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## BUDGET UNIT BRIEF – FY 2025

Fiscal Services Division

July 1, 2024



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Ground Floor, State Capitol Building

Des Moines, Iowa 50319

515.281.3566

## Water Trails and Low Head Dam Program — RIF

### Purpose and History

Appropriations are made from the infrastructure budget for the Water Trails and Low Head Dam Mitigation Program administered by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The Program provides grants and funding assistance for local entities, water trail enhancements, and dam mitigation grants to dam owners. During the 2008 Legislative Session, [SF 2380](#) (Water Trails and Low Head Dam Public Hazard Program Act) established the Program and required the DNR to study waterways for recreational purposes and develop a Statewide Plan by January 1, 2010. In addition, the DNR was required to administer the Program once funding was provided. The Statewide Plan presented several information items, including a map inventory of low head dams for publicizing hazards, recommendations for local communities, input from various stakeholders, and guidance and recommendations related to water trail development.

### Water Trails and Low Head Dam Projects

The DNR adopted rules that set grant criteria for water trails and low head dams. For water trails development, the State role is to provide guidelines, templates, planning and technical assistance, and enforcement, as well as the water trails development grants. For dam mitigation, the Program focuses on reducing fatalities at traditionally designed dams, reducing recreational hazards, and enhancing aquatic species connectivity. Applications for both are submitted to the DNR and approved by the Natural Resource Commission (NRC). Per rule, the Director of the DNR appoints a Water Trails Advisory Committee that provides expertise to the Scoring Committee for the grants and assists the DNR in planning for the Program. The DNR staff and the Water Trails Advisory Committee review all projects and determine the mix of allocations for water trails development and for dam mitigation.

Local governments and nonprofit entities are eligible to apply for water trail development grants. No local match is required, but cost share is strongly encouraged throughout the selection criteria. As water trail projects are completed, they may be eligible to become a designated water trail and be included in the DNR water trail marketing materials.

Dam owners, including counties, cities, State agencies, cooperatives, and individuals, are eligible to apply for dam mitigation grants. Projects include removing or demolishing low head dams and restoring river flow, creating rock ramps, and altering the height of the dams, as well as improving signage and warnings near low head dams.

### State Funding

This appropriation has been funded from the Rebuild Iowa Infrastructure Fund (RIIF) since FY 2009, with the exception of FY 2011, FY 2012, and FY 2018. No funding was appropriated for this purpose during those three years.

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### More Information

DNR — Water Trail Projects:

[www.iowadnr.gov/Things-to-Do/Canoeing-Kayaking/Water-Trail-Development](http://www.iowadnr.gov/Things-to-Do/Canoeing-Kayaking/Water-Trail-Development)

DNR — Low Head Dams: [www.iowadnr.gov/Recreation/CanoeingKayaking/LowHeadDams.aspx](http://www.iowadnr.gov/Recreation/CanoeingKayaking/LowHeadDams.aspx)

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**Related Statutes and Administrative Rules**

Iowa Code section [464A.11](#)

Iowa Administrative Code [571—30](#)

**Budget Unit Number**

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