
FISCAL UPDATE Article

Fiscal Services Division

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WATER RESOURCES COORDINATING COUNCIL MEETING — DECEMBER 2021

December Meeting. The [Water Resources Coordinating Council](#) (WRCC) held a teleconference meeting on December 17, 2021.

Department of Transportation (DOT). Environmental Specialist Brandy Beavers, DOT, provided an update on the Interstate 74 Bridge over the Mississippi River. The new bridge has been completed and the old bridge will be torn down next summer. During the construction of the new bridge, more than 32,000 mussels were safely relocated.

Iowa Finance Authority (IFA). Chief Bonds Program Director Aaron Smith, IFA, provided updates on [SF 512](#) (Water Quality Act) funds and funds received from the [American Rescue Plan Act \(ARPA\) of 2021](#). The Authority has approximately \$6.4 million of awarded grants to distribute from SF 512 funds. Also, the Authority received \$75.0 million from American Rescue Plan funds for the [Water Infrastructure Fund](#) (WIF). The WIF will make investments to support innovative projects across the State with the goal of protecting, preserving, and restoring Iowa's water resources.

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Jon Hubbert, NRCS, provided information on Iowa NRCS FY 2021 accomplishments. The NRCS enrolled more than 300,000 acres in conservation programs in Iowa in FY 2021. More information can be found [here](#), specifically on the "At-a-Glance" document.

Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Water Quality Resource Coordinator Adam Schnieders, DNR, reported that the DNR is currently creating an action plan for a project that will test 57 public water systems for Per- and Polyfluorinated Substances (PFAS). Schnieders also noted the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is creating an award called [Nutrient Smart](#). The award will recognize wastewater treatment facilities for the adoption of enhanced nutrient management practices.

Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (DALs). Division Director Susan Kozak, Soil Conservation & Water Quality, DALs, reported the Field Services Bureau has more than 413,000 acres of cover crops obligated this year. The Cover Crop Cost-Share Program allows farmers to obtain cost-share funding from the DALs for planting cover crops through local Soil and Water Conservation Districts. First-time cover crop users are eligible for \$25 per acre, and continuing users are eligible for \$15 per acre for up to 160 acres. The [Crop Insurance Discount Program](#) (CIDP) is another option for producers to obtain cost-share funding for cover crops. The CIDP provides a \$5 per acre discount on federal crop insurance for producers who plant cover crops as long as the acres are not enrolled in other state or federal cost-share programs. The sign-up for the CIDP Program is now open. Producers cannot enroll the same acres in both programs. Kozak also reported the DALs received \$25.0 million of funds from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021 for the [Conservation Infrastructure Initiative](#).

Iowa Flood Center. Director Witold Krajewski, Iowa Flood Center, gave a presentation on the flood forecasting system developed for the Missouri River Basin. The system provides real-time estimates of potential floods in the Missouri River Basin.

Watershed Planning Advisory Council (WPAC). WPAC Chairman John Whitaker discussed the [2021 Annual Report](#) from the WPAC. The report recommendations to the General Assembly include:

- Increasing funding and full-time equivalent positions (FTEs) for watershed projects to a minimum of one watershed coordinator per [HUC-8 watershed](#).
- Funding consideration for projects that have demonstrated sufficient involvement of partners within a watershed project.
- Contemplating drainage system improvements in a way that incorporates water quality practices as a component of the overall project.
- Monitoring emerging issues, such as Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs), PFAS, and pharmaceuticals in wastewater in addition to the current monitoring of nutrients and bacteria.
- Studying the fee structure for water use permitting to reflect the value of water.
- Reevaluating and potentially reestablishing the [Leopold Center](#).
- Exploring the constraints to the development of water quality improvement projects, including improved collaboration with the Army Corps of Engineers to address expedient, efficient, and holistic drainage area construction practices.
- Prioritizing research that identifies relationships between soil health and carbon sequestration and co-benefits with water quality across different watersheds or regions in Iowa.
- Assessing the [Iowa Environmental Mesonet's](#) current and future uses, and what additional resources are needed to meet those uses.
- Updating the Iowa water plan to incorporate climate change-related sustainability of Iowa surface and groundwater resources for short-term and long-term management and usage.

Next Meeting. The next meeting will take place on March 10, 2022. The location is yet to be determined. For additional information, refer to the [WRCC](#) website.

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