

Upper Iowa River Watershed

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Upper Iowa News

September 2004

Upper Iowa Project Expands Scope, Develops Regional Focus

After five years of working towards the goal of improving water quality and watershed health in the Upper Iowa River and its tributaries, the Upper Iowa River Watershed Project will be taking on a new shape in the coming months. The new shape will be one that is more regional and comprehensive in scope (see map).

Northeast Iowa RC&D saw an opportunity to apply the model developed in the Upper Iowa River Watershed to other watersheds in the region, specifically the Turkey and Yellow River Watersheds. According to Marilyn Rubner, RC&D Board President, "Much of the work done in the Upper Iowa River Watershed project over the last several years is not only applicable to our neighboring watersheds, but relevant to current and future water quality improvement projects in those areas."

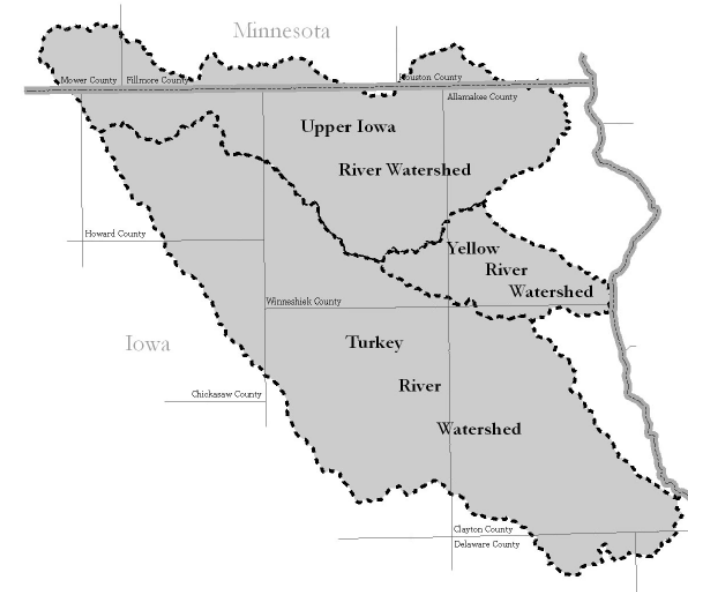
The work completed in the Upper Iowa River Project over the last five years has provided a great deal of insight into water quality impairments and potential solutions for those impairments. The project has made extensive use of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) technologies and field research to provide a comprehensive assessment document that will guide current and future requests for funding for targeted projects.

Looking beyond the boundaries of the Upper Iowa River Watershed was the next logical step. A regional approach made sense, as much of the research, and many of the GIS models developed in the UIRW could also be applied to other watersheds in the region. The karst topography also made it logical to consider the potential impact of non-point source pollution from beyond the surface boundaries of the watershed. A karst landscape blurs the traditional boundaries of a watershed through an intricate system of groundwater flows. Examining a region allows for greater study into those subterranean boundaries.

A regional watershed coordinator will be hired by Northeast Iowa RC&D to guide the project and work with agencies, organizations, and landowners in the expanded area. The project coordinator will continue to facilitate water quality activities in the Upper Iowa River Watershed, will expand the UIRW model to develop a comprehensive watershed assessment in the Yellow River Watershed, and will begin to build an alliance of project partners in the Turkey River Watershed.

This project is being funded in part through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Water Quality Cooperative Agreement Allocation. For more information, please call Northeast Iowa RC&D at (563) 864-7112.

The Geographic Scope of the Northeast Iowa Watershed Project



Paired Watershed Study Conducted by UIRW Project

Adam Kiel, GIS Specialist

As part of the UIRW Project, numerous research studies have been conducted to provide information that can give insight into water quality issues. One study recently completed by the project was a paired watershed study in the Silver Creek West sub-watershed and Ten Mile Creek sub-watershed.

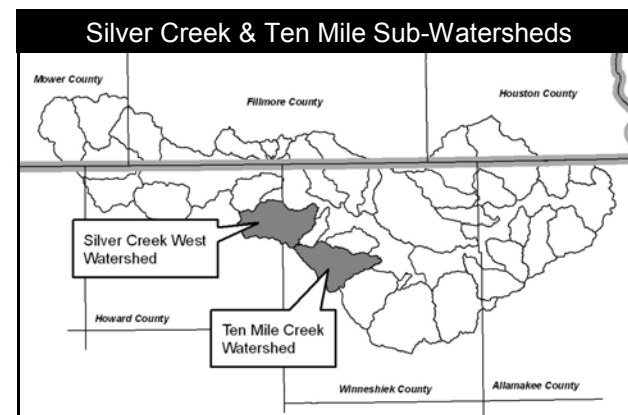
The goal of the study was to better define those stream and watershed characteristics that impacted water quality. Specifically, the study examined how differences in land use, conservation practices, and geology may account for some of the differences in water quality. In order to make an appropriate comparison, the two sub-watersheds chosen were of similar size and geographic location. The Silver Creek West sub-watershed has been ranked as having

some of the poorest water quality in the UIRW and has been consistently high in levels of the parameters tested by the UIRW project, including ammonia, nitrate + nitrite-N, phosphorus, membrane fecal coliform, turbidity, and Atrazine. The Ten Mile Creek sub-watershed, which borders Silver Creek to the Southeast, has had relatively low readings in these parameters.

The conclusions of the study indicate that landcover in critical areas of the Ten Mile Creek sub-watershed may be preventing soil loss and erosion. In addition, land use practices and riparian area vegetation have impacted nutrient

transport. The distribution and management of livestock is also a critical factor in considering the level of fecal coliform.

For more information on the paired watershed study, please contact Northeast Iowa RC&D at (563) 864-7112 or email adamkiel@netins.net.



River Clean-Up Invites Volunteers

A crew of canoe-mounted volunteers will show their love for the outdoors this month during a river cleanup expedition.

The third annual "Upper Iowa River Cleanup" will take place Saturday, September 25, beginning at 10 AM. Organizers expect between 40 and 60 volunteers to pilot canoes over the 17 miles between Kendallville and Bluffton. They will remove trash from the water as they go. Should enough people volunteer, a second cleanup crew will float the 15.5 miles between Bluffton and Decorah.

All interested parties should meet at 10 AM at the Chimney Rock Canoe Rental & Campground, 3312 Chimney Rock Road, Cresco, IA. Please reserve your canoe and campsite by calling Chimney Rock Canoe Rental & Campground at 563-735-5786 or toll free at 877-787-CAMP (2267). Participants can also bring their own canoes or kayaks.

Participants will receive free camping Friday and Saturday night and free use of canoes on Saturday. Organizers will provide transportation to and from the river, sandwiches for lunch, and trash bags for the cleanup. They will also conduct a group

potluck and prize drawing Saturday evening. Participants should bring drinks, work clothes, and a potluck dish. Refrigerators and warming ovens are available.

Local sponsors include Chimney Rock Canoe Rental & Campground, Ozzie's Outdoors, Upper Iowa Marine, Inc., Wal-mart, Subway, Blimpies, K&S Grocery, Fareway Grocery, Fred Carlson Co., Pizza Hut, Oneota Lanes, Kwik Star, Cabelas, Mabe's Pizza, Happy Joes, O'Henry's Stitches & Prints, and NE IA RC&D. Several prizes have been donated for the drawing, including a child's rod and reel kit, 2 hooded sweatshirts, and a 50 quart cooler.

The program began two years ago when Chimney Rock Canoe Rental and Campground owner/operator Deb Keefe collaborated with the Iowa DNR. Roughly 20 volunteers participated in each of the cleanup's first two years. Keefe said she expects more participants this year because of collaboration from Northeast Iowa Resource Conservation and Development.

For more information, contact Richard Kittelson at (563) 864-7112 or at kittelson@netins.net

Friends of the Upper Iowa River

Many thanks to the following individuals and organizations that have already contributed to the Friends of the Upper Iowa River Fund. Listing includes gifts received through September 15, 2004.

Randy & Cheryl Brenton
Fred Carlson Co.
Conservation Districts of Iowa
Craft's at Bluffton
Jon & Mary Hart
John Hoines
Dave & Jane Jensen
Paul & Pat Johnson
Palisades Chapter
- Izaak Walton League
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Lime Springs Fish & Game Club
Steve & Donna Story
Ted Wilson
Winneschick County Conservation
Jean Young

In-Kind Sponsors
Decorah Bicycles
Chimney Rock Campground & Canoe Rental

Upper Iowa River Cleanup

Saturday, September 25th, 10am

Chimney Rock Canoe Rental and Campground, 3312 Chimney Rock Road, Cresco, IA

Alliance Building is Key to Watershed Approach

A watershed approach to water quality improvement is not always an easy task. Spanning "traditional" boundaries such as county and state lines can add considerably to the complexity of managing a watershed. Yet, the benefits of examining an entire watershed, as opposed to that "part" which falls within certain political boundaries are immense. Looking at the entire watershed allows key coordination skills that maximize the dollars used to improve water quality in the entire watershed. The water and land in a watershed are intimately connected, and to address a problem in one area without considering how it impacts the rest of the watershed sometimes results in wasted effort and money.

There has been a trend in recent years to look at water quality issues from the perspective of the entire watershed. The "watershed approach" does not successfully develop from one person or one organization, instead, it involves a collaborative effort of dozens of organizations and agencies and hundreds of landowners.

This is the approach that Northeast Iowa RC&D decided to focus on five years ago when funding first became available for the Upper Iowa River Watershed. One of the first tasks was to build an alliance of agencies, organizations, and land-

owners that had a stake in the health of the watershed. Today, the Upper Iowa River Watershed Alliance remains a critical element in the project. Partners in the UIRW Alliance include local governments, research organizations, private organizations, county, state, and federal agencies, private businesses, educational institutions, and landowners. UIRW Alliance members come together several times a year to discuss activities in the watershed, the latest assessments, and targeted projects for improving water quality or watershed health.

As the project becomes more regional in scope, alliance building will become a priority in the Yellow and Turkey River Watersheds. The Project Coordinator will identify those agencies, organizations, and landowners that have a stake in the health of those watersheds and will begin efforts to bring these groups and individuals together. These stakeholders will play a critical role in identifying the priorities in their watershed, which in turn will shape the future of the project.

For more information on alliance building, please contact Northeast Iowa RC&D at (563) 864-7112.

Become a Friend of the Upper Iowa River!

Don't miss your chance to provide much needed financial assistance to continue water testing in the Upper Iowa River and its tributaries. Just clip the form below and send with your tax deductible contribution. Together we can make a difference!



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Yes! I/We would like to become a Friend of Upper Iowa River with a gift of:

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- _____ \$500
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- _____ Please check here if you wish to remain anonymous

Please make your check payable to Northeast Iowa RC&D, Inc. Send to: PO Box 916, Postville, IA 52162