

CEDAR RIVER WATERSHED COALITION

WORKING TOGETHER TO REDUCE FLOOD RISK AND IMPROVE WATER QUALITY FOR A HEALTHY AND PRODUCTIVE CEDAR RIVER WATERSHED.

Cedar River Watershed Coalition Spring Meeting: ~Getting Involved in Your Watershed~

Friday, June 10th, 2016 • 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm
Kling Memorial Library, Grundy Center (708 7th Street)

Meeting Notes

1:00 pm Welcome & Introductions

The meeting included 45 participants, with a number of new participants from Grundy County. Other entities represented included city and county staff and elected officials, state agencies, councils of government, academic institutions, non-governmental organizations, and interested citizens. Several landowners and producers were also in attendance.

1:15 pm Planning for Targeted Water Quality Improvement in the Middle Cedar

Karl Gesch, Iowa Soybean Assoc. Watershed Coordinator spoke about several watershed management plans that ISA has helped to develop in the Cedar River watershed. He outlined the basic components of the watershed plans, including the overall water quality improvement goals, and described the agricultural practices that would be required to help meet the plan's goals. The watershed plan lays out a variety of practices, to ensure there are different options available to producers in the watershed. Karl also outlined the budget for meeting the watershed plan goals. To implement the Miller Creek Watershed Improvement Plan, ISA estimates that nearly \$5 million dollars is needed for structural practices, and annual management practices would cost an estimated \$592,500 per year. ISA has helped to develop watershed improvement plans for the following projects: Miller Creek, Benton-Tama Nutrient Reduction Project, Lime Creek, and Rock Creek.

1:45 pm Introducing the Middle Cedar Watershed Management Authority

The Middle Cedar Watershed Management Authority is a recently-formed effort with broad support and engagement. Over 20 local governments (SWCDs, counties, and cities) have signed on to the agreement. Mary Beth Stevenson of Iowa DNR introduced the session by giving an overview of WMAs in Iowa. Jennifer Fencl, ECICOG Environmental Services Director & Middle Cedar WMA Secretary described the watershed and the members. Cara Matteson, Cedar Rapids Stormwater Coordinator and Middle Cedar WMA Vice-Chair described why the city of Cedar Rapids is invested in the effort from the standpoint of improving water quality and reducing flood risk. The Middle Cedar watershed has been targeted in the statewide project known as the Iowa Watershed Approach, and money will be available for watershed assessment and on-the-ground projects. Through this project, a major watershed improvement planning effort will be undertaken in the coming months, and all stakeholders in the Middle Cedar watershed will be invited to participate.

2:15 pm Downstream Perspectives – Middle Cedar Partnership Project

The Middle Cedar Partnership Project is a cooperative effort among the city of Cedar Rapids and agricultural partners in the Middle Cedar Watershed. Steve Hershner, Cedar Rapids Utilities Director, described the progress the project has been making in building relationships and increasing on-the-ground conservation. Jason Gomes of North Iowa Agronomy Partners, who

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has been hired to conduct outreach efforts to farmers through the program, spoke about his activities to engage producers in the targeted watersheds. Jason hopes to work directly with landowners to provide information and education about conservation farming.

3:00 pm Conservation Farming in Grundy County

Fred Abels is a farmer in Grundy County who has been experimenting with different methods to improve his operation through no-till practices and cover crops. Fred talked about his methods and the improvements he has made to his equipment.

3:15 pm Updates from Projects & Partners around the Cedar River Watershed

Coalition partners shared updates on upcoming meetings and events:

June 16, 3 pm – Middle Cedar WMA meeting & Iowa Watershed Approach Kick-off (Farmers Savings Trust, Vinton)

June 18, 1:30 pm – Practical Backyard Tour (starts at Rudy's Tacos, Waterloo)

June 22, 5 pm – Upper Cedar WMA meeting & tour (Waverly Community Center)

June 17 – 18 – Charles City Whitewater Challenge event (Charles City)

July 20, 9 am – Economics of Cover Crops (Grundy County Fair)

3:45 pm Next steps for the Cedar River Watershed Coalition

The next Cedar River Watershed Coalition meeting will be held in November, location TBD. Several suggestions were raised for meeting topics around the topic of The Economics of Conservation:

- How can we incentivize agricultural conservation practices using different funding schemes?
- Identify policy recommendations, such as Watershed Management Authority funding
- What are the actual costs vs. savings to farmers for implementing conservation?
- What impact could the corporate perspective have, in terms of emphasizing supply chain sustainability?

4:00 pm Adjourn