



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF  
**AGRICULTURE &  
LAND STEWARDSHIP**

# **2024 Annual Report**

## AG DIVERSIFICATION & MARKET DEVELOPMENT BUREAU

**Overview:** The Ag Diversification and Market Development Bureau assists producers with marketing opportunities for diversified agricultural products, manages valued added food and renewable energy programs – as well as covering and reporting on commodity sales. Programs include an organic certification program; local food programs including Farm to School, the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, the Local Food Purchasing Assistance Program, and the Farmers Market Nutrition Program; administration of the state’s Renewable Fuel Infrastructure Program; livestock auction reports; and daily cash grain reports.

*Highlighted programs:*

**The Iowa Renewable Fuels Infrastructure Program (RFIP)** This grant incentives program helps retail operators of motor fuel dispensing sites – as well as biodiesel terminals - to convert their equipment to allow the expanded use of ethanol and biodiesel in Iowa. Utilizing new opportunities available through Iowa’s 2022 Biofuels Act, the 11-member board of directors awarded over \$4,000,000 in grants in fiscal year 2024.

**The Iowa Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP)** This program provides vouchers to lower-income seniors and participants in the state’s WIC Program for the purchase of locally grown fruits and vegetables at farmers’ markets and farmstands throughout Iowa. In 2023 the program raised the dollar amount available to Senior recipients from \$30 to \$50. Under a temporary waiver from USDA, we will also increase the benefit from \$30 to \$50 for WIC participants in 2025. In 2024, Iowa FMNP introduced a streamlined process for paying farmers. Instead of depositing vouchers at a bank, farmers now scan them via a smartphone app and receive direct deposits. This method is more efficient and reduces potential voucher misuse. From 2023 to 2024, the program saw an increase in food dollars utilized: a 4% increase in dollars utilized for the senior program and 2% increase within the WIC FMNP. Participating farmers averaged an additional \$1,800 in additional sales by redeeming FMNP vouchers in 2024.

**Organic Certification Program** The Organic Certification Program is accredited by the United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA)/National Organic Program (NOP) and has been since 2002, when the NOP was first implemented. The program staff works with some 300 clients in three certification scopes: organic crops, livestock production, and processing. In early 2024, the USDA’s new rulemaking, “Strengthening Organic Enforcement,” went into effect and the state program staff have been implementing the new rules into program policies.

**Local Food for Schools (LFS)** Through the Local Food for Schools Cooperative Agreement Program (LFS), Iowa has been awarded over \$2.1 million for purchases of Iowa foods for distribution to schools. This program will strengthen the food system for schools by helping to build a fair, competitive, and resilient local food chain and expanding local and regional markets with an emphasis on purchasing from historically under-served producers and processors. This program is funded through USDA’s Commodity Credit Corporation. The current program ends in February 2025; however, an announcement of additional funds has been made and additional information is anticipated soon. This program has served 165 schools and has spent \$2,029,291 on local food to date. This program is set to expire in May 2025; however, an announcement of additional funds has been made and additional information is anticipated soon. More than \$3,868,712 has been spent on food to date. Food distribution has occurred at more than 951 sites in 97 counties. Two hundred eighty-one producers/processors have recorded sales.

**Iowa Local Food Purchase Assistance Program (LFPA)** This statewide program was created to facilitate the purchase and distribution of Iowa grown and produced food for use by underserved communities. IDALS has an operating agreement with Iowa Valley RC&D and works with partners across the state to implement this program. This program funded at 5.6 million dollars over 3 years is expected to benefit at least 300 Iowa farmers with a reach of 2,000 food distribution sites through partnerships with 15 distributors, including food hubs, food banks and the Meskwaki Nation. The program is funded via the Commodity Credit Corporation Charter Act and the American Rescue Plan.

**Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBG)** This program allocates funds (approximately \$360,000 annually) each year to support Iowa's specialty crops. The funding will be distributed to support projects that raise awareness about, drive demand for, or create new markets benefiting Iowa's specialty crops. The grant dollars are made available through a partnership with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and are funded through the Farm Bill. Applications are available on our website in January each year.

**Iowa Farm to School Program** The Iowa Farm to School program links schools with Iowa farmers. In turn, participating farmers provide schools with fresh, minimally processed, Iowa-grown food for inclusion in school meals and snacks and offer ways for children to develop healthy eating habits. The program also often includes hands-on learning activities related to local agriculture.

## ANIMAL INDUSTRY DIVISION

**Overview:** The Animal Industry Division oversees multiple programs to protect animal health and the public, plus the licensing of veterinarians and veterinary technicians. This includes the licensing, inspection and regulation of commercial establishments (animal breeders, shelters, and kennels), auction markets, and dealers. The Division also regulates the importation of animals and animal movement within the state — as well as the investigation, control, and eradication of diseases.

**Foreign Animal Disease** The \$15.8 billion Iowa animal industry has seen significant growth in recent years. The industry employs thousands of Iowans and adds value to Iowa grown corn and soybeans. The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship Animal Industry Division supports this important and growing industry. Iowa's livestock farmers are always finding new ways to responsibly raise their animals while guarding against devastating diseases. They do this because they want to ensure a nutritious and affordable protein-packed product can be on a family's dinner table. We have many dedicated professionals in the department working with our industry partners and farmers to protect animal health and ensure that we are prepared for any foreign animal disease threat. Whether it is Foot and Mouth Disease or African Swine Fever or Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza, we must be prepared. Unfortunately, Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) hit our state again this year, affecting our turkey farmers and egg producers. In 2024, 3 farms were impacted (as of December 2; compared to 21 in 2023, and 30 in 2022, far fewer than the 77 farms in 2015. Additionally, 13 cases of HPAI were confirmed in

dairy cattle herds in 2024. Many lessons were learned from 2015 and in working with affected producers and the United States Department of Agriculture, we implemented many improvements to our coordinated response. Moving ahead, we will continue to refine and reassess our response to ensure we are prepared to confront the potential threats ahead.

Department and Division leaders participate in various national working groups with industry partners and the USDA.

## CHOOSE IOWA

### CHOOSE IOWA

**Overview:** Iowa farmers have a longstanding tradition of producing high-quality food and Choose Iowa is about connecting consumers to the great products Iowans are growing, raising, processing, and marketing every day. Choose Iowa is the state's signature brand that promotes Iowa grown, Iowa raised, or Iowa made foods and beverages. The program is intended to increase the visibility of Iowa food and beverages that begin as Iowa agricultural products to meet the growing consumer demand for local foods. The Choose Iowa brand celebrated its first year as it returned to the Iowa State Fair with several features including daily presentations in The Kitchen, hosting the Best Choose Iowa Fair Food Contest and sponsoring the Farm to Fair Dinner. Choose Iowa continues to sponsor a special award in the Iowa Restaurant Association's Culinary Competition for the Most Innovative Feature of a Choose Iowa Ingredient from an Iowa Farm—this year the award was won by Doolittle Farm's Aaron Holt, a Choose Iowa member. Members are signing up and recruitment efforts are underway through the winter months at numerous industry association annual meetings and conferences.

#### *Highlighted program:*

#### **Choose Iowa Value-Added Grant Program and Dairy Innovation Grant Program**

The Choose Iowa Grant Programs exist to identify, evaluate, and financially support programs and services that add value to agricultural products, enable new technologies, and support alternative marketing strategies. For Value-Added Grants, cost-share dollars leveraged additional private investment in 2024 as the available \$463,000 in funding was awarded to 26 projects with combined budgets totaling over \$1.9 million including on-farm processing capabilities and capacity, refrigerated delivery vehicles, on-farm stores and commercial kitchens, direct-to-consumer meat sales, and many others. The newly introduced Dairy Innovation Grants, which can focus on either on-farm dairy processing or labor-saving technology, saw grant requests far exceed the available funding. Eligible grant requests totaling \$2,670,191.50 were received from 50 dairies. After judging, 20 Iowa dairies were awarded grants in total of \$750,000 which will leverage an overall investment of \$2,211,000.24.

## CLIMATOLOGY BUREAU

**Overview:** The primary emphasis of the Bureau is the collection, quality control, summation, and archiving of Iowa weather records. The weather section of the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) “Iowa Crops and Weather” is written by the State Climatologist each week from the beginning of April through the end of November. The Bureau issues a summary of the state’s weather and climate within the first week of the month in the “Iowa Preliminary Monthly Weather Summary.” A final version of this report is available after quality control is completed. The State Climatologist provides expert weather and climate testimony in court cases and certifies weather observations for public and private litigation. Additional responsibilities include providing weather and climate data to state and federal agencies including the Iowa DNR and USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA).

The Climatology Bureau also provides input each week to the U.S. Drought Monitor and offers detailed weather records to support pesticide drift investigations conducted by the Department’s Pesticide Bureau. The *Iowa Drought Plan*, which was finished in early 2023, gives the State Climatologist additional responsibilities as the State Drought Coordinator.

## COMMERCIAL FEED AND FERTILIZER BUREAU

**Overview:** The Commercial Feed and Fertilizer Bureau licenses feed mills and commercial feed manufacturing facilities. This bureau also registers pet foods, collects commercial feed tonnage fees, inspects medicated feed in accordance with Food and Drug Administration (FDA) rules and regulations and responds to consumer complaints related to feed. Industry cooperates with this bureau to obtain licenses and register fertilizer plants and products. Additionally, the Bureau collects, compiles, and distributes data on plant food consumption. Other duties include collecting commercial fertilizer tonnage fees, groundwater protection fees and regulating all fertilizer and soil conditioner installations in the state. The bureau oversees both feed and fertilizer-related matters in addition to being responsible for regulating, licensing and inspecting limestone quarries and egg handlers.

### *Highlighted program:*

**Feed contract** The State of Iowa is under contract with FDA to perform eight (8) various types of feed inspections. This contract also includes collection of various types of feed samples. This contract allows the Bureau of Feed and Fertilizer to fulfill the Iowa Code requirements regarding inspections and samples with some of the costs covered by the FDA.

## DAIRY PRODUCTS CONTROL BUREAU

**Overview:** The Dairy Products Control Bureau (DPCB) administers programs to protect the health of the public and the dairy industry's ability to participate in interstate commerce. The Dairy Products Control Bureau oversees permitting for Grade A and Manufacturing Milk plants, Receiving-Transfer Stations, Wash Stations, and Single Service facilities as well as Grade A and B farms. The DPCB oversees licensing for Hauler/graders, Intake/Receivers, Samplers, Field Representatives and Milk Truck/Tankers per Iowa Code and rules. The DPCB also administers programs for Certified Industry Resellers and Certified Industry Tanker Inspectors. Additionally, the DPCB conducts surveillance work as part of the State-PHS/FDA Cooperative Agreement program of National Conference on Interstate Milk Shipments, a program participated in by all fifty (50) States, the District of Columbia, and U.S. Trust Territories.

*Highlighted program:*

**Dairy Entity Inspections:** The DPCB Field Staff inspects dairy farms a minimum of twice per year, dairy plants a minimum of four times per year, Hauler/graders biannually, and milk truck/tankers once per year. Additionally, staff perform thousands of pasteurization inspections, equipment tests, and product samplings each year.

## ENTOMOLOGY AND PLANT SCIENCE BUREAU

**Overview:** The Entomology & Plant Science Bureau is responsible for implementing laws on pests, weeds, seed, and bees. Duties include listing plants, insects, and disease pests and carrying out control, annually inspecting nursery stock (hardy woody perennials) and inspecting and certifying plant products destined for sale outside of Iowa, including foreign destination (phytosanitary certificates). The Bureau is also charged with establishing the labeling requirements for agricultural and vegetable seeds, establishing the required tests for sale of agricultural and vegetable seed, and issuing seed permits.

## FIELD SERVICES (SOIL AND WATER) BUREAU

**Overview:** The Field Services Bureau provides technical support for Iowa's 100 Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) and the 500 elected SWCD commissioners. Staff within the bureau work very closely with many partners. However, the core partnership between the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Conservation Districts of Iowa (CDI) is the foundation for the success of this bureau's programs. The cooperative working agreement has provisions in which NRCS provides office space, employee training, equipment, and vehicles for field staff employees and SWCD employees. In exchange, staff assist with federal workload implementation. The Bureau also administers cost share programs and low and no-interest loan programs.

*Highlighted program:*

**Soil Conservation Cost Share Program**

*Report included at the end of document.*

## GRAIN WAREHOUSE BUREAU

**Overview:** The Grain Warehouse Bureau licenses and regulates warehouse operators and grain dealers. The Bureau regulates warehouse operators to protect individuals and businesses who hold title to the grain stored in the warehouse operator's facilities. The Bureau enforces laws to protect producers who sell grain to licensed grain dealers. Grain inventories are checked for quantity and quality to verify that they are sufficient to cover the grain obligations on the licensee's records as required by law.

The Bureau is also charged with the administration of the Grain Indemnity Fund. This fund provides coverage for grain stored in a warehouse licensed by the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship. The fund also provides coverage for grain sold and delivered to a grain dealer licensed by the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship. The coverage is 90% of a loss up to a maximum of \$300,000 per claimant. Grain sold on credit sale contracts is not covered. Beginning September 1, 2023, the Bureau began collecting fees to replenish the fund after three recent warehouse/grain dealer failures. Fees are assessed to Iowa licensed warehouses and grain dealers. The per-bushel assessment may be passed on to the seller. The fees will be in effect one full year from implementation and will continue until the fund reaches the level outlined by legislation.

The Bureau also completes audits for the corn and soybean promotion boards. These audits certify that the correct assessments are received from the producer and then correctly paid to the respective corn and soybean promotion boards.

## IOWA LABORATORY BUREAU

**Overview:** The Iowa Laboratory Bureau works on issues related to food safety, economic assurance, and the environment. Testing focuses on label guarantees, pathogens in food products, and misuse of agricultural products. There are several laboratories within the Laboratory Bureau that focus on specific products and work closely with other bureaus. Inspectors from the Dairy Products Control Bureau, the Meat and Poultry Inspection Bureau, the Pesticide Bureau, and the Commercial Feed and Fertilizer Bureau collect and submit samples for testing. Samples entering the Laboratory are considered official samples and viable for regulatory actions. The Laboratory is strictly regulatory in nature and does not perform testing for the general public or for industry on a fee-basis. The laboratories use verified methods and participate in accreditation testing and/or "check sample" programs to verify that methods, staff, and equipment are performing well. When the testing is completed, the results are provided to the associated bureau.

*Highlighted program:*

### **CIS Program**

The Iowa Laboratory Bureau, along with the Meat and Poultry Inspection Bureau, maintains a Cooperative Interstate Shipment (CIS) agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS). The CIS program allows small, state-inspected meat and poultry processing facilities to broaden their customer base by allowing them to ship products outside of Iowa. The role of the laboratory in this program is to provide laboratory testing "same as" federal FSIS laboratories. In addition to audits from FSIS, the laboratory must also maintain ISO 17025 accreditation for all microbiological and chemical food testing methods. Iowa is one of ten states to be a part of the CIS program.

## **MEAT AND POULTRY INSPECTIONS BUREAU**

**Overview:** The Iowa Meat and Poultry Inspections Bureau assures a safe, wholesome, and truthfully labeled supply of meat and poultry products from the establishments under the Bureau's inspection. The Bureau enforces, Iowa Code Chapter 189A, the Meat and Poultry Inspection Act. This Chapter's objective is "to provide for meat and poultry products inspection programs that will impose and enforce requirements with respect to intrastate operations and commerce that are at least equal to those imposed and enforced under the Federal Meat Inspection Act and the Federal Poultry Products Inspection Act". To this end, the Bureau has adopted Federal meat and poultry inspection regulations for the administration of the mandatory inspection requirements in the state inspected establishments. USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) completes ongoing oversight through self-assessments and on-site reviews to ensure that the state program provides a system of inspection that is at least "equal to" the provisions found in the Federal Acts. The Bureau also cooperates with industry, academia, government, and the citizens of Iowa to enhance their knowledge of safe food production and handling practices at all levels in the food chain.

*Highlighted program:*

**Cooperative Interstate Shipment Program** In 2019, the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship established a Cooperative Interstate Shipment (CIS) Agreement with USDA-FSIS. The CIS program allows participating state-inspected meat and poultry establishments with less than 25 full-time employees to ship products across state lines. There are now a total of 31 CIS establishments. Overall, there are 158 total establishments (72 official-inspected, 86 custom inspected).

## **MINES AND MINERALS BUREAU**

**Overview:** The Mines and Minerals Bureau is responsible for licensing mining operations in the state, enforcing appropriate environmental regulations during extraction and reclamation, and performing reclamation of coal mine locations. The goal is to ensure that extraction occurs in a manner that is environmentally safe and restores the landscape following mining to appropriate standards of reclamation and soil productivity.

*Highlighted program:*

**Iowa Minerals Program:** In the State of Iowa, there exists a robust mineral industry, comprising of just under 1,000 registered sites operated by 178 licensed companies, across 96 counties. These sites yield essential minerals such as limestone, sand, gravel, gypsum, and clay, with the limestone sector contributing significantly to the construction industry by producing an impressive 33-35 million tons of stone annually.

Beginning in 1968, to maintain the integrity of these operations, the Division of Soil Conservation and Water Quality licenses each mining company, ensuring compliance with Iowa Code Chapter 208. A dedicated inspector oversees all sites statewide, guaranteeing adherence to standards and confirming the adequacy of reclamation bonds in case of operator default. The Division conducts inspections prompted by citizen inquiries or complaints, striving to address concerns promptly.

Operators must observe specified setbacks from buildings, dwellings, property lines and public rights-of-way. They must also employ measures to stabilize and vegetate overburden piles, preventing any offsite damage resulting from mining activities. Moreover, final reclamation requires the removal of debris, with disturbed overburden requiring grading, smoothing and vegetation before the bond release is sanctioned.

Notably, air and water quality concerns at these mine sites fall under the purview of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, while mine safety and health standards have been the exclusive jurisdiction of the federal government since 1973. Matters related to blasting and site location, including zoning regulations rest within the jurisdiction of local county authorities and are beyond the scope of the Divisions authority. This comprehensive framework ensures the responsible and sustainable management of Iowa's mineral resources, fostering both economic growth and environmental conservation.

## **PESTICIDE BUREAU**

**Overview:** The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship Pesticide Bureau facilitates the judicious sale, distribution, and use of pesticides through state regulatory programs, education, and outreach to protect human health and the environment and to ensure access to safe, effective pest control measures. Regulatory programs administered by the Bureau are mandated under the Pesticide Act of Iowa found in Chapter 206, Iowa Code, including primary enforcement responsibility for pesticide use/misuse violations under sections 26 and 27 of the Federal Insecticide, Rodenticide and Fungicide Act (FIFRA, 7 U.S.C. §136). Established regulatory programs involve a state/federal/public relationship to meet federal requirements for enforcement and applicator certification programs (7 U.S.C. §136). These programs are supported by state and federal funds through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

*Highlighted program:*

## Pesticide product registration

The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship Pesticide Bureau registers pesticide products for sale and distribution in a manner to safeguard human health, plants, crops, food, feed, water and other environmental resources of Iowa's citizens, farmers, and industry workers.

## Certifications and licensing

The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship Pesticide Bureau oversees licensing for pesticide dealers, commercial pesticide applicators, aerial applicators, and registration for consultants. The Pesticide Bureau also collaborates with Iowa State University Extension, which offers private and commercial applicator certification training through the University.

The Pesticide Bureau is also charged with crafting the joint State of Iowa-EPA plan for pesticide compliance. Certification exams and review of training programs offered by Iowa State University Extension and industry also fall within the purview of the Pesticide Bureau.

The Pesticide Bureau is responsible for responding to complaints and helping protect citizens from misuse of pesticide products. In addition, education and testing on the safe use of pesticides is administered to all licensed pesticide applicators in conjunction with Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. The Department's pesticide investigator gathers information by providing notification of inspection, conducting interviews, obtaining statements, reviewing application records and pesticide labels, taking photographs and making on site assessments. The information gathered helps document whether a violation of state and/or federal pesticide law occurred.

## WATER RESOURCES BUREAU

**Overview:** The Water Resources Bureau is responsible for implementation of several programs and initiatives, including support for special projects, wetlands and water quality improvement initiatives, watershed planning and projects, agricultural drainage well closures, and programs that are not explicitly carried out through field offices or Iowa Financial Incentives cost-share. Much of the current work of the bureau is connected to the Water Quality Initiative and a series of state-federal partnerships. Additionally, Water Resources Bureau staff serve on various intergovernmental working groups and provide technical and administrative support to the Iowa Water Quality Initiative (WQI).

*Highlighted programs:*

**Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program** The Iowa Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) was initiated in 2001 and is a joint effort of the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship and the USDA Farm Service Agency to protect Iowa drinking water and reduce hypoxia in the Gulf of Mexico. It is a highly targeted water quality program focusing on the reduction of nitrate loads to surface waters through the restoration of strategically located and designed wetlands that intercept tile-drainage water from upper-lying cropland. Research and monitoring by Iowa State University has shown that CREP wetlands remove 40-90% of the nitrate in tile-drainage water. In addition, these wetlands provide high quality wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities.

***Report included at the end of document.***

## **WEIGHTS AND MEASURES BUREAU**

**Overview:** This Bureau inspects and licenses for commercial use all weights and measures or weighing and measuring devices, which includes many consumer-facing devices used to measure everything from petroleum products (e.g., fuel pumps) to food (e.g., commercial food scales). Additionally, this bureau conducts petroleum product sampling and testing, tests and certifies antifreeze, and conducts random package and labeling inspections of products offered for sale.

The Weights and Measures Bureau registers and licenses all service agencies and people who service or repair commercial measuring devices and approves blueprints for new scale installations. The Bureau follows the rules and regulations of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) and uses weights and measures standards that are traceable to NIST. The Bureau facilitates increased production and consumption of products made from Iowa's agricultural commodities by encouraging the production and use of renewable fuels and coproducts.

***Highlighted program:***

**Fuel Pump Inspections** Iowa currently has over 53,000 fuel meters, which is up from 39,811 meters in 2016. During such inspections, experts examine the functionality of pumps to ensure that the display readings consumers view correspond accurately with the quantity of product actually dispensed. Inspectors also examine the technical and physical integrity of pump components. Additionally, pump examiners have been briefed on how to look for credit card “skimmers,” which are devices thieves use to steal personal information from unsuspecting customers. Local law enforcement partners with inspectors and investigates if fuel pump payment system tampering is suspected. Have also started the inspection of Electric Vehicle charging stations. There are 423 EV charging stations with 1,700 meters to test.

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

# ACCELERATING IOWA'S SOIL CONSERVATION AND WATER QUALITY PROGRESS



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF  
AGRICULTURE &  
LAND STEWARDSHIP

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## UPDATE FROM SECRETARY MIKE NAIG

2023 was a milestone year for conservation and water quality in Iowa. Not only did we recognize 10 years of the state's Nutrient Reduction Strategy and 50 years of cost-share through the Iowa Financial Incentives Program, but we also set yet another record for conservation implementation in the state. More Iowans than ever are saying "Yes" to conservation.

Department-wide, our programs continue to see record utilization - in cost-share dollars invested, dollars leveraged, and in total practices implemented. We've gone from approximately 10,000 acres of cover crops statewide a decade ago to nearly 4 million today. We've completed 133 wetlands and have dozens of additional sites in the design process as we head toward our goal of building 30 per year. We invested in 108 urban projects, including 14 this year, demonstrating that conservation can be accomplished in communities big and small. We've built hundreds of saturated buffers and bioreactors through our innovative and highly efficient "batch and build" model, which is also now being adopted for use by other states. With eight active "batch and build" agreements in place and more in development, there's ample room for growth. We launched 13 new or expanded Water Quality Initiative projects in targeted watersheds in 2023 with the help of more than 350 public and private partners. This work is unquestionably making a difference.

This success would not be possible without the strong and ongoing funding support from Governor Reynolds and the Legislature. I am very thankful for this leadership and commitment. Because of our trailblazing approach - from our Nutrient Reduction Strategy to dedicated funding sources to practice implementation models - our innovative work is now serving as a blueprint for other states.

We know that positive changes to the land will lead to more positive impacts to our water. And even though Iowa State University's dashboard measurements show that we are making progress towards the goals of the Nutrient Reduction Strategy, we are far from satisfied. We want to push further every year, continually recruiting more farmers, landowners and partners. Conservation records exist to be broken and that's what we intend to keep doing. We've come a long way, yet we still have a long way to go.

Iowa's economy depends on agriculture and agriculture depends on our natural resources. Because of many who are continually championing these efforts, we are building a thriving culture of conservation in this state. Without question, the investments we are making, the partnerships we are forming, the practices we are implementing, and the water quality momentum we are accelerating will benefit not just the Iowans of today but the generations of Iowans yet to come.




## WATER QUALITY & SOIL CONSERVATION HIGHLIGHTS

**3.8M** COVER CROP ACRES STATEWIDE  
(\*2022 INREC SURVEY)

**286** SATURATED BUFFERS AND  
BIOREACTORS COMPLETED

**\$23.2M** STATE COST-SHARE  
INVESTMENT

**300+** SATURATED BUFFERS AND  
BIOREACTORS IN DEVELOPMENT

**\$43.2M** ESTIMATED FARMER AND OTHER  
PARTNER CONTRIBUTIONS

**133** WETLANDS  
COMPLETED

**6,000+** FARMERS AND LANDOWNERS  
PARTICIPATING IN DEPARTMENT PROGRAMS

**60+** WETLANDS IN  
DEVELOPMENT

# ANOTHER RECORD YEAR FOR CONSERVATION

The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, working with Iowa’s 100 Soil and Water Conservation Districts, USDA-NRCS, and many other partners, once again shattered a record for conservation and water quality practice adoption within Iowa during FY2023. While we are far from satisfied with our results and we have much more work to do, we are unquestionably making water quality and soil conservation progress. The acceleration of this important work will only continue to build as more farmers, landowners, partners, practices, people and resources are added in the years and decades ahead.

## RECORD CONSERVATION COST SHARE IN FY2023

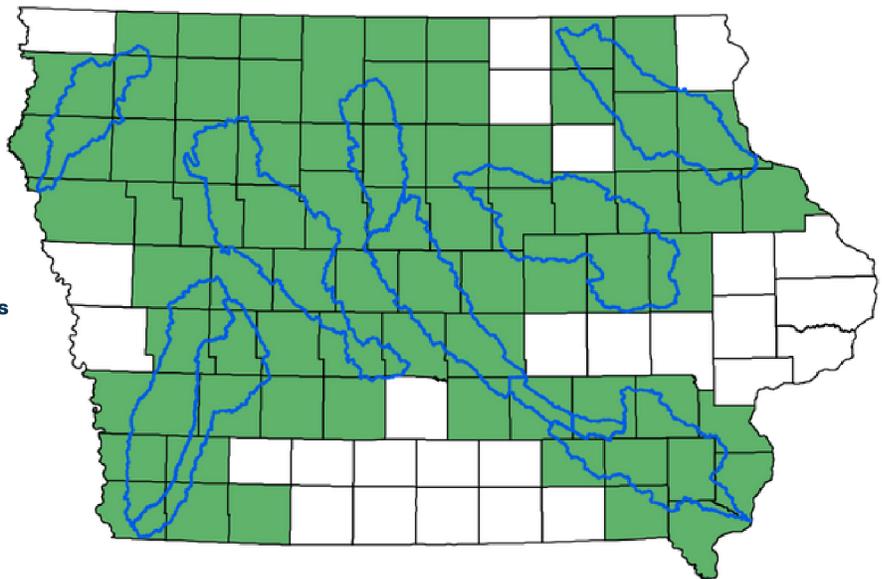
The following summary includes all Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship cost-share programs but excludes edge-of-field practices and wetlands.

- \$23.2M State Cost-Share Contributions
- \$43.2M Estimated Farmer and Other Partner Contributions
- 6,000+ Farmers and Landowners Participated in FY2023

## WQI PROJECT AREAS

Though we target much of our water quality and soil conservation investments into priority watersheds, impactful work is happening and making a difference across the state.

-  Priority HUC-8 Watersheds
-  Counties with existing WQI projects



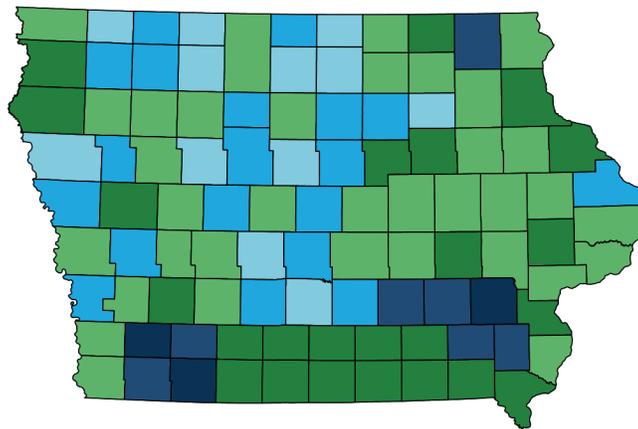
## LEVERAGING STATE FUNDS

EPA Gulf of Mexico	NRCS Mississippi River Basin	NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Programs	Private/Non- Government Organizations	Conservation Infrastructure Program
<b>\$3.3M</b>	<b>\$20.7M</b>	<b>\$142.4M</b>	<b>\$963,600</b>	<b>\$25M</b>

*Note: Summary is the total amount received since the start of the WQI and directly tied to WQI activities. Many of these projects are multi-year and are in various stages of their project term. These totals do not include investments made by individual farmers or landowners.*

# INCENTIVES FOR CONSERVATION ADOPTION PROVIDED TO IOWA FARMERS AND LANDOWNERS

Diverse landforms across Iowa directly affect the cost and type of conservation practices best suited for each field and impact the funding each county needs and receives.



## FY2023 COST-SHARE DOLLARS EXPENDED BY DISTRICT

- < \$50,000
- \$50,000 - \$100,000
- \$100,000 - \$250,000
- \$250,000 - \$500,000
- \$500,000 - \$750,000
- \$750,000 +

## PERMANENT STRUCTURES FUND ONGOING BENEFITS

## TONS OF SOIL SAVED PER YEAR

<b>497</b> TERRACE PROJECTS, COVERING 1,271,508 FEET	<b>32,692</b>
<b>122</b> GRADE STABILIZATION STRUCTURE PROJECTS	<b>21,884</b>
<b>92</b> WATER AND SEDIMENT CONTROL BASIN PROJECTS	<b>5,819</b>
<b>121</b> GRASSED WATERWAY PROJECTS	<b>6,386</b>

## PRACTICE EXAMPLES



TERRACES



COVER CROPS



GRASSED WATERWAYS



WATER AND SEDIMENT CONTROL BASINS



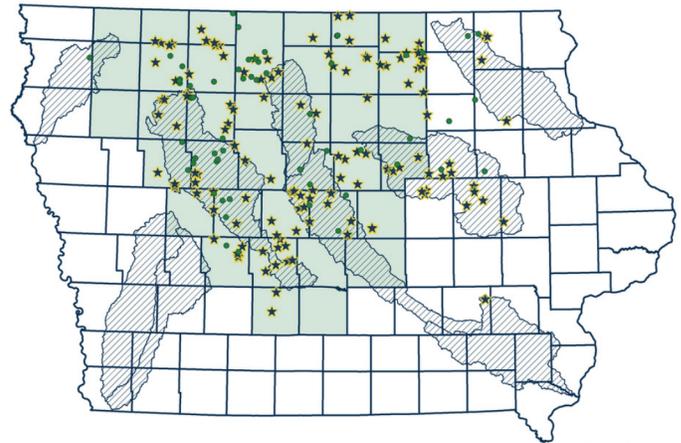
GRADE STABILIZATION STRUCTURES

## HOW COST SHARE WORKS

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
Legislature appropriates funding	Department allocates funds to Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD)	Farmers and landowners apply for cost share at SWCD offices	SWCD Commissioners approve cost share applications	Local contractors install conservation practices	Conservation practices improve soil health and water quality

# WATER QUALITY WETLANDS

Water quality wetlands do an excellent job of filtering water before it reaches our rivers, lakes and streams. However, these beautiful additions to our landscape also provide important habitat for wildlife. Research and ongoing monitoring by Iowa State University has demonstrated that strategically sited and designed nutrient reduction wetlands remove up to 90% of nitrates from cropland drainage waters, providing a high return on investment for this efficient and effective permanent practice. In 2023, the Department announced an expanded partnership with Ducks Unlimited and is working with other partners to accelerate the construction of even more wetlands going forward. To date, 133 wetlands have been built with dozens more in the design process as we head toward our goal of building 30 per year.



- ★ COMPLETE (133)
- IN PROGRESS (59)
- ▨ PRIORITY HUC8 WATERSHEDS
- CREP-ELIGIBLE COUNTIES

**133**

WATER QUALITY WETLANDS HAVE BEEN CONSTRUCTED

**1.8M+**

POUNDS OF NITROGEN REMOVED FROM THE WETLANDS ANNUALLY

**\$0.27/lb.**

AVERAGE N-REMOVAL COST OF NUTRIENT REDUCING WETLANDS

**137,778**

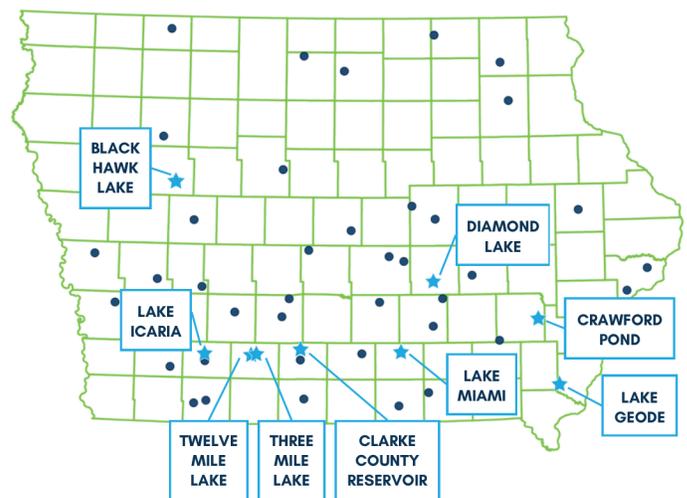
EST. TONS OF NITRATES WILL BE REMOVED OVER THEIR LIFETIMES

**1,359**

ACRES OF WETLAND PROTECTING A COMBINED 158,869 ACRES OF WATERSHED

# PUBLICLY OWNED LAKES

Iowa's many public lakes are key assets to our state, and we want to ensure that Iowans can enjoy these beautiful attractions for generations to come. This program, which is jointly administered by the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, provides cost-share funding to landowners for conservation practices on private land within watersheds above publicly owned lakes and reservoirs. Eligible practices include soil conservation and water quality practices that reduce nutrient loss and sediment delivery to Iowa's public lakes. These resources complement additional efforts by the agencies and their public and private partners to enhance and protect water quality in Iowa lakes and other surface waters. Each year, a minimum of five percent of the appropriation to the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship for soil conservation cost share is targeted for protecting the water quality of publicly owned lakes in Iowa.



- FY 2006 - 2022 PROJECTS
- ★ FY 2023 PROJECTS

# INNOVATIVE “BATCH AND BUILD” MODEL RAMPS UP

The “Batch and Build” model modernizes and streamlines the project management process by installing batches of edge-of-field conservation practices on multiple farms at once, therefore allowing a faster acceleration of water quality progress. The model is used to install bioreactors and saturated buffers, which filter and denitrify water as it leaves the farm field and before it enters our waterways.

- **8** active Batch and Build agreements in place, installing practices in **15** different counties.
- **5** more Batch and Build agreements in planning stages with local partners.



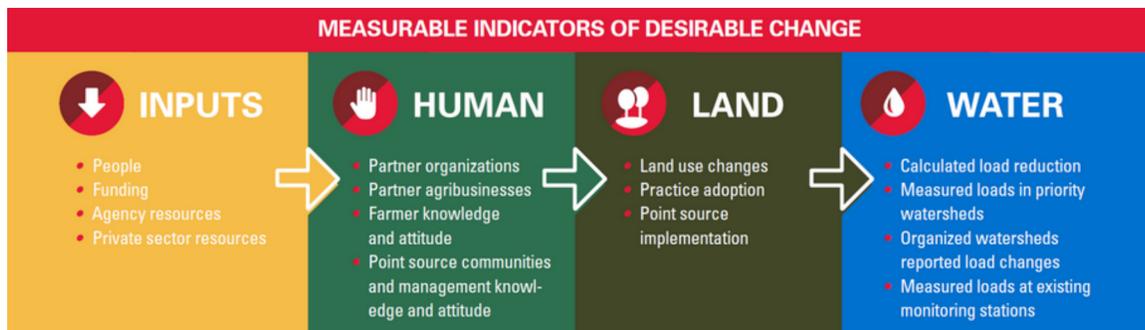
Saturated buffer in Cedar Creek

## COUNTY PARTICIPATION BY YEAR



## PARTNERS IN MEASURING PROGRESS

In 2021, the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, and Iowa State University launched an online dashboard to improve the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy’s reporting process. The online dashboard uses visual reporting tools, including charts, graphs and maps to share the data. The online dashboard is updated regularly as data is collected from a variety of sources and partners. Each update focuses on one of the “measurable indicators of desirable change” – inputs, human, land and water – that guide the Nutrient Reduction Strategy. The online dashboard is available at [nrstracking.cals.iastate.edu](http://nrstracking.cals.iastate.edu).



*The Logic Model of the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy, which is guided by measurable indicators of desirable change.*

# URBAN CONSERVATION SURPASSES 100 PROJECTS STATEWIDE

**WHAT IS URBAN CONSERVATION?** Whether you live in an urban, suburban or rural area, all Iowans have an important role in protecting and improving our state’s water quality.

The Department provides financial and technical assistance to communities and organizations implementing urban water quality practices. To receive state funding, urban water quality projects must include education and outreach components and involve local partners. These community-based projects raise awareness about new stormwater management methods and encourage others to adopt similar infrastructure-based practices to improve water quality. Urban conservation projects include water quality practices like bioretention cells, bioswales, native plantings, permeable pavers, rain gardens, soil quality restoration, wetlands and many other proven practices. These practices help to slow the flow of water, which helps to reduce downstream erosion and flood risk, by capturing stormwater from impervious surfaces to reduce pollutants such as sediment and nutrients before it drains to a water source.

## URBAN CONSERVATION SNAPSHOT

	PROJECTS	ALLOCATED IN WQI FUNDS	LEVERAGED FROM APPLICANTS AND PARTNERS
<b>IN 2023</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>\$2.2M</b>	<b>\$10.3M</b>
<b>SINCE 2015</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>\$10.3M</b>	<b>\$39.8M</b>

### SUCCESS IN WAUKON

The City of Waukon used WQI urban conservation funding to construct a stormwater wetland that treats runoff from 61 acres above the city park. The wetland treats nearly 850,000 gallons of stormwater and reduces the flow rate of the water after a storm event. The wetland was just one phase of a larger project that included the installation of a bioretention cell and permeable pavers, which treats stormwater from nine acres. These practices protect an additional 40,000 gallons of water. Native prairie species were also planted on over eight acres to help filter stormwater and provide habitat for wildlife and pollinators.



*Stormwater wetland and bioretention cell in Waukon*



*Permeable pavers and a bioretention cell in Waukee*

### SUCCESS IN WAUKEE

The City of Waukee incorporated bioretention cells and permeable pavers into the new parking lot for the city library. The bioretention cells were placed in the islands of the parking and around the building. The pavers were installed in the parking spaces of the lot to capture water and these practices treat 150,000 gallons of water from eight acres. There is an additional 20 acres that drains into a wet pond adjacent to the library parking lot. The pond stores over 1 million gallons of stormwater and slows down the flow of water before it enters nearby Sugar Creek. Signage was placed near the practices and inside the library to educate visitors about stormwater management techniques.

# CATTLE AND CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP PROJECT EXPANDS

A successful Water Quality Initiative project that started in Taylor and Page counties expanded in 2023 into five more western Iowa counties, including Carroll, Guthrie, Cherokee, Ida and Woodbury.

The Department and other partners work with farmers and landowners by using precision ag tools to identify, build and expand opportunities for forage-based crops where row crops are less profitable. Assistance is provided to cattle producers on an individual basis to evaluate their operations and goals on a sub-field level and to identify the best opportunities to target conservation practices. Goals and practice priorities include grazing and hay land planting, installing grade stabilization structures that incorporate watering systems, promoting extended crop rotations, incorporating the use of cover crops in livestock operations, and engaging with new and beginning farmers.

Since 2016, when the initial project launched, more than 62,500 acres of cover crops have been planted, 5,600 acres of cropland have been converted to forage-based systems, and 32 grade stabilization structures have been constructed.

The project combines \$10.8 million in funding from both state (Water Quality Initiative) and federal (RCPP) sources. Additional partners include the Cherokee, Ida, Woodbury, Carroll and Guthrie County Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Cherokee and Carroll County Cattlemen, Iowa Cattlemen's Association, Iowa Beef Industry Council, Coalition to Support Iowa's Farmers and Iowa State University.

The project reinforces that cattle and conservation make for a great combination and that this innovative model is scalable and can be replicated statewide. Farmers and landowners are proving that they can conserve and protect our valuable natural resources while also keeping Iowa's farmland working in ways that keep family farms productive.



*Grazing and hay land planting, grade stabilization structures, and cover crops in Taylor and Page counties.*