

**\*\*\*An infographic about the Midwest Agriculture Water Quality Partnership is attached**

**USDA REGIONAL CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM (RCPP) AWARDS  
\$9.5 MILLION FOR MIDWEST AGRICULTURE WATER QUALITY PARTNERSHIP**

*Project will leverage \$4.75 million in state funding and \$33 million from the private sector to expand water quality efforts*

**Media Advisory:**

The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Iowa Agriculture Water Alliance (IAWA), and other partners will hold a media availability to discuss the Midwest Agriculture Water Quality Partnership at the Iowa Soybean Association Research Conference next Tuesday, Feb. 16 at 5:00 p.m. at the Iowa Events Center, Rooms 308-310, 730 Third St., Des Moines.

Present:

- Mike Naig, Iowa Deputy Secretary of Agriculture
- Sean McMahon, Executive Director, Iowa Agriculture Water Alliance

**For Immediate Release**

Friday, Feb. 12, 2016

**USDA REGIONAL CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM (RCPP) AWARDS  
\$9.5 MILLION FOR MIDWEST AGRICULTURE WATER QUALITY PARTNERSHIP**

*Project will leverage \$4.75 million in state funding and \$33 million from the private sector to expand water quality efforts*

DES MOINES –Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Bill Northey and Sean McMahon, Executive Director of Iowa Agriculture Water Alliance (IAWA), today said that the USDA Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) has awarded \$9.5 million to the Midwest Agriculture Water Quality Partnership. The Partnership is co-led by the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship and IAWA and involves 43 additional partners.

“This project will work with a diverse group of committed partners to engage farmers and help scale-up the water quality efforts in the targeted watersheds. By working with ag organizations, businesses, retailers and other partners, we are building on momentum at the local level to address nutrient losses at the watershed scale,” Northey said. “These funds will allow us to continue to engage the local agricultural community to deliver and demonstrate the technologies needed to improve water quality while protecting and maintaining Iowa’s tremendous agricultural productivity.”

“This project will help Iowa farmers to simultaneously improve their profitability and environmental performance,” said Sean McMahon of IAWA. “This effort is a true public-private partnership that will leverage the resources of our agribusiness partners to help their farmer customers adopt practices that will improve water quality.”

The \$9.5 million grant is the largest National Funding Pool award in the country this year. These funds will be leveraged with \$4.75 million in state funding (\$2.5 from IDALS and \$2.25 from

Iowa DNR) and \$33 million from the private sector. Farmers and landowners will be making additional investments that are not included in these amounts.

The project will build an innovative public-private collaboration focused on improving water quality, soil health and habitat for at-risk species. The partnership has brought together diverse stakeholders from multiple sectors committed to improving water quality as guided by the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy.

The initiative is focused on engaging local partners, such as agribusinesses, ag retailers, seed companies and ag organizations, to deliver and demonstrate water quality practices and technologies proven to have a significant impact on reducing losses of nitrogen and phosphorus. These practices include cover crops, nutrient management, strip-till and no-till, drainage water management, bioreactors, saturated buffers and wetlands.

The project will merge traditional approaches to deliver conservation through scaling up conservation planning and conservation practices with a non-traditional, highly innovative precision agriculture platform integration component that will lead to greater practice adoption and improved conservation outcomes. The initiative will help leverage private sector precision agriculture tools to deliver conservation and water quality improvement.

The initiative will be focused in targeted watersheds within the North Raccoon, South Skunk, Lake Red Rock, Middle Cedar and Upper Cedar watersheds.

“This project will help direct conservation practices to where they can be most effective to maximize water quality benefits,” McMahon added. “We credit NRCS and USDA for recognizing the importance of targeting Farm Bill resources to priority watersheds and landscapes.”

The full USDA RCPP announcement can be found [here](#).

### **Background on Iowa Water Quality Initiative**

The Iowa Water Quality Initiative was established in 2013 to help implement the Nutrient Reduction Strategy, which is a science and technology based approach to achieving a 45 percent reduction in nitrogen and phosphorus losses to our waters. The strategy brings together both point sources, such as municipal wastewater treatment plants and industrial facilities, and nonpoint sources, including farm fields and urban stormwater runoff, to address these issues.

The initiative seeks to harness the collective ability of both private and public resources and organizations to deliver a clear and consistent message to stakeholders to reduce nutrient loss and improve water quality.

The initiative is seeing some exciting results. Last fall Northey announced that 1,800 farmers committed \$3.5 million in cost share funds to install nutrient reduction practices in each of Iowa’s 99 counties. The practices that were eligible for this funding are cover crops, no-till or strip till, or using a nitrification inhibitor when applying fall fertilizer. Participants include 980 farmers using a practice for the first time and more than 830 past users that are trying cover crops

again and are receiving a reduced-rate of cost share. Farmers using cost share funding contribute 50% or more to the total cost of the practice.

In addition, 32 demonstration projects are currently located across the state to help implement and demonstrate water quality practices. This includes 16 targeted watershed projects, 7 projects focused on expanding the use and innovative delivery of water quality practices and 9 urban water quality demonstration projects. More than 100 organizations are participating in these projects. These partners will provide \$16.72 million dollars to go with the \$11.11 million in state funding going to these projects.

More than \$325 million in state and federal funds have been directed to programs with water quality benefits in Iowa last year. This total does not include the cost share amount that farmers pay to match state and federal programs and funds spent to build practices built without government assistance.

More information about the initiative can be found at [www.CleanWaterIowa.org](http://www.CleanWaterIowa.org).

#### **About The Iowa Agriculture Water Alliance**

The Iowa Agriculture Water Alliance (IAWA) is increasing the pace and scale of farmer-led water quality efforts. Founded in 2014 by the Iowa Corn Growers Association, Iowa Soybean Association and the Iowa Pork Producers Association, IAWA is building public-private partnerships focused on implementing water quality solutions. Iowa farmers are actively engaged in various conservation efforts that improve water quality while maintaining or increasing profitability. Learn more at [www.iowaagwateralliance.com/](http://www.iowaagwateralliance.com/)

-30-

#### Contacts:

Dustin Vande Hoef (IDALS)  
515-281-3375, [Dustin.VandeHoef@IowaAgriculture.gov](mailto:Dustin.VandeHoef@IowaAgriculture.gov)

Donna Ramaeker Zahn (IAWA)  
515-334-1080 [dramaekerzahn@iowaagwateralliance.com](mailto:dramaekerzahn@iowaagwateralliance.com)