



# MRBI 101: What is the Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative?

The Mississippi River—“America’s River”—is the largest river in North America, flowing over 2,300 miles through the heartland to the Gulf of Mexico, and the centerpiece of the second largest watershed in the world. The watershed not only provides drinking water, food, industry and recreation for millions of people but it also hosts a globally significant migratory flyway and home for more than 325 bird species.

For some time, sediments and nutrient loading have contributed to water quality problems throughout the river basin. The NRCS Chief initiated the Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative (MRBI) to work with conservation partners and build on the past efforts of agricultural producers in the 13-state area to address nutrient loading.

Participating states include Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio, South Dakota, Tennessee and Wisconsin.

NRCS is working with producers to manage and optimize nitrogen and phosphorus to minimize runoff and

reduce downstream nutrient loading. Through such Farm Bill conservation programs as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), NRCS offers a suite of conservation practices promoting water quality, wetland restoration and wildlife habitat while maintaining agricultural productivity.

The Initiative is available in targeted watersheds with approved projects. Iowa has 13 project areas within its six target watersheds which are: Boone River, Lower Grand River, Maquoketa River, North Raccoon River, Root River and Upper Cedar River.

Producers in these project areas are eligible for increased financial assistance for select conservation practices. Some of these practices in Iowa include: cover crop, denitrifying bioreactor, nutrient management, no-till, strip-till and terraces.

MRBI applications are accepted on a continuous basis. However, each project has a cutoff date for ranking application. To find out if your operation is within an MRBI project area, contact your local field office or go online: [www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/MRBI.html](http://www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/MRBI.html).

**Iowa MRBI Target Watersheds**

