

Boone River Watershed Project Retains New Coordinator

Sean McCoy, Environmental Specialist, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS)

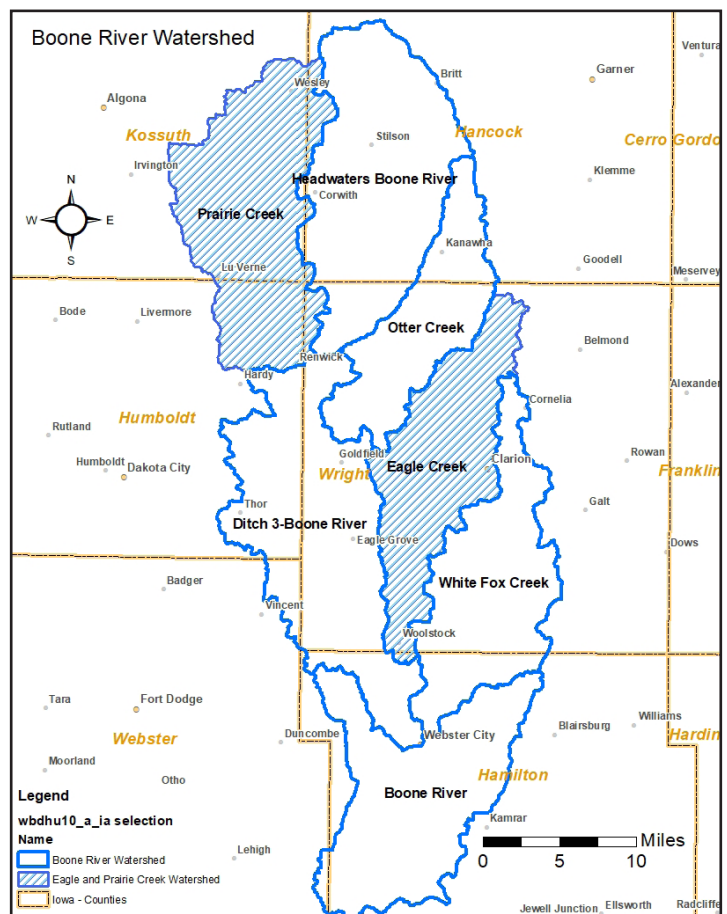
The Boone River Watershed Nutrient Reduction Initiative is excited to announce that this Water Quality Initiative Project has hired a new project coordinator! My name is Sean McCoy and I reside south of Webster City. I grew up swimming, paddling, fishing and hunting along this great body of water. I have been an Environmental Specialist with IDALS for 20 years. My career began in Wright County in 1999 working on ag drainage well closures. I have worked in several counties and on several watershed projects over the course of 20 years. I am exceptionally excited to work on the Boone River Project!

We are also excited to announce that the Boone River Nutrient Reduction Project has been extended through 2022 to promote and implement edge-of-field and management conservation practices. With this grant, we have the potential to get conservation practices on 30,000 acres!

Getting conservation on the ground is key to making this project a success. Promotion and cost share assistance will be available for cover crops, no-till/strip till, P band manure application, bioreactors, saturated buffers, wetlands, and oxbows! Cost share will be prioritized to the sub-watersheds of Eagle and Prairie Creek, with potential cost share available for the whole Boone River Watershed. These designated areas are considered demonstration watersheds and are used to show the progress that can be made to improve water quality using the voluntary science-based approaches outlined by Iowa's Nutrient Reduction Strategy for nonpoint source nutrient reduction.

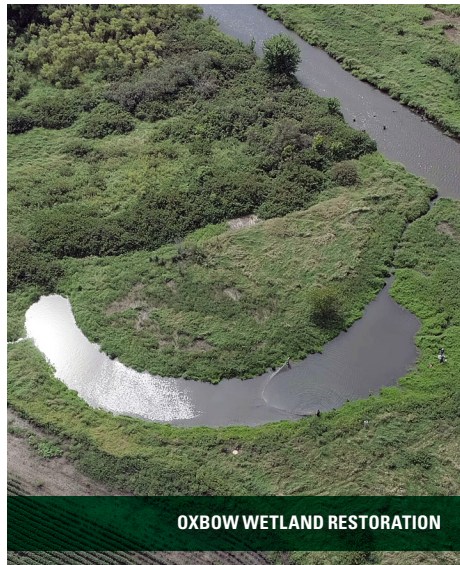
Partnership is the foundation of this project and will continue to be moving into the next three years. The Wright County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) along with both public and private partners including Kossuth and Humboldt SWCD, USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, Iowa Soybean Association, The Nature Conservancy, Iowa State University Extension, and many others!

If you would like to learn more about the project or are interested in conservation on your farm, please contact me for more information: Sean McCoy, Project Coordinator, at 515-532-2165 ext. 3017 / sean.mccoy@iowaagriculture.gov or visit booneriver.org.

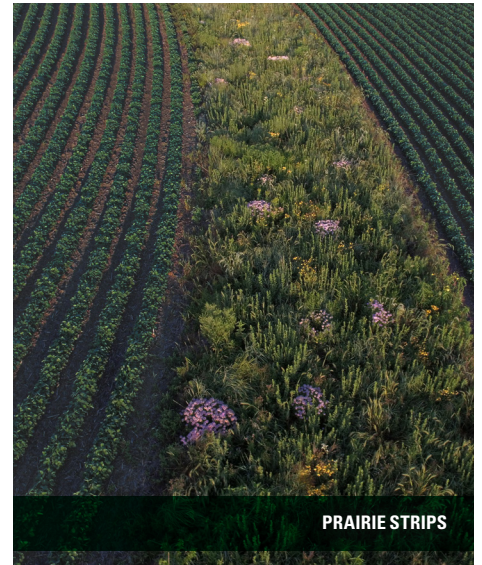


Practice Spotlights

Here are some of the conservation practices that will be prioritized by the Boone River project over the next few years:



OXBOW WETLAND RESTORATION



PRAIRIE STRIPS

Oxbow Wetland Restorations – Oxbows are old riverbends that get abandoned or cut off from the river. Over time, many of these old channels fill in with sediment and cease to provide the wetland-like benefits that they used to. During restoration, excess sediment is dug out so that the oxbow can hold water year-round for wildlife habitat and floodwater storage. Subsurface tile water can be re-routed into the oxbow to filter out fertilizers lost from the field. Plus, oxbow restoration will add recreational opportunity and natural beauty to your land. There are many different programs that will fund oxbow restorations at absolutely no cost to the landowner.

Prairie strips – 13 years of research at Iowa State University has demonstrated that planting just 10% of your crop-field to diverse, native perennial vegetation can reduce sediment movement off your field by 95 percent and total phosphorous and nitrogen lost through surface runoff by 90 and 85 percent, respectively. Save money on low-yielding acres and provide wildlife habitat by installing prairie strips through the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Prairie strips can be installed through a field, around a field, alongside waterways, and in a terrace channel. They are a minimum of 30 feet wide to a maximum of 120 feet wide not to exceed 25% of a crop field. You can sign up prairie strips for CRP by visiting your local USDA service center!

Saturated buffers – Saturated buffers are an edge-of-field practice that can provide exceptional water quality benefits. For this practice, a water control structure is added before a subsurface farm tile outlets into a creek or river. Perforated lateral tiles connected to the water control structure redirect tile water into the soil profile of a stream buffer parallel to a stream. During exceptionally high flows, water can bypass the saturated buffer to prevent water from backing up into the farm field. The deep-rooted plants of the buffer and microbiology in the soil absorb excess water and nutrients from the tile, to provide up to 50% reduction of nitrate load. The Boone River Project and partner funding can be combined to cover 50-100% of the installation costs. Visit your local NRCS office to find out if a saturated buffer could work on your farm and to learn more about cost-share rates.

Bioreactors – Bioreactors are woodchip filled trenches that intercept tile water to achieve up to 40% reduction in nitrate. A water control structure redirects tile water into the underground woodchip trench, where the microbiology naturally removes nitrate. Bioreactors can be planted under existing field buffers but should not be driven on. On average, the woodchips will need to be replenished every 10 years. Excess water can bypass the system to prevent water from backing up into a farm field. Cost share is available to cover 50-100% of the cost of a bioreactor installation. Contact your local NRCS office to learn more!

Reduced tillage – Reducing tillage can minimize soil disturbance to improve soil health and structure. It allows you to target your tillage to the seedbed, while leaving the majority, or all of the field, untouched. For maximum benefits, no-till is recommended. The benefits of reducing tillage can be reduced soil erosion, improved water infiltration, improved microbiology, increased organic matter, and less time/inputs in the field. Strip-till and no-till practices can receive up to \$15/acre with no acreage cap!



BIOREACTORS



REDUCED TILLAGE



COVER CROPS

Cover crops – Cover crops can be added to an operation to keep the soil on the farm protected in between harvest and planting. Some cover crops, such as oats, will naturally terminate after frost, but the best benefits are gained from planting vegetation that will continue to grow over the spring, such as rye. Cover crops reduce soil erosion, build soil structure and organic matter, support soil microbiology, increase water infiltration, and can add nutrients back to your soil. Cover crops can reduce nitrate loss by 30%. Cover crop implementation will carry a \$35/acre incentive with no acre cap. Preference to first time users.

Manure Management – P-band applied manure is a practice where manure is injected into cropland with equipment that maintains high residue levels. This practice minimizes soil disturbance so that soil quality characteristics that improve the productivity of the soil can be preserved. This will also diminish the need for subsequent tillage passes to create a “mellow” seed bed to plant into and will get nutrients (such as Phosphorus) down into the root zone of the crop for greater plant utilization. This practice is best paired with cover crops, to further reduce nutrient and soil losses. Planting cover crops is not required to be eligible for the P-Band Applied incentive, but it is being encouraged. The primary requirement to be eligible for the \$12/acre incentive, which could go a long way toward equipment investments, is that no greater than 30% residue disturbance will result from manure applications.

Watershed Planning Efforts – COMING SOON!

The Boone River Watershed Management Authority (WMA) will be hosting several public meetings over the course of the next year to gather local feedback and input in the development of a Boone River Watershed Plan. The Watershed Plan will be an opportunity for us to all express our goals for the watershed, and the communities and farms that lie within it. We will discuss water quality, flooding, recreation, habitat, and more! **Check BooneRiver.org for upcoming events.**

Upcoming events

**Watershed Management Authority
Meeting** (open to the public)
Clarion Public Library
March 26 • 2:00 p.m.

Boone River Watershed Field Day
May 7
More details to come at
BooneRiver.org

Boone River Clean-up
Briggs Woods Park,
Webster City
August 1 • 7:30 a.m.



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SPRING 2020

The Boone River REVIEW

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