

Legislature Stresses Flood Prevention and Recovery

With rivers rising this spring and memories of the floods of 2008 still fresh in the minds of Iowans, the Legislature this year developed programs to prevent future flood damage. No one can stop all flooding, but Iowa communities can develop ways to mitigate the damage from floods.

Smart Growth Planning

One tool will be a set of ten smart growth planning principles that state and local governments can use in preparing both for economic growth and to mitigate damage from future floods. These principles, outlined in Senate File 2389, are guides and are not mandates. Communities that use smart growth principles in their comprehensive plans are eligible to apply for a grant to help with flood prevention. The bill also provides \$30 million for these grants.

In addition, a task force is created to consult with experts, local governments, and others; solicit information from the public; evaluate state policies, programs, and laws; develop statewide goals; and develop incentives to conduct comprehensive planning.

Flood Plain Management

A watershed demonstration pilot project for urban and rural areas is created in House File 2459. The project is to maximize water-holding capacity, minimize severe erosion during floods, manage water runoff in uplands under saturated soil moisture conditions, and reduce and mitigate structural and nonstructural flood damage.

Iowa State University extension service, the department of natural resources and state agencies are instructed in House File 2531 to work with experts to educate Iowans about flood plains, flood risks, and basic flood plain management principles.

Watershed Management

Realizing that flood prevention and mitigation is a regional issue; House File 2459 authorizes the creation of watershed management authorities between political subdivisions - cities, counties, and soil and water conservation districts. Authorities develop ways to reduce flood risk and improve water quality; and can monitor federal flood risk planning and activities.

Case Management

During the recovery efforts following the floods and storms of 2008, a case management system was implemented to help individual disaster victims determine what assistance was available to them and to help them apply for and receive that assistance. It is considered one of the successful efforts implemented in the wake of the 2008 disasters and has become a national model. House File 2422 will make the system permanent so it is available if needed in the future. In addition, a task force is created to determine how a case management system can be established for businesses.

Flood Recovery

As communities continue to rebuild from the floods, the Legislature is again providing funds, in Senate File 2389, to help communities become stronger and better than before. More than \$30 million will be available starting on July 1, the new fiscal year, to help specific communities rebuild their infrastructure and important buildings.