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Watershed Improvement Review Board
Report to the Joint Agriculture and Natural Resources Appropriations
Subcommittee
Tuesday, February 17,2009

History

The Watershed Improvement Review Board (WIRB) and the Watershed Improvement Fund were created by the Iowa Legislature and signed into law by the Governor in 2005. This statute is codified in Iowa Code Chapter 466A. The WIRB is a fifteen-member appointed Board comprised of representatives from agriculture, drinking water utilities, environmental organizations, agribusiness, the conservation community along with two state senators and two state representatives.

Purpose

The WIRB awards grants to specific groups and organizations listed in the Chapter 466A. The numbers of projects awarded to date by type of group or organization include: cities (7), county conservation boards (1), local watershed improvement committees (17), public water supply utilities (1), and soil and water conservation districts (33).

Funding

The Watershed Improvement Fund was appropriated \$5 million for fiscal years 2006 through 2009 for a total of \$20 million.

Data from the applications received for the Request For Applications announced since inception for the program include: 147 applications requested \$45.3 million of Watershed Improvement Funds. WIRB approved 59 applications for funding totaling \$18.0 million with an additional \$41.6 million in leveraged funds. This is 2.3 dollars leveraged for every dollar of Watershed Improvement Fund.

The Board is currently reviewing ten applications from the Request For Applications that closed January 30,2009. These applications are requesting \$3.4 million of Watershed Improvement Funds for approximately \$2.8 million available. These ten applications are leveraging an additional \$8.7 million.

Outcomes

Six projects have been completed and the final report accepted by the WIRB thus far. These six projects addressed an unsewered community, urban runoff and sedimentation water quality issues in three publicly-owned lakes, a privately-owned lake, and a stream.

Oversight

The Board provides oversight to the funded projects by:

- Developing application selection criteria including emphasizing water quality improvement documentation, cost effectiveness, and accountability
- Requiring all approved projects enter into a grant agreement between the applicant and the Board
- Holding back up to 10% of the total grant amount until the final project report is accepted by the Board, and requiring routine project progress reports that are reviewed by the Board