



WATERSHED PLANNING  
ADVISORY COUNCIL  
2015 ANNUAL REPORT



## **Summary**

The Watershed Planning Advisory Council (WPAC) was established by the Iowa Legislature (see Appendix A: Iowa Code 466B.31) to assemble a diverse group of stakeholders to make recommendations to state and federal agencies to protect water resources in Iowa. In 2015, WPAC prioritized the seven areas for recommendations outlined in 466B.31, and small work groups drafted recommendations for approval by the full membership.

The WPAC approved the following recommendations which are described in greater detail in the Recommendations section:

- Commission a study, conducted by experts in water quality monitoring and data analysis, of all of Iowa's water quality monitoring programs. The study will evaluate the existing framework, develop recommendations for coordination of efforts, and identify ways to make data easily accessible to the public.
- Encourage rural/urban collaboration, support legislative priorities, and facilitate economic incentive learning opportunities.

In addition, from the 2014 WPAC report, the greatest challenge for any public or private water resource program continues to be long term financial and technical resources. These programs need time and resources in order to meet their goals. This obstacle is ongoing and will need continued attention in the future.

This report provides background on WPAC formation and 2015 activities, recommendations to protect Iowa water resources, and reports from the three work groups.

## **Background**

The Watershed Planning Advisory Council (WPAC) was established by the 2010 Iowa Legislature (see Appendix A: Iowa Code 466B.31) to assemble a diverse group of stakeholders to review research and make recommendations to state and federal agencies regarding methods to protect water resources in Iowa, assure an adequate supply of water, mitigate and prevent floods, and coordinate the management of the state's resources in a sustainable, fiscally responsible, and environmentally conscientious manner.

The voting members of WPAC (see Appendix B) consist of representatives of designated non-governmental organizations as well as representatives appointed by the Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship and the Department of Natural Resources. Nonvoting members include two members of the Iowa Senate and two members of the Iowa House of Representatives.

Many of the organizations that make up the WPAC were involved in the Watershed Quality Planning Taskforce (WQPTF) that was called for by the Iowa Legislature in 2006 to make recommendations on water quality programs and needs to improve water quality and reduce pollution from both point and nonpoint sources (Senate File 2363). In November 2007, the WQPTF produced a consensus report <http://www.iowaagriculture.gov/WPAC/pdf/finallegislativereport2007.pdf>. The WQPTF recommendations were considered by the Iowa Legislature in 2008, resulting in the creation of a Water Resources Coordinating Council (WRCC) <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/code/466B.pdf>.

The WPAC continues to consult with the WRCC and other governmental and non-governmental organizations and provides recommendations on watershed planning and implementation effectiveness.

In 2015, WPAC met in March, June, September, and December. In January, a survey was sent to members to gather input for a framework and priorities for 2015. Based on the survey results, the seven areas for recommendations from Iowa Code 466B.31 (see Appendix A) were prioritized to three. WPAC members were asked to volunteer to work in small groups in one of the three priority areas and draft potential recommendations. At each quarterly WPAC meeting, the work groups provided updates on their work and/or presented recommendations for full membership approval.

### **Recommendations**

The full WPAC membership voted and approved the following recommendations contained in two work group proposals: “Commission a Statewide Study of Monitoring Programs” and “Encourage Collaboration, Support Legislative Priorities, and Facilitate Learning Opportunities”.

#### **Commission a Statewide Study of Monitoring Programs**

We recommend commissioning a study, conducted by experts in water quality monitoring and data analysis, of all of Iowa’s water quality monitoring programs. The study will evaluate the existing framework, develop recommendations for coordination of efforts and identify ways to make data easily accessible to the public.

Objectives of the Recommendation:

1. Ensure coordination of water quality monitoring activity around the state;
2. Identify any gaps and/or redundancies in monitoring;
3. Make the information readily available to the public at the watershed level so that Iowans have an accurate sense of Iowa’s water quality;

Additionally, the Recommendation would:

- Support the Iowa State Soil Conservation Committee’s June 2015 statement in support of water quality monitoring and the need for a “cooperative, coordinated effort among those entities currently funded to conduct water quality monitoring [including but not limited to Water Resources Coordinating Council (WRCC), Iowa State University (ISU), University of Iowa Hygienic Lab (UI), Iowa Soybean Association (ISA), Watershed Planning Advisory Council (WPAC), United States Geological Survey (USGS) and Department of Natural Resources (DNR)].”
- Support recommendations in the 2014-2015 Nutrient Reduction Strategy annual report calling for “a robust reporting framework that provides information needed to direct resources and show progress”; to understand the “multiple nutrient monitoring efforts”; and “identify opportunities and potential data gaps to better coordinate and prioritize” nutrient monitoring efforts; (Annual Report, page 3)
- Support the call for coordination of the Water Resources Coordinating Council and WPAC nutrient monitoring efforts in the 2014-2015 Nutrient Reduction Strategy annual report which would “better coordinate and prioritize future nutrient WQ monitoring efforts”. (Annual Report, page 24)

#### Suggested Process for Conducting the Study:

- Compile a detailed inventory of current monitoring programs including names of organizations that are conducting monitoring programs; data quality information; and monitoring locations, frequencies, and parameters.
- Define state monitoring program objectives and potential uses of monitoring data.
  - i. Multiple objectives at different HUC levels
- Evaluate adequacy of the existing monitoring framework including monitoring locations, methods, and parameters, as well as gaps and/or redundancies, and recommend appropriate modifications.
- Develop recommendations for coordination of monitoring programs by various organizations to ensure a comprehensive, cost effective program. Combine resources of several groups and agencies including:
  - i. Iowa Department of Natural Resources
  - ii. United States Geological Survey
  - iii. Iowa State University
  - iv. IHR Hydroscience and Engineering, University of Iowa
  - v. Commodity Producer Organizations such as the Iowa Soybean Association
  - vi. Environmental Interest Groups such as Iowa Environmental Council and its member organizations
  - vii. Professional and Trade Organizations such as the Iowa Water Environment Association and American Water Works Association including wastewater and water treatment facility operators
  - viii. Others

#### Potential Experts to Conduct the Study:

- Environmental consulting firm (ENVIRON, TetraTech, others) to conduct the study, act as facilitator among the monitoring entities, and make appropriate recommendations;
- In-state review panel (in addition to potential experts mentioned above) such as universities and other stakeholders.

#### Encourage Collaboration, Support Legislative Priorities, and Facilitate Learning Opportunities

##### 1. Encourage rural/urban collaboration within watersheds.

- 1.1 State and federal support should be provided for an offset/exchange program. A state or federal guidance document should encourage local governments to help landowners/farmers install conservation practices that can generate credits for the program.
- 1.2 A pre-compliance offset/exchange program is being developed to encourage urban/rural collaboration in a cost effective manner. Organizations should monitor, support and participate in the development of this program.
- 1.3 State agencies should work with local governments and private organizations to raise awareness among rural and urban stakeholders about the State Revolving Fund and the value of it and similar opportunities.
- 1.4 Include in the 2016 IDALS Iowa Soil and Water Quality Funding Summit a session on conservation finance opportunities for watershed projects.

2. Create three legislative priorities annually all WPAC members can support.
  - 2.1 Provide support of the Secretary of Agriculture's request for the Water Quality Initiative.
  - 2.2 Provide support for increasing conservation practice incentives and funding.
  - 2.3 Provide support for programs that encourage and/or reward urban and rural collaboration.
  
3. Facilitate Economic Incentive Learning Opportunities
  - 3.1 In 2016, WPAC request information from IDALS-DSCWQ and DNR to assess existing conservation programs and determine if needs are being met and if new innovative programs and projects should be developed.
    - Quantify the backlog of conservation practices awaiting state cost share funds to be installed throughout the state.
    - What is the status of watershed planning throughout the state?
    - What is the status of technical assistance throughout the state?
  
  - 3.2 In 2016, WPAC invite experts to help the WPAC identify, understand and compile public and private sector incentive opportunities for conservation and agricultural technologies in order to determine recommendations that promote private sector engagement, nongovernment incentives and agricultural technology development.
    - Ask Shawn Richmond, AAI to speak with subcommittee to develop recommendation to advance the installation of CREP Wetlands.
    - Michelle Perez, Senior Associate, World Resources Institute
    - Panel of private sector conservation initiatives: Heartland Co-op, United Suppliers' SUSTAIN, Winfield and others
  
  - 3.3 In 2016, WPAC invite experts to outline the opportunities for urban and rural collaboration, and the status of current efforts.
    - Dustin Miller, Iowa League of Cities – CIG Water Quality Trading Grant Status
    - Steve Hershner, Cedar Rapids Utility Director – Cedar River RCPP Project
    - Dave Taylor, Madison, WI Waste Water – Adaptive Management Pilot Project
    - Representatives from Iowa Cities and Rural Stakeholders
    - Representatives from Watershed Management Authorities

## **Work Group Reports**

### **Work Group #1**

Charge: Creating economic incentives for voluntary nonpoint source load reductions, point source discharge reductions beyond those required by the federal Water Pollution Control Act, implementation of pollution prevention programs, wetland restoration and creation, and the development of emerging pollution control technologies.

Work Group #1 met three times, including meetings with representatives of state agencies and private industry and discussed possible recommendations. Recommendations considered to be contrary to a member's organizational policy were discussed, but not approved. The work group focused on

recommendations with which all could support and that provided the best opportunities for rural-urban watershed improvement and collaboration.

In 2016, Work Group #1 intends to continue this focus, including further assessment of existing conservation programs and a determination of needs for new, innovative programs; and a more thorough understanding of private sector incentive opportunities for conservation and agricultural technologies that promote their engagement through the use of technology.

### Work Group #2

Charge: Improving water quality and optimizing the costs of voluntarily achieving and maintaining water quality standards.

Work Group #2 discussed possible recommendations for providing nitrogen testing equipment and educational materials directly to farmers and landowners. Individuals can then directly monitor their local waters and evaluate practices to implement on their land to improve water quality.

In 2016, Work Group #2 intends to evaluate current projects and develop a recommendation to the Water Resources Coordinating Council to help expand the availability of this water monitoring equipment. Current projects are being conducted by Iowa Corn and Conservation Districts of Iowa/Iowa State University Extension. Iowa Corn has provided nitrate test strips to its board members, county associations, and local watershed projects. Conservation Districts of Iowa and Iowa State University have developed a pilot program that provides nitrate test strips and informational materials to soil and water conservation districts and extension offices for use by private individuals.

### Work Group #3

Charge: Providing incentives, methods, and practices for the development of new and more accurate and reliable pollution control quantification protocols and procedures, including but not limited to development of policy based on information and data that is publicly available and that can be verified and evaluated.

Work Group #3 discussed three possible recommendations: including appropriate water monitoring and other assessment elements in all Water Quality Initiative projects; commissioning a study of all Iowa water quality monitoring programs in order to ensure coordination, identify any gaps, and make the information available to the public at the watershed level; and developing statistical methods for normalizing nutrient water quality data to account for seasonal variations that impact nutrient transport. The second recommendation (commissioning a study) was approved by WPAC.

In 2016, Work Group #3 will continue to discuss its possible recommendations for including monitoring in Water Quality Initiative projects and developing statistical methods to normalize water quality data.

## **Appendix A: Iowa Code 466B.31**

### WATER PROTECTION AND WATERSHED MANAGEMENT, §466B.31

#### 466B.31 Watershed planning advisory council.

1. A watershed planning advisory council is established for purposes of assembling a diverse group of stakeholders to review research and make recommendations to various state entities regarding methods to protect water resources in the state, assure an adequate supply of water, mitigate and prevent floods, and coordinate the management of those resources in a sustainable, fiscally responsible, and environmentally responsible manner.

The advisory council may seek input from councils of governments or other organizations in the development of its recommendations. The advisory council shall meet once a year and at other times as deemed necessary to meet the requirements of this section. The advisory council may appoint a task force to assist the advisory council in completing its duties.

2. The watershed planning advisory council shall consist of all of the following members:

*a.* The voting members of the advisory council shall include all of the following:

- (1) One member selected by the Iowa association of municipal utilities.
- (2) One member selected by the Iowa league of cities.
- (3) One member selected by the Iowa association of business and industry.
- (4) One member selected by the Iowa water pollution control association.
- (5) One member selected by the Iowa rural water association.
- (6) One member selected by growing green communities.
- (7) One member selected by the Iowa environmental council.
- (8) One member selected by the Iowa farm bureau federation.
- (9) One member selected by the Iowa corn growers association.
- (10) One member selected by the Iowa soybean association.
- (11) One member selected by the Iowa pork producers council.
- (12) One member selected by the soil and water conservation districts of Iowa.
- (13) One person representing the department of agriculture and land stewardship selected by the secretary of agriculture.
- (14) One person representing the department of natural resources selected by the director.
- (15) Two members selected by the Iowa conservation alliance.
- (16) One member selected by the Iowa drainage district association.
- (17) One member selected by the agribusiness association of Iowa.
- (18) One member selected by the Iowa floodplain and stormwater management association.
- (19) One member selected by Iowa rivers revival.

*b.* The nonvoting members of the advisory council shall include all of the following:

- (1) Two members of the senate. One senator shall be appointed by the majority leader of the senate and one senator shall be appointed by the minority leader of the senate.
- (2) Two members of the house of representatives. One member shall be appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives and one member shall be appointed by the minority leader of the house of representatives.

3. By December 1 of each year, the watershed planning advisory council shall submit a report to the governor, the general assembly, the department of agriculture and land stewardship, the department of natural resources, and the water resources coordinating council. The report shall include recommendations regarding all of the following:

*a.* Improving water quality and optimizing the costs of voluntarily achieving and maintaining water quality standards.

*b.* Creating economic incentives for voluntary nonpoint source load reductions, point source discharge reductions beyond those required by the federal Water Pollution Control Act, implementation of pollution prevention programs, wetland restoration and creation, and the development of emerging pollution control technologies.

*c.* Facilitating the implementation of total maximum daily loads, urban storm water control programs, and nonpoint source management practices required or authorized under the federal Water Pollution Control Act. This paragraph shall not be construed to obviate the requirement to develop a total maximum daily load for waters that do not meet water quality standards as required by section 303(d) of the federal Water Pollution Control Act or to delay implementation of a total maximum daily load that has been approved by the department and the director.

*d.* Providing incentives, methods, and practices for the development of new and more accurate and reliable pollution control quantification protocols and procedures, including but not limited to development of policy based on information and data that is publicly available and that can be verified and evaluated.

*e.* Providing greater flexibility for broader public involvement through community-based, nonregulatory, and performance-driven watershed management planning.

*f.* Assigning responsibility for monitoring flood risk, flood mitigation, and coordination with federal agencies.

*g.* Involving cities, counties, and other local and regional public and private entities in watershed improvement including but not limited to incentives for participation in a watershed management authority created under this chapter.

4. Each year, the voting members of the advisory council shall designate one voting member as chairperson.

2010 Acts, ch 1116, §1; 2011 Acts, ch 131, §98, 158

**Appendix B: WPAC Membership**

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Member Name or Delegate</b>
Senate Seat 1 (non-voting member)	Senator Joe Bolkcom
Senate Seat 2 (non-voting member)	Senator Dan Zumbach
House of Representatives Seat 1 (non-voting member)	Rep. Charles Isenhardt
House of Representatives Seat 2 (non-voting member)	Rep. John Wills
Agribusiness Association of Iowa	Joel Brinkmeyer/Shawn Richmond
Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship	Jim Gillespie
Department of Natural Resources	Bill Ehm
Growing Green Communities	Reo Menning
Iowa Association of Business and Industry	Scott Ickes
Iowa Association of Municipal Utilities	Bill Stowe
Iowa Conservation Alliance Seat 1	Jeremy Rosonke
Iowa Conservation Alliance Seat 2	Mike Delaney
Iowa Corn Growers Association	Ben Gleason, Co-chair
Iowa Drainage District Association	John Torbert
Iowa Environmental Council	Susan Heathcote, Co-chair
Iowa Farm Bureau Federation	Rick Robinson
Iowa Floodplain and Stormwater Management	Luis Leon
Iowa League of Cities	Dustin Miller/Dean Mattoon
Iowa Pork Producers Association	Tyler Bettin
Iowa Rivers Revival	Robin Fortney
Iowa Rural Water Association	Emily Piper
Iowa Soybean Association	Roger Wolf
Iowa Water Environmental Association	Jay Brady
Soil & Water Conservation Districts of Iowa	Clare Lindahl