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## FISCAL UPDATE Article

Fiscal Services Division

November 5, 2021



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

**Teleconference.** The State Soil Conservation and Water Quality [Committee](#) held a teleconference meeting on November 4, 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 the Bureau is in the process of filling five vacancies for conservation assistants and conservation technicians. Interns for the summer of 2022 are also being recruited. The Bureau is working with Districts to determine each District's interest in hosting an intern for 2022.
- DALs Bureau Chief Vince Sitzmann, Mines and Mineral Bureau, reported construction started on the Dubuque lead mine subsidence emergency project. The Bureau has five active construction projects and four in the Preliminary/Final Design phase.
- DALs Bureau Chief Jake Hansen, Water Resources Bureau, reported the Bureau is in the process of hiring an additional environmental engineer to assist with wetland and edge-of-field practice design and construction observation. The Bureau will also be participating in the State of Iowa Partners meeting hosted by the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). This meeting gives agencies an opportunity to meet with leadership from the four USACE field offices serving Iowa (Rock Island, IL; Omaha, NE; St. Paul, MN; Kansas City, MO) to discuss current issues and potential collaboration efforts.
- DALs Division Director Susan Kozak, Soil Conservation and Water Quality Division, reported the Water Quality Initiative Grade Stabilization Pilot Program has been successful. The Program addresses agricultural land drainage and excessive nutrient capture in 21 target counties in southern Iowa, where installing traditional edge-of-field practices is not optimal. Projects in this Program have been obligated \$1.5 million. Funding for this calendar year has ended and field staff are looking for projects for next year. Close to \$500,000 has been expended and 10 projects have been completed.
- Executive Director John Whitaker, Conservation Districts of Iowa (CDI), reported a McKnight Foundation grant request for \$100,000 has been submitted, but has not yet been awarded. If awarded, a pilot mentoring program will be established using soil and water conservation district commissioners engaging in conservation farming practices as mentors to farmers interested in implementing conservation practices.
- Coordinator Steve Hopkins, Department of Natural Resources (DNR), reported the Lake Geode Restoration Project was completed. Restocking of the lake has begun, and will continue next spring.
- Iowa State University Extension and Outreach promoted its Iowa Learning field days and webinars on water quality, conservation, and other related areas. Field days and webinars are listed on the Iowa Learning Farms [website](#).
- Assistant State Conservationist Scott Cagle, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), reported the Emergency Watershed Protection Program has completed 52 of 53 agreements which obligated more than \$13.7 million for 2019 flood recovery. More than \$12.7 million has been expended on repairs. The 2020 derecho cleanup efforts generated 34 damage survey reports and allocated \$7.5 million for the removal of debris from streams and rivers. Seven agreements are in place and one has been completed.

**Next Meeting.** The next meeting will take place on December 2, 2021.

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