

CHAPTER 466

IMPROVEMENT OF WATERSHED ATTRIBUTES

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466.1 Short title.

This chapter shall be known and may be cited as “*Initiative on Improving Our Watershed Attributes (I on IOWA)*”.

2000 Acts, ch 1068, §1

466.2 Legislative goal.

The goal of this chapter is to develop a comprehensive water quality program that will result in water quality improvements while reducing proposed regulatory impacts. The program shall use information, education, monitoring, technical assistance, data gathering and evaluation, incentives, and more efficient issuance of permits. The program is expected to have a menu of initiatives and approaches to appeal to a broad audience of participants and shall be coordinated so that individual initiatives work toward the objective of improved water quality. The departments of agriculture and land stewardship and natural resources shall work cooperatively with federal agencies to obtain waivers and changes in rules and procedures at national and state levels to improve the federal programs’ environmental and economic performance for Iowans. State agencies shall collaborate with other state agencies to attain the overall goal of improved water quality. The state department of transportation and the department of natural resources shall collaborate to provide for the preservation of topsoil, erosion control, water impoundment during highway construction and reconstruction, and restoration and management of roadside right-of-way for prairie restoration, wildlife habitat, and erosion control.

2000 Acts, ch 1068, §2

466.3 Iowa clean water award.

An Iowa clean water award is created. The governor and the general assembly shall give the award annually to a city or other political subdivision which has met criteria established by the department of natural resources and the department of agriculture and land stewardship identifying exemplary efforts to improve water quality within its jurisdiction.

2000 Acts, ch 1068, §3

466.4 Conservation buffer strip program.

1. As used in this section, “*conservation buffer strip*” means a riparian buffer, filter strip, waterway, contour buffer strip, shallow water area for wildlife, field border, or any vegetative barrier on private land that meets the criteria established by the United States department of agriculture, natural resources conservation service.

2. a. The department of agriculture and land stewardship, in consultation with the department of natural resources, shall establish a program to accelerate the United States department of agriculture’s program to install conservation buffer strips in this state.

b. The department of agriculture and land stewardship shall request waivers from the United States department of agriculture to initiate projects that reward landowners maintaining current conservation practices. The goal of the projects is to discourage the destruction of existing conservation buffer strips and to monetarily reward landowners who maintain quality conservation practices. If the waivers are granted, up to twenty-five percent of the program resources shall be committed to establishing projects.

c. The department of agriculture and land stewardship shall request a waiver from the

United States department of agriculture for the purpose of establishing that a person who is subject to a twenty-five percent reduction in conservation buffer strip payments due to grazing shall be allowed ninety days to graze animals.

d. The department of natural resources shall establish a prairie seed harvest program to assist in the restoration of prairies and provide for private land stewardship and public resource management through assistance with the implementation of buffer and filter strip practices, and public or private habitat development and management. The department shall carry out these efforts through landowner contacts and cooperation with private and public organizations.

e. The five-year goal of the conservation buffer strip program shall be to meet the objective of water quality improvement by enrolling an additional four hundred seven thousand five hundred acres.

2000 Acts, ch 1068, §4

466.5 Conservation reserve enhancement program.

1. A conservation reserve enhancement program is established within the department of agriculture and land stewardship to restore or construct wetlands for the purposes of intercepting tile line runoff, reducing nutrient loss, improving water quality, and enhancing agricultural production practices. The program shall be directed primarily, but not exclusively, toward the tile-drained areas of the state.

2. The department of agriculture and land stewardship shall request the assistance of and consult with the United States department of agriculture's natural resources conservation service and farm service agency to implement the conservation reserve enhancement program. The department shall also consult with county boards of supervisors, county conservation boards, drainage district representatives, department of natural resources, and soil and water conservation districts affected by the implementation of the conservation reserve enhancement program. The department shall also collaborate with other public agencies and private organizations to develop wetland habitat and related projects to improve water quality.

3. The department of agriculture and land stewardship shall maintain a record of all wetlands established pursuant to the conservation reserve enhancement program including any conditions that may apply to the landowner's right to remove the wetland after the provisions of the conservation reserve enhancement program contract or easement are concluded.

4. When establishing a wetland under this section, the department of agriculture and land stewardship shall be governed by the following requirements:

a. Wetland construction or restoration shall not damage the value of property in any public or private drainage system without the property owner's consent.

b. Wetland construction or restoration shall improve water quality and provide aesthetic and habitat benefits.

c. Wetland construction or restoration under this section may be used to mitigate wetland removal by the landowner if it meets the requirements of federal agencies with wetland jurisdictional authorities. Where practicable, priority shall be given to mitigating wetland removal within the same United States geological survey hydrologic unit code 8 watershed, but a watershed confines shall not limit the use of duly authorized wetland mitigation banks.

5. The five-year goal of the conservation reserve enhancement program is the establishment of thirty-two thousand five hundred acres of wetlands.

2000 Acts, ch 1068, §5; 2000 Acts, ch 1232, §75; 2003 Acts, ch 108, §88

466.6 Water quality monitoring.

The department of natural resources shall operate water quality monitoring stations for the purpose of gathering information and data to establish benchmarks for water quality in this state.

2000 Acts, ch 1068, §6

466.7 Water quality protection program.

1. The department of agriculture and land stewardship shall implement, in conjunction with the federal government and other entities, a program that provides multiobjective resource protections for flood control, water quality, erosion control, and natural resource conservation.

2. The department of agriculture and land stewardship shall implement a statewide, voluntary farm management demonstration program to demonstrate the effectiveness and adaptability of emerging practices in agronomy that protect water resources and provide other environmental benefits. A demonstration program under this subsection may complement, but shall not duplicate, projects conducted by Iowa state university extension service. The demonstration program shall be designed to concentrate on management techniques in both the livestock and crop genres and shall be offered to farm operators through an educational setting and demonstration projects. The demonstration program shall be offered in conjunction with the community colleges, Iowa state university, and private farmer demonstrations. Continuing education units shall be offered. The educational program shall be offered at no cost to farm operators who file a schedule F with the internal revenue service and do not have permitted livestock facilities or are certified under a manure management plan.

3. The department of agriculture and land stewardship shall provide financial assistance for the establishment of permanent soil and water conservation practices.

4. The department of natural resources shall provide local watershed managers with geographic information system data for their use in developing, monitoring, and displaying results of their watershed work. The local watershed data shall be considered public records and are accessible to the public pursuant to chapter 22.

5. The department of natural resources shall develop a program that provides support to local volunteer management efforts to the different programs concerned with water quality. The department shall assist in coordinating and tracking of the volunteer component of these programs to increase efficiency and avoid duplication of efforts in water quality monitoring and watershed improvement.

6. The department of natural resources shall provide for activities supporting the analysis of water quality monitoring data for trends and for the preparation and presentation of data to the public.

7. The department of natural resources shall contract to assist its staff with the review of national pollutant discharge elimination system permits.

8. The department of natural resources shall expand floodplain protection education to better inform local officials that make decisions with regard to floodplain management.

9. The department of natural resources shall continue the establishment of an effective and efficient method of developing a total maximum daily load program, based on information gathered on other states' programs and investigation into alternative methods for satisfying the requirements.

2000 Acts, ch 1068, §7; 2001 Acts, ch 37, §1, 4

466.8 On-site wastewater systems assistance program.

The department of natural resources shall establish an on-site wastewater systems assistance program for the purpose of providing low-interest loans to homeowners residing outside the boundaries of a city for improving on-site wastewater disposal systems.

1. The environmental protection commission shall adopt rules for carrying out the program including but not limited to criteria for homeowner participation, the methods used to provide loans, and financing terms and limits.

2. The department may make and execute agreements with public or private entities, including lending institutions as defined in section 12.32, as required to administer the program.

3. Assistance provided to homeowners shall not be used to pay the nonfederal share of the cost of any wastewater system projects receiving grants under the federal Clean Water Act, 33 U.S.C. § 1381 – 1387.

4. The department shall report to the general assembly annually on the progress of the on-site wastewater systems assistance program.

2001 Acts, ch 37, §2, 4; 2001 Acts, ch 176, §69, 70

466.9 On-site wastewater systems assistance fund.

1. An on-site wastewater systems assistance fund is established as a separate fund in the state treasury under the control of the department. Moneys in the fund are appropriated to the department for the exclusive purpose of supporting and administering the on-site wastewater systems assistance program as established in section 466.8.

2. The fund shall consist of all of the following:

a. Moneys appropriated to the department by the general assembly for deposit in the fund or to carry out the purposes of the on-site wastewater systems assistance program.

b. Moneys provided to the department by the federal government to carry out the purpose of administering the programs, policies, and undertakings authorized in the federal Clean Water Act, 33 U.S.C. § 1381 – 1387.

c. Moneys collected by the department pursuant to loan agreements from homeowners receiving loans under the on-site wastewater systems assistance program.

d. Any other moneys obtained or accepted by the department for deposit in the fund.

3. a. The fund shall consist of the following accounts:

(1) The financing account which shall be used for the exclusive purpose of providing financing to homeowners residing outside the boundaries of a city with improving on-site wastewater systems under the on-site wastewater systems assistance program.

(2) The administration account which shall be used by the department to defray expenses associated with carrying out the on-site wastewater systems assistance program.

b. Of all moneys deposited into the fund each year, the department shall credit at least ninety-six percent of the moneys to the financing account and any remaining moneys to the administration account.

4. The moneys in the fund are not considered part of the general fund of the state, and in determining a general fund balance shall not be included in the general fund of the state. The moneys in the fund are not subject to section 8.33 and shall not be transferred, used, obligated, appropriated, or otherwise encumbered except as provided in this section. Notwithstanding section 12C.7, subsection 2, interest or earnings on moneys deposited in the fund shall be credited to the fund.

2001 Acts, ch 37, §3, 4