

Middle Iowa Watershed Management Authority

Quarterly Board Meeting

To: Cities, Counties, Soil & Water Conservation Districts, and other stakeholders in the Middle Iowa Watershed

From: Middle Iowa Watershed Management Authority

Subject: Middle Iowa Watershed Management Authority Quarterly Meeting January 9th, 2025

OVERVIEW: In 2010, Iowa lawmakers passed legislation authorizing the creation of Watershed Management Authorities (Iowa Administrative Code Chapter 466B Subchapter II). A Watershed Management Authority (WMA) is a mechanism for cities, counties, Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) and stakeholders to cooperatively engage in planning and management at the watershed scale. A WMA was formed for the Middle Iowa Watershed, and is comprised of member organizations located in Benton, Iowa, Johnson, Marshall, Poweshiek, and Tama counties.

MEETING AGENDA ATTACHED

For questions or inquiries, please contact Mike Wolfe (Stormwater Coordinator/MIWMA Board Chair, City of North Liberty) at 319-626-5713 or by email at mwolfe@northlibertyiowa.org, or Kasey Hutchinson (Environmental Regulations Coordinator, Johnson County Planning, Development and Sustainability) at 319-356-6083 or by email at khutchinson@johnsoncountyiowa.gov.

PUBLIC MEETING NOTICE: The quarterly board meeting of the Middle Iowa Watershed Management Authority has been scheduled for Thursday, January 9th at 1 PM at the City of Tama City Hall (305 Siegel Street, Tama, Iowa.) Cities, Counties, SWCDs and other watershed stakeholders are encouraged to attend and learn how they can collaborate with this important organization.

MEETING AGENDA: The complete meeting agenda follows. Please post the agenda in a public location and share the invitation widely with staff, elected officials, and other interested stakeholders.

Middle Iowa Watershed Management Authority

Quarterly Board Meeting

Meeting: Thursday, January 9th • 1 PM – 3 PM

Location: City of Tama City Hall – Large Meeting Room

Address: 305 Siegel Street, Tama, Iowa 52339

MEETING AGENDA

1. Call to Order and Roll Call
2. Approval of October Meeting Minutes
3. Carissa Shoemaker, The Nature Conservancy – presentation on TNC's priorities, programs, and resources
 - a. Carissa Shoemaker presented virtually, providing a general overview of what TNC does as well as current and ongoing work in Iowa. The TNC has staff dedicated to policy and advocacy, renewable energy, agriculture programs, land protection, oxbows and wetlands, etc.
 - b. Currently, TNC has a lot of land protection in place in the Iowa/Cedar watershed, especially in Cedar County. This involves land acquisition. TNC has mapped potential oxbow locations but have not yet prioritized the Iowa watershed for this. They do focus on biodiversity hotspots. The land acquisition involves placement of easements and transfer of land so it does not remain under TNC ownership.
 - c. TNC tools presented:
 - i. Resilient Land Mapping Tool
 1. This tool shows where the good stuff is already happening.
 2. Can import polygons to define areas of interest and import your watershed that will generate a report. This tool could be useful for grant writing or planning work.
 - ii. Resilient River Explorer
 1. Can use this tool to look at various metrics and connectivity of the rivers (based on dams).
 2. Tool also allows you to run scenarios with dam removal incorporated, to see how it changes things.
 - d. Carissa is advocating for the Middle Iowa watershed to be included as a TNC priority watershed.
 - i. Even if not a priority watershed, there is still opportunity to partner, but being designated a priority greatly facilitates partnering.
 - e. Carissa will share the slides and maps from today's presentation.
4. IDNR Comprehensive Water Quality Management Planning Grant Updates
 - a. Draft Chapters, Watershed Prioritization (HEI)
 - i. Rachel Olm with HEI presented on plan chapters that have been drafted and reviewed by the TAC, and ready for distribution to the full board. This includes the plan introduction and watershed characterization. Other chapters that are currently in progress include the watershed issues and management goals, and selection of priority subwatersheds. These chapters, once draft complete, will be provided to the TAC for review later in the month.
 - ii. Charles Ikenberry with HEI presented results from the Recovery Potential Screening tool, along with observations and recommendations on selection

Middle Iowa Watershed Management Authority

Quarterly Board Meeting

of priority HUC-12 watersheds. Stressor, Ecological, and Social indicators were covered, along with the resulting top rankings of subwatersheds based on these indicators.

- iii. Some things considered in the initial priority recommendations included were subwatersheds that made multiple lists.
- iv. Discussion followed the presentation, with three out of the four priority HUC12 watersheds selected, which include Hilton Creek, South Branch Salt Creek, and Stoney Creek-Big Bear. It was decided that the fourth recommended HUC12 (Otter Creek) be further discussed with potential alternatives to be presented to the TAC by HEI. A virtual meeting can be held for TAC to make recommendation to the full WMA board, and vote on fourth priority watershed.

b. Outreach and Education Committee planning update

- 1. Heartland Co-Op: A Very Cover Crop Christmas (Kasey Hutchinson), November 2024
 - a. Kasey Hutchinson updated the group on this event. It is considered the first unofficial outreach event. A small table was set up for Middle Iowa WMA.
 - b. There were 20 or so attendees, and representatives from the Middle Iowa WMA included Mel, Kasey, Al, Mike, Brent.
 - c. A pamphlet was created for the event using some language provided by HEI as well as from the grant application that members can put to use. This will be uploaded to the website once ready.
 - d. Had a simple straw poll asking attendees what conservation practices they are interested in learning more about and what conservation practices they are ready to implement. Wetlands received the most votes for both questions.
- 2. Tama SWCD Soil Health Event (Mel Bro), February 25, 2025
 - a. Melody Bro (Tama SWCD) updated the group on an upcoming outreach event that is being put on by Tama SWCD: Roots to Rivers: Exploring the Connection Between Soil Health and Water Quality.
 - b. The Middle Iowa WMA has been invited to set up a table similar to that at the Heartland Co-Op event.
 - c. The event has several great speakers lined up including: Lance Gunderson (founder of Regen Ag Lab), Tanner Puls (IDALS Edge-of-Field Coordinator), Ruth McCabe (Heartland Cooperative Conservation Agronomist). There will also be a farmer panel hosted by Adam Nechanicky (Tama County farmer and livestock producer).
 - d. An RSVP is required for the event.

ii. Other Potential Events - Discussion

- 1. Heartland Co-Op Recruitment Dinners

Middle Iowa Watershed Management Authority

Quarterly Board Meeting

- a. Kasey Hutchinson informed the group of farmer recruitment dinners coming up at the end of January put on by Heartland Co-Op. There will be two separate events, one in Iowa/Tama one in Poweshiek/Marshall.
- b. The WMA will plan to have table plus straw poll as was done at the A Very Cover Crop Christmas event.
- c. Anyone interested in representing the Middle Iowa WMA at this event should let Kasey know so she can give final numbers to Heartland Co-Op.
- 2. Practical Farmers of Iowa (Cynthia Farmer)
 - a. Cynthia Farmer (Center for Rural Affairs) updated the group on a potential event in cooperation with Practical Farmers of Iowa
 - b. There are many options for the group, of which the responsibility of the WMA for planning varies greatly. The WMA would have more input in some options than the others, the fees also vary.
 - c. The group can provide topic ideas along with landowners for the WMA to propose to PFI.
- 3. Iowa Learning Farms (Mel Bro)
 - a. Mel Bro (Tama SWCD) updated the group on a potential event in cooperation with Iowa Learning Farm.
 - b. Mel has been in contact with Liz Ripley, they have tools available that focus on how to talk to your tenant and landowner.
 - c. The group can provide topic ideas along with host sites to ILF.
- iii. Urban Topics
 - 1. OEC still discussing and working on establishing urban sessions.
 - 2. Will update group as the OEC decides on events.
 - a. Any ideas can be emailed to Kasey.
- c. Middle Iowa WMA Logo Design Contest (5 minutes)
 - i. Includes schools across Benton, Iowa, Linn, Johnson, Marshall, Poweshiek, and Tama counties
 - ii. Deadline of January 24, winner announced February 3
 - iii. Judging panel – OEC and the executive board
 - 1. The OEC will send out the winning announcement
- d. WMA Story Map Discussion (HEI) (10-15 minutes)
 - i. HEI updated the group on development of the WMA website.
 - ii. This will be a WordPress site, address will be middleiowawma.org.

- 5. Other Business (10 minutes)
- a. WMA members update
 - i. New members:
 - 1. City of Cedar Rapids and Linn County are newly official members.
 - ii. Existing members:

Middle Iowa Watershed Management Authority

Quarterly Board Meeting

1. Cities: Belle Plaine, Cedar Rapids, Chelsea, North Liberty, Solon, Walford
2. Counties: Iowa, Johnson, Linn, Marshall, Poweshiek
3. SWCDs: Iowa, Marshall, Tama

iii. Potential members on the horizon:

1. Jeff Tindle (Poweshiek Soil Commissioner) has been communicating with the Mayor of Grinnell, Dan Agnew. Dan has expressed interest in involvement with the WMA. This would be a great group to add as a cooperating partner.

b. Request for Letter of Support – Kate Giannini, Iowa Flood Center

- i. The group agreed to provide a letter of support to the Iowa Flood Center for an EPA Farmer to Farmer grant.
- ii. The project will center around storytelling on water quality, including a roadshow across Iowa of sorts, with regenerative farmer Seth Watkins.
- iii. The project will also look to develop a cohort of four communities to involve, and fund water quality demonstration projects.
- iv. The group will also travel to the Gulf of Mexico and explore how to collaborate and develop deeper relationships.

c. City of Belle Plaine Projects in the Works – Steve Beck, City Administrator

- i. The City of Belle Plaine will be constructing a wetland this year with a \$500,000 IDNR grant.
- ii. They recently were active in outreach related to this grant, at the Iowa Institute of Hydraulic Research (IIHR) at the University of Iowa.
 1. A seminar featuring the hydrologic cycle was put on by IIHR that was available to both kids and adults.
 2. The students are in a “Future City” competition where they design a floating city and construct a scaled model. Related to this, the students had a chance to tour the wave simulator building at IIHR.

d. Source Water Protection Event – March 5th, 9-3

- i. Will be hosted by Belle Plaine and put on by IDNR.
- ii. CEU’s are available.

6. Public Comments

7. Schedule April Meeting (tentatively April 3rd, 1:00)

- a. Location selection
 - i. Curtis Behrens (Tama County Conservation Director) has offered use of the facilities at the Tama County Otter Creek Lake and Park.
 - ii. The WMA decided move the April meeting to this location.
 - iii. Meeting will be held at the same time, 1:00-3:00.

Please post this meeting notice and agenda in a public location.