*
- Would the WMA benefit from hiring a watershed coordinator as part of the project? If so:
 - What is the total amount of money required to hire a coordinator?
 - Who will house and employ the coordinator?*
 - Where will the coordinator be stationed or based?
 - Is there a job description and plan for supervision in place for this individual?
- Is there demonstrable demand for the project (for example: waiting list, interested landowners)? If so, be sure to include this information.
- Are any components of this project partially or already designed, surveyed, or assessed? If so, be sure to include this information.
- Is the project outlined in the WMA's comprehensive watershed management plan? If so, be sure to include this information.
- Does the project involve partnerships with local individuals, organizations, or entities?

*Traditionally, SWCDs have made good fiscal agents and entities to house staff. However, some WMAs have found success with other entities, such as Resource Conservation and Development organizations and county conservation boards.

Suggested next steps

- Familiarize yourself with program details: iowaagriculture.gov/dscwq/requests-proposals
- Reference Iowa's Nutrient Reduction Strategy: nutrientstrategy.iastate.edu
- Reach out to your IDALS Regional Coordinator to collaborate on application development:



If you are considering applying for a Nutrient Reduction Strategy Demonstration Project and would like support in the process, reach out to Kate Hansen, policy associate, Center for Rural Affairs at 515-215-1294 or kateh@cfra.org.