

Lower Skunk River Water Quality & Soil Health Initiative
Des Moines, Henry, Jefferson, Lee & Van Buren SWCD's
Working together to improve water quality.

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NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Lower Skunk River Watershed Project Funded for Additional 3 Years

On July 1, 2020, the Lower Skunk River Water Quality & Soil Health Initiative Project was funded to continue its efforts in water quality and soil health for an additional three-years. The Lower Skunk River Water Quality and Soil Health Initiative supports the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy and the Iowa Water Quality Initiative by working with producers in the project area to implement conservation practices. The project demonstrates and accelerates the adoption of conservation practices that have been proven to be most effective in reducing nitrate-N and phosphorus-P in streams, providing cost share assistance to implement practices such as cover crops, bioreactors, saturated buffers, wetlands, and terraces implemented with alternative tile outlets.

The project has expanded its original area into Henry and Lee counties, adding Des Moines county for the first time. The previous project area included parts of Henry, Lee, Jefferson, and Van Buren counties, totaling approximately 135,000 acres with 46% of those acres in row crop. The expansion of the project will bring roughly 204,000 acres, making the total project area nearly 339,000 acres, increasing the farmable acres to almost 70%. This will provide over \$6 million in funding opportunities including state, partner, and farmer contributions to implement conservation practices in Southeast Iowa. As remarked by Miranda Haes, LSR Project Coordinator, "By expanding the project area we are able to build on what we have learned over the past six years, creating momentum and increasing the use of nutrient management practices, benefiting not only Southeast Iowa water quality and soil health goals, but also the entire state."

Farmer participation has increased nearly two-fold since the beginning in 2014. To date there have been 14,378 acres of cover crops implemented, nearly 170,000 feet of terraces built, 3 alternative tile outlets, 1 saturated buffer, 1 bioreactor, 1 wetland creation, and 3 grade stabilization structures installed. Additionally, 1 saturated buffer and 2 grade stabilization structures are planned for this coming fall.

Sabrina Pidgeon, LSR Steering Committee member and project landowner states "I'm proud to know the Lower Skunk River Watershed Project has been approved for another 3 years and even extended its territory. This project plays a major role in educating and providing financial resources to everyone within the watershed to protect the soil and sustain the environment. Our family farms, fishes, kayaks, swims and explores in this watershed. It is in our best interest to protect it for today, for tomorrow, and for our children's future."

For more information on the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy, Water Quality Initiative, and the Lower Skunk River Water Quality & Soil Health Initiative, please visit www.cleanwateriowa.org or contact Miranda Haes, PC at 319-385-2824 Ext. 3 – miranda.haes@ia.nacdnet.net.

Partnering with Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship and Natural Resources Conservation Service.
The Henry, Lee, Van Buren and Jefferson Soil & Water Conservation District's prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status.

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