

# BUILDING MOMENTUM: TOOLS FOR WATERSHED MANAGEMENT AUTHORITIES



Iowa's 27 Watershed Management Authorities (WMAs) cover 40% of the state, putting local leaders in the driver's seat to address water concerns such as flooding and water quality. Together, they have made demonstrable progress, working with landowners to install more than 1,900 voluntary conservation practices, and bringing in tens of millions of dollars in investments to their communities. However, not all Iowans know about WMAs, or even if they live within the boundaries of one.

This resource provides ideas and guidance for making connections with elected officials, as well as raising awareness of WMAs through the media. Its intended audience is watershed coordinators, board members, and anyone invested in a WMA.

## KNOW YOUR WMA'S STORY

Before educating others about your WMA, details are helpful to tell its story. Some WMAs have put together one-page fact sheets about their efforts, while others may prefer to share in conversation. Consider these questions.

- What prompted local leaders to join together to form your WMA?
- How much federal, state, and private funding has your WMA brought to the local area?
- What does your WMA look like? How many communities? Urban vs. rural? Natural resources and features? What types of agricultural land?
- How much local funding has the WMA received, i.e. local jurisdictions' skin in the game?
- Does the WMA have a comprehensive watershed management plan on file? If so, what are key priorities of the plan, such as future project goals?
- Do you have any key success stories in your WMA? For example, a landowner who installed a practice or a project with local students?
- What projects have been executed by the WMA? How many practices were implemented as a result?
- If your WMA had infinite resources, what would you implement? Can you point to any "shovel-ready" projects?



## CONNECT WITH LOCAL ELECTED OFFICIALS

From supervisors to mayors to commissioners, WMA boards are made up of elected officials. However, more can be informed about WMAs' presence within their jurisdictions. State legislators, in particular, are good connections to make.

Every Iowan is represented by one state senator and one state representative in the Iowa Legislature. WMAs are unique in that they cover the entirety of a watershed, and often have multiple legislators with overlapping districts.

In response to the shift in population identified by the 2020 Census, Iowa's state legislative districts will change, effective in the 2022 elections. To determine your WMA's legislators and their contact information, visit [legis.iowa.gov/legislators/find](https://legis.iowa.gov/legislators/find).

## INVITE YOUR LEGISLATORS TO A WMA FIELD DAY OR BOARD MEETING

WMAs are doing "boots on the ground" work to address flooding and water quality. As such, there are many opportunities to invite state lawmakers to see the work in action.

Consider inviting your legislators to a field day or event you are hosting. Not only would this be a good opportunity for you to share details about the WMA, but also for them to engage with their constituents and visit a farm or town within their district.

If your WMA is newer and does not have a field day or event planned, invite your lawmakers to a quarterly board meeting to see how the WMA operates.

## OTHER IDEAS TO ENGAGE ELECTED OFFICIALS

- Give them a call
- Send them an email
- Invite them for a chat over coffee
- Attend a community meeting, town hall, or forum and bring up your WMA as a point of discussion

## STAY CONNECTED WITH LOCAL MEDIA

A good relationship with local media outlets can be mutually beneficial—you can spread the word about your WMA and its efforts, and the outlets are better informed about local initiatives. Options for elevating your profile alongside local media include these.



### Issue press releases for upcoming events or news.

Do you have an upcoming field day planned? Just receive a grant to do some great work? Draft a press release and share it with local media outlets within the watershed.



### Feature your WMA in a written piece.

Consider writing a feature story about the work of your WMA, either a general story or one on a specific project, grant, etc. Newspapers are often looking for local news content.



### Invite community members or board members to write an op-ed in support of the WMA.

Guest opinion pieces are a staple of many local news outlets. Work with a member of your board or member of the community who has been involved with the WMA to write a piece highlighting its successes.

## CREATE AN ONLINE PRESENCE

A number of WMAs have established social media platforms and websites to make information easily accessible online. This can help you provide needed updates and build support within the local community. Consider putting together a(n):

- Website
- Facebook page
- Twitter account
- Instagram account
- Story map (to learn more, visit [knightlab.northwestern.edu](https://knightlab.northwestern.edu))

