

Legislature Approves Watershed Improvement Fund

First round approved to use new watershed projects resources

During the 2005 session, the Iowa legislature created a new \$5 million Watershed Improvement Fund to award grants to local organizations that are working to improve water quality. At the same time, the legislature also established a Watershed Improvement Review Board to administer the funds.

The two groups eligible to receive funds are Soil and Water Conservation Districts and local watershed improvement committees. Anyone who is affected by water quality or who may be affecting water quality, might be eligible to establish their own watershed improvement committee — a formally organized, nonprofit entity. Additional specific requirements for forming a local watershed improvement committee are found in the Request for Applications.

The Watershed Improvement Review Board — a 15-member board composed of representatives of environmental, agricultural, commodity, and water-related organizations and agencies — will review all applications. The board will then grant awards to projects that address water quality impairments from at least one of the following:

- agricultural runoff and drainage
- stream bank erosion
- municipal discharge
- stormwater runoff
- unsewered communities
- industrial discharge; and
- livestock runoff

Many types of water quality improvement projects may be eligible. Specific ranking criteria for projects are detailed in the Request For Applications, found at <http://www.agriculture.state.ia.us/IWIRB.htm>.

The maximum amount requested per application is limited to 10% of the annual appropriation to the fund from the legislature. For example, if \$5 million



is appropriated to the Watershed Improvement Fund, the maximum allocation for an individual application would be \$500,000 that year.

However, projects can be funded on a single application for up to three years. If a multi-year project is funded, the WIRB will set aside funds for the length of the entire project in order to ensure the project can be completed as proposed, and eliminating repeat funding requests.

This is a tremendous new resource for Iowans to fund the kind of projects that make a difference.

Contact

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The RFA documents, other information regarding the WIRB, and contact information for questions can be found on the WIRB website at: