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## FISCAL UPDATE Article

Fiscal Services Division

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### STATE SOIL CONSERVATION AND WATER QUALITY COMMITTEE MEETING — OCTOBER 2021

**Teleconference.** The State Soil Conservation and Water Quality [Committee](#) held a teleconference meeting on October 7, 2021.

**Updates.** Employees from the Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (DALs) and partners provided the following updates:

- DALs Bureau Chief Will Myers, Field Services Bureau, reported demand for Iowa Financial Incentives Programs (IFIP) remains strong with 35 Districts receiving approximately \$3.0 million through the fall supplemental. Over the past five years, the average waiting period for a conservation request through IFIP has been approximately two years for all districts. Districts with the highest demand, largely in southern Iowa, have had longer waiting periods.
- DALs Bureau Chief Vince Sitzmann, Mines and Mineral Bureau, reported that Congress has not yet reauthorized the Abandoned Mine Land (AML) program. The current federal legislation to reauthorize the program has been packaged with [HR 3684](#) (Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act). If the Bill passes, program funding is anticipated to increase from \$3.0 million annually to \$9.0 million annually for the next 15 years. If the Bill does not pass, program funding is anticipated to be reduced approximately 20.0% from the current level.
- DALs Division Director Susan Kozak, Soil Conservation and Water Quality Division, reported 550,000 acres have been obligated to various DALs cover crop programs.
- Executive Director John Whitaker, Conservation Districts of Iowa (CDI), reported the McKnight Foundation Midwest Climate and Energy program invited CDI to apply for funding. A mentoring program that matches commissioners with farmers interested in conservation practices is being discussed.
- Nonpoint Source Coordinator Steve Hopkins, Department of Natural Resources (DNR), reported the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approved the most recent grant proposal from the DNR. A nitrate sensor with a calibration error was discovered and corrected. Extremely high nitrate levels had been reported by the recently installed sensor at the Decorah Fish Hatchery. Real-time nitrate levels of various Iowa water sources can be viewed on the Department [website](#).
- Iowa State University Extension and Outreach promoted its Iowa Learning weekly webinars on water quality, conservation, and other related areas. Webinars are available to watch on the Iowa Learning Farms [website](#). The MacArthur Foundation has named Lisa Schulte Moore, professor of ecology and management at Iowa State University (ISU), a MacArthur Fellow. Schulte Moore is the first ISU faculty member to receive this prestigious award that identifies scientists, artists, entrepreneurs, and others who have demonstrated exceptional creativity and who show promise for important future advances. Her research primarily addresses the integration of native perennial prairie plants into agricultural systems.
- State Conservationist Jon Hubbert, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), highlighted new funding opportunities and four new Regional Conservation Partnership Program projects. The

new projects are: Turkey River Watershed Partnership, Iowa Systems Approach to Conservation Drainage, North Raccoon Soil and Water Outcomes, and Midwest Ag Water Quality Partnership.

**Next Meeting.** The next meeting will take place on November 4, 2021.

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