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## FISCAL UPDATE Article

Fiscal Services Division

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### STATE SOIL CONSERVATION AND WATER QUALITY COMMITTEE MEETING — MAY 2020

**Teleconference.** The State Soil Conservation and Water Quality Committee held a teleconference meeting on May 7, 2020. Kevin Pope, Vice Chairperson of the Committee, conducted the meeting.

**Department Updates.** The following updates were provided by employees from the Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (DALs):

- Bureau Chief Will Myers, Field Services Bureau, reported that eight Soil and Water Conservation Districts received over \$250,000 in grant funding from the National Association of Conservation Districts.
- Bureau Chief Vince Sitzmann, Mines and Minerals Bureau, reported that a federal grant was requested for FY 2021 to provide funding for three mine reclamation projects.
- Bureau Chief Jake Hansen, Water Resources Bureau, reported that the next Water Resources Coordinating Council meeting will be held on June 4, 2020, in Altoona. Mr. Hansen also reported there are 23 agriculture drainage wells that remain open and that 2 of those projects are completing the wetland restoration phase. These are located in Humboldt and Wright counties.
- Division Director Susan Kozak, Soil Conservation and Water Quality Division, reported that the majority of employees were working from home and that operations are running well. Ms. Kozak also reported that the DALs has implemented the [Iowa Resource Coordination Center](#) to assist producers in animal disposal or with other related issues. Producers can complete an online form or call the DALs at 515.725.1005 for assistance.
- The DALs applied for several Regional Conservation Partnership Program grants from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and has been awarded the following:
  - North Raccoon Partnership for Soil and Water, a \$25.8 million project with \$9.8 million from the USDA, \$8.3 million from the DALs, and \$7.7 million from other partners. Partners include the Iowa Soybean Association, the City of Des Moines, and agriculture retailers. The watershed approach will be applied to a high-profile watershed located in central Iowa. Practices will include no-till, cover crops, denitrifying bioreactors, saturated buffers, and wetland restoration.
  - Iowa Systems Approach to Conservation Drainage, a \$33.5 million project with \$10.0 million from the USDA, \$8.3 million from the DALs, and \$15.2 million from other partners. Partners include PepsiCo, Heartland Co-op, the Nature Conservancy, and Nutrient Ag Solutions. The project will demonstrate a systems approach for improved sustainability and profitability. The project supports the planting of 150,000 acres of cover crops and the installation of 50 bioreactors and saturated wetlands.
  - Turkey River Watershed Project, a \$6.9 million project with \$3.0 million from the USDA and \$3.9 million from the DALs. The DALs will deliver a comprehensive approach to reduce water quality degradation in the Turkey River Watershed.

**Partner Updates.** Other information provided during the meeting included:

- Executive Director John Whitaker, Conservation Districts of Iowa, brought up whether the annual conference should be held on August 10 and 11 in Ames, in relation to social distancing requirements

as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Committee members provided input and Whitaker said a final decision would be made in June as to whether the conference would be held.

- Nonpoint Source Coordinator Steve Hopkins, Department of Natural Resources (DNR), discussed online meetings that were held to discuss a study to develop a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) plan that would remove bacteria from Iowa lakes and beaches. The study would focus on Nine Eagles Lake, Hickory Grove Lake, and Clear Lake to see where bacteria comes from and how it can be reduced. The [draft plan](#) for this study is available on the DNR website.
- Water Quality Program Manager Jamie Benning, Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, explained that the Iowa Learning Farm is sponsoring weekly webinars on water quality, conservation, and other related areas. She also explained that the webinars were available to watch on [Iowa Learning Farms website](#).
- State Conservationist Kurt Simon, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), stated that the USDA is assisting producers with the disposal of animals that are not being slaughtered due to the closure of meat processing plants. As of May 7, 2020, there were 5,000 market hogs euthanized in Iowa. The [Coronavirus and USDA Assistance for Farmers](#) website provides information on several programs, including the Emergency Animal Mortality Management practice, which makes payments to swine producers based on the type of disposal. Prior to payment, a swine mortality certification from a veterinarian is required. Payments include:
  - Burial: \$74.28 per animal unit (\$89.14 for historically underserved producers)
  - Carcass disposal other than burial: \$111.53 per animal unit (\$191.20 for historically underserved producers)
  - Incineration: \$219.88 per animal unit (\$263.86 for historically underserved producers)
  - Disposal at landfill or render: \$0.05 per pound (\$0.06 for historically underserved producers)

**Next Meeting.** The annual tour that was scheduled for June has been canceled. The next meeting will be a teleconference meeting held on June 4, 2020.

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