



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

EcoNewsWire

Environmental Services

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Northeast Iowa farmers reinvigorate namesake creek

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JACKSON COUNTY—Following years of work on the land to reduce the amount of sediment and nutrients reaching Farmers Creek in Jackson County, the stream is a candidate for delisting from Iowa’s impaired waters list, and the effort has been recognized as a water quality success story by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

This tributary to the Maquoketa River, which winds through rolling farmland and past picturesque bluffs, had landed on the impaired waters list in the early 2000s, after two significant fish kills and a noted decline in the health of aquatic life living in the creek.

Water sampling found that excess nutrients and sediment washing in from the watershed—in this case, the almost 31,000 acres of land that drains to the creek—were the top concerns for its health. Roughly 14,000 tons of sediment, largely from the highly erodible farmland surrounding it, was washing into the creek every year—enough to fill 1,000 dump truck loads. Additional sampling found low numbers of fish, insects, snails, mussels, crayfish and other wildlife that live in the creek, indicating a biological impairment of the stream.

“Biological impairments are difficult to address because there are so many factors that contribute,” said DNR biologist Jen Kurth. “To get the stream to the point of recovery and delistment is a real achievement.”

To address these concerns, the Jackson County Soil and Water Conservation District launched a watershed improvement project in 2005, working with farmers and landowners to make changes on the land to improve water quality. This five-year project helped place conservation practices on the land, like streambank protection, grassed waterways, sediment basins and more, reducing sediment reaching the stream by 40 percent. Since the end of the project, local farmers and landowners have upheld the culture of conservation by maintaining these practices and adding new ones.

“The watershed project was successful because funding was available for direct outreach, which was used to build strong producer support,” said Michelle Turner, who led the effort locally. “Landowners saw the results of their efforts quantified, and there was satisfaction in knowing they had helped improve water quality.”

The reduction in sediment also improved the habitat in Farmers Creek for fish and other aquatic life. Sampling has noted a greater diversity of fish and invertebrate species, as well as increases in species that are sensitive to pollution and habitat disturbances. Based on these improvements, Farmers Creek is now a candidate for removal from the state’s impaired waters list.

Additional partners and funding sources involved in the Farmers Creek project include the Iowa DNR through U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Clean Water Act section 319 grants, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service and Iowa Resource Enhancement Assistance Program funds.

To learn more about Farmers Creek and its success story, visit the [U.S. EPA’s website](#).

Air Quality permits under review

MEDIA CONTACT: Marnie Stein, DNR, at 515-725-9525 or Marnie.Stein@dnr.iowa.gov for Title V permits.

DES MOINES – The DNR Air Quality Bureau has the following draft permits up for review. The permits help protect Iowans’ health and air quality. DNR’s permitting staff review each permit application to ensure facilities comply with state and federal air quality requirements. We encourage public comments on draft permits, providing help on how to [make effective comments](#). Submit written comments to the assigned permit writer before 4:30 p.m. on the last day of the comment period. DNR considers public comments before finalizing the permits.

Title V Operating Permits

Title V Operating permits are reviewed and re-issued every five years. Facilities with a Title V permit have the potential to emit large amounts of air pollutants compared to other facilities. The five-year reviews are a federal requirement and ensure adequate monitoring is included in the permit. The DNR plans to issue Title V Operating Permits for the following facilities. Find permit details at www.iowadnr.gov/titlev-draft.

Black Hawk County Cedar Falls Municipal Water Utility – 2618 Greenhill Road, Cedar Falls. The application was submitted to operate their existing water supply facility. The public comment period ends Feb. 19.