

# FACT SHEET:

# WATERSHED MANAGEMENT AUTHORITIES IN IOWA

## What is a Watershed Management Authority?

- A Watershed Management Authority (WMA) is a chapter 28E cooperative agreement among cities, counties, and soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs) that enables them to work collaboratively on watershed planning and management within a Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC)-8 watershed. Statewide, several WMAs are organized along the boundaries of smaller watersheds, such as the headwaters of the South Skunk River WMA (cluster of HUC-12s) and Squaw Creek WMA (HUC-10).
  - Authorized in 2010 by the Iowa Legislature, WMAs may: assess and reduce flood risk, assess and improve water quality, monitor federal flood risk planning and activities, educate residents of the watershed regarding flood risks and water quality, and allocate funds made available to the authority for purposes of water quality and flood mitigation.
  - WMAs offer a crucial way for stakeholders to develop partnerships that are not restricted by political boundaries, but instead are organized along the boundaries of the watershed.

**Hydrologic Unit Codes (HUC):** The U.S. Geological Survey created a hierarchical system of hydrologic units that defines drainage areas, or watersheds, for surface water. The higher the number, the smaller the watershed. For example, HUC-12 watersheds are nestled within HUC-10 watersheds.

## How do I form a WMA in my watershed?

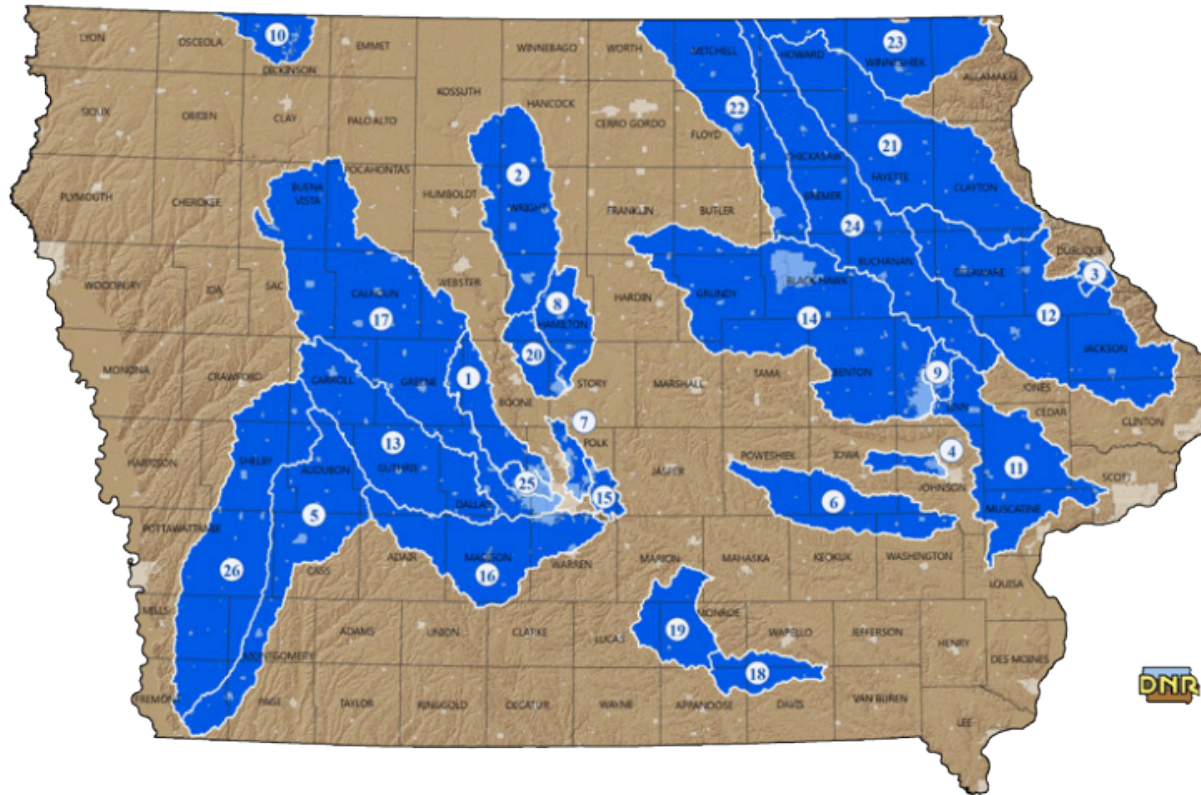
- Although only cities, counties, and SWCDs can be voting board members, community members, and other stakeholders, such as farmers and landowners, play an important role in WMA formation. Specifically, these stakeholders can share information and encourage their local officials to create a WMA. Steps that must be taken to form a WMA<sup>1</sup> include:
  - The watershed must be selected and defined; it may not exceed the boundaries of a HUC-8 watershed, but can be smaller.
  - All political subdivisions (cities, counties, and SWCDs) within the selected watershed must be notified and invited to join 30 days prior to the organization of a WMA.
  - A chapter 28E agreement must be signed and approved by the participating political subdivisions. No political subdivision is required to participate in a WMA and each political subdivision can participate in more than one WMA if they so choose.
  - The chapter 28E agreement must include a map showing the area and boundaries of the WMA. This agreement must be filed with the Iowa Secretary of State's office. Additional information about a chapter 28E agreement can be found in Chapter 28E, Joint Exercise Of Governmental Powers of the Iowa Code.<sup>2</sup>
- According to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, there are currently 26 WMAs in Iowa. Of those WMAs, 14 have watershed management plans on file, 8 do not have a watershed management plan on file, and 4 are in the process of formulating and approving their plan as of November 2019.

## Sources

- 1 Iowa Code 2019, Water Protection and Watershed Management, Section 466B.22 (17, 0), 2018, Iowa Legislature, [legis.iowa.gov/docs/code/2019/466B.22.pdf](https://legis.iowa.gov/docs/code/2019/466B.22.pdf).
- 2 Iowa Code 2019, Joint Exercise of Government Powers, Chapter 28E (31, 1), 2018, Iowa Legislature, [legis.iowa.gov/docs/code//28E.pdf](https://legis.iowa.gov/docs/code//28E.pdf).



FIGURE 1. IOWA'S WATERSHED MANAGEMENT AUTHORITIES



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|---|--|--|
| 1. Beaver Creek WMA                     | 10. Little Sioux Headwaters Coalition                  | 18. Soap Creek Watershed Board           |
| 2. Boone River WMA                      | 11. Lower Cedar WMA                                    | 19. South Central Iowa Cedar Creek WMA   |
| 3. Catfish Creek WMA                    | 12. Maquoketa River WMA                                | 20. Squaw Creek WMA                      |
| 4. Clear Creek Watershed Coalition      | 13. Middle-South Raccoon WMA                           | 21. Turkey River WMA                     |
| 5. East Nishnabotna Watershed Coalition | 14. Middle Cedar WMA                                   | 22. Upper Cedar River WMA                |
| 6. English River WMA                    | 15. Mud Creek, Spring Creek, and Camp Creek WMA        | 23. Upper Iowa River WMA                 |
| 7. Fourmile Creek WMA                   | 16. North and Middle Rivers WMA                        | 24. Upper Wapsipinicon River WMA         |
| 8. Headwaters of the South Skunk WMA    | 17. North Raccoon River Watershed Management Coalition | 25. Walnut Creek WMA                     |
| 9. Indian Creek WMA                     |  | 26. West Nishnabotna Watershed Coalition |

TABLE 1. IOWA'S WATERSHED MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY PLANS

WMA	Watershed plan on file?
Beaver Creek WMA	Plan in progress.
Boone River WMA	No plan completed.
Catfish Creek WMA	Yes, plan is complete.
Clear Creek Watershed Coalition	Plan in progress.
East Nishnabotna Watershed Coalition	Yes, plan is complete.
West Nishnabotna Watershed Coalition	Yes, plan is complete.
English River WMA	Yes, plan is complete.
Fourmile Creek WMA	Yes, plan is complete.
Headwaters of the South Skunk WMA	Yes, plan is complete.
Indian Creek WMA	Yes, plan is complete.
Little Sioux Headwaters Coalition	No plan completed.
Lower Cedar WMA	No plan completed.
Maquoketa River WMA	No plan completed.
Middle-South Raccoon WMA	No plan completed.

WMA	Watershed plan on file?
Middle Cedar WMA	Plan in progress.
Mud Camp Spring Creek WMA	Yes, plan is complete.
North and Middle Rivers WMA	No plan completed.
North Raccoon River Watershed Management Coalition	Plan in progress.
Soap Creek Watershed Board	Yes, plan is complete.
South Central Iowa Cedar Creek WMA	No plan completed.
Squaw Creek WMA	Yes, plan is complete.
Turkey River WMA	Yes, plan is complete.
Upper Cedar River WMA	Yes, plan is complete.
Upper Iowa WMA	Yes, plan is complete.
Upper Wapsipinicon River WMA	No plan completed.
Walnut Creek WMA	Yes, plan is complete.

