

# Watershed Protection and Soil Conservation

Improving Iowa's water quality through watershed protection and soil conservation efforts continues to be a high priority of the Legislature.

The Legislature provided a total of \$8 million to Iowa's soil conservation cost-share program, an increase of \$1 million. The program helps landowners control soil erosion through terraces and other conservation practices, and helps with flood prevention.

Iowa's conservation reserve enhancement program is provided an additional \$2.5 million, for a total of \$4 million, to improve water quality through intercepting nitrates before they runoff into our rivers and streams. This money could draw down a 10 to 1 match of federal dollars through the Wetlands Reserve Enhancement Program (WREP).

Two million dollars is provided for the watershed improvement grant program, for local community projects to improve water quality. Since the program began in 2005, \$27 million has been provided for local watershed and water quality projects.

An additional \$1.8 million is provided to the Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship for conservation of soil and water resources or the support of soil and water conservation district commissioners. The department may also use some of this money to draw down a 10-1 federal dollar match from the USDA's Mississippi River basin healthy watersheds initiative.

A Mississippi River basin healthy watersheds initiative is created based on the federal program. This initiative is to assist in improving the health of the Mississippi River basin, including water quality and habitat. The moneys can provide for a conservation system that manages and optimizes nitrogen and phosphorous to minimize runoff, to control soil erosion, and to partner with landowners to implement land stewardship practices.