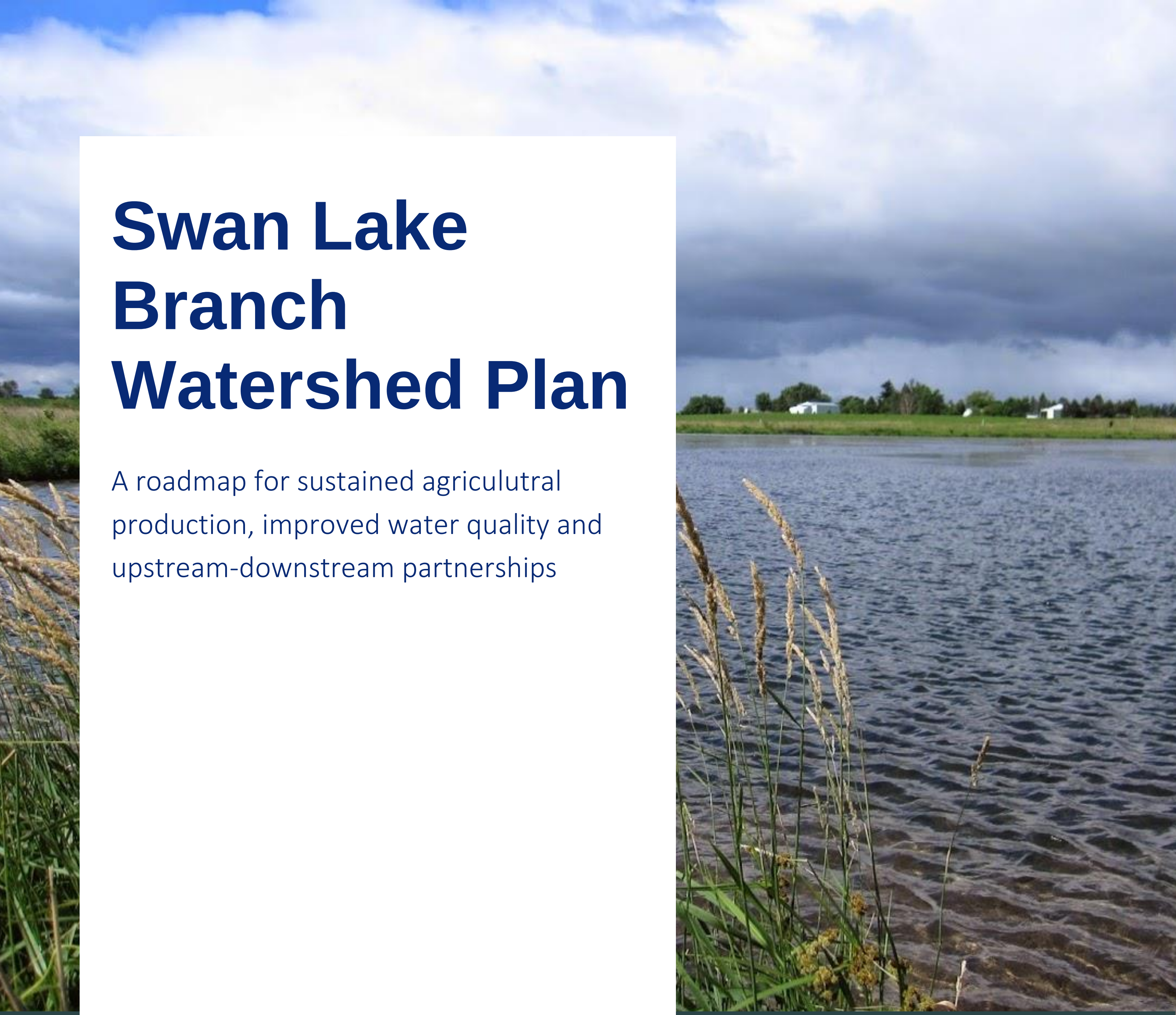

Swan Lake Branch Watershed Plan

A roadmap for sustained agriculutral production, improved water quality and upstream-downstream partnerships

FEBRUARY 20, 2018

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Iowa Soybean Association Environmental Programs & Services

Funding to support the development of this watershed plan document and associated watershed planning activities in the Swan Lake Branch Watershed has been provided by:

The WALTON FAMILY FOUNDATION

Watershed planning partners:

Watershed residents, farmers and landowners

Dallas County Soil & Water Conservation District

City of Des Moines

A roadmap for sustained agricultural productivity and improved water quality in the Swan Lake Branch Watershed.

Why was the Swan Lake Branch Watershed Plan developed?

This watershed plan is intended to provide a roadmap for land and water improvements in the Swan Lake Branch Watershed while simultaneously maintaining and improving agricultural performance and quality of life. Environmental improvements are a big task, and trying to tackle everything at once can be daunting. This plan lays out a phased approach to implementation to ensure continuous improvements are made towards achieving long-term goals for the watershed.

Who owns this watershed plan?

This plan is for all stakeholders interested in the Swan Lake Branch Watershed, including landowners, farmers, residents, nongovernmental organizations and local, state and federal units of government. Ultimately, successful implementation of this plan will rest with these stakeholders.

Who developed this watershed plan?

This plan was developed by the Iowa Soybean Association and input was provided by representatives of landowners, farmers, residents and city, county and federal governments.

Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary

A watershed is an area of land that drains to a single point (Figure 1.1). The Swan Lake Branch Watershed is comprised of 15,775 acres in northwest Dallas County. Two small streams, Swan Lake Branch and Elm Branch, combine to form a stream that meets with the North Raccoon River south of Perry, Iowa.

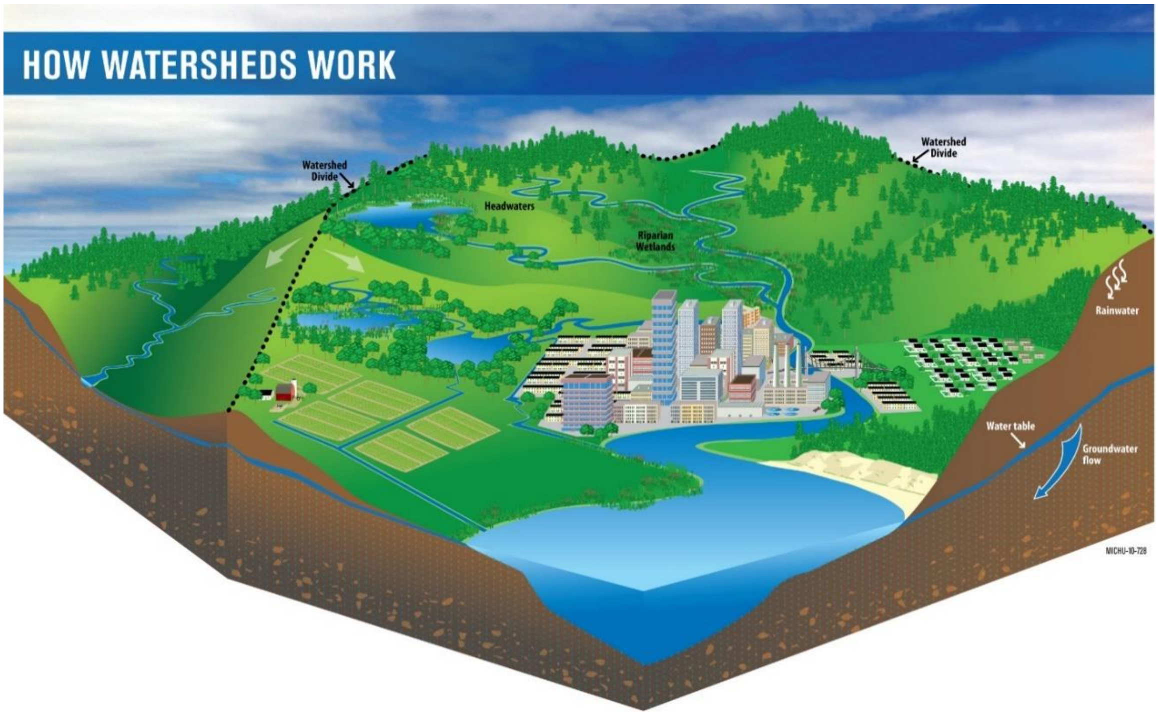


Figure 1.1. A watershed contains the land and water that flow to a common point (Michigan Sea Grant).

This watershed plan defines and addresses existing land and water quality conditions, identifies challenges and opportunities and provides a path for improvement. The watershed plan was developed according to the watershed planning process recommended by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (Figure 1.2) and incorporated input from a variety of public and private stakeholders. The Iowa Soybean Association led development of this watershed plan with funding provided by the Walton Family Foundation. Stakeholders including watershed farmers and landowners, conservation professionals and others contributed local knowledge and insights. The Swan Lake Branch Watershed Plan integrates existing data, citizen and stakeholder input and conservation practice recommendations to meet the goals established through the watershed planning process.

The Swan Lake Branch Watershed was identified for watershed planning due an interest from the City of Des Moines to invest in water quality and flood reduction practices. New relationships have been formed between the Iowa Soybean Association, the City of Des Moines and farmers and landowners in the watershed focused on the importance of water quality and increased local adoption of conservation and water quality improvement practices. Community participation proved important during the watershed planning phase. Such local engagement and leadership will be essential as the plan is implemented now and in the future.

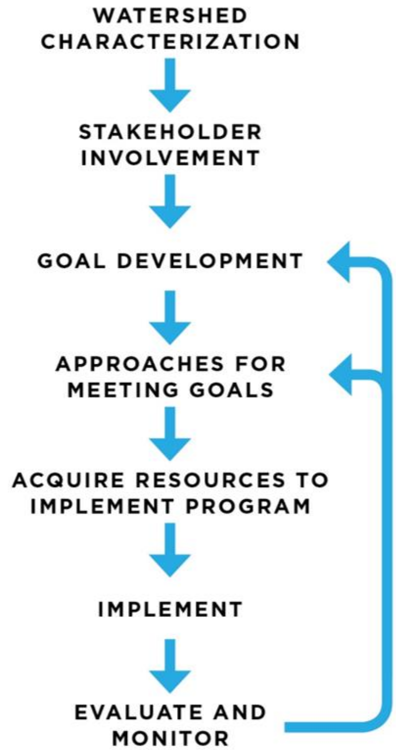


Figure 1.2. The watershed planning process.

The Swan Lake Branch watershed is a subwatershed of the larger North Raccoon basin, which is one of nine priority watersheds identified in the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy (INRS). The INRS identifies a broad strategy to reduce nutrient loads in Iowa water bodies and downstream waters that incorporates regulatory guidelines for point sources of nutrients and a non-regulatory approach for nonpoint nutrient sources. This watershed plan was developed within the flexible nonpoint source framework to identify a locally appropriate strategy to address INRS water quality improvement goals.

Goals for the Swan Lake Branch Watershed have been identified to achieve the vision of all stakeholders. This document guides stakeholders according to a continuous improvement approach to watershed management. It is important both to adopt a long-term perspective and to realize that many small improvements must be made to cause large, lasting changes for the entire watershed. The long-term goals of the Swan Lake Branch Watershed Plan are to:

1. Identify cost effective solutions
2. Provide for profitable and productive agriculture
3. Create conditions for healthy soils and water
4. Minimize downstream impacts
5. Work with urban and rural stakeholders to implement

Public involvement was a key component of the watershed planning process. Watershed planners encouraged participation throughout the planning process and sought to incorporate diverse stakeholder input from farmers, landowners, farm managers, agricultural service providers, conservation professionals and other local stakeholders to guide the development of this watershed plan.

Improving land and water resources in the Swan Lake Branch Watershed is a complex challenge and will require substantial, long-term collaboration and partnerships. The implementation schedule in this watershed plan was developed to balance currently available resources and awareness with the need and desire to improve land and water quality. A 20-year phased implementation schedule has been designed to allow for continuous improvements that can be periodically evaluated to determine if progress is being made toward achieving the stated goals by the year 2037. The total investment necessary to accomplish the watershed plan goals is estimated to be approximately $2,052,100 for initial infrastructure costs associated with structural practices, $338,600 for annual costs associated with management practices and an additional $75,000-$125,000 per year to fund technical assistance, outreach, monitoring and equipment necessary to promote and implement conservation in the watershed.

Expenditures for watershed improvement in the Swan Lake Branch Watershed should be viewed as long-term investments in agricultural vitality and water quality. With this perspective in mind, the cost efficiency of any purchased investments (i.e., conservation practices) should be considered along with their potential internal and external benefits and risks. This approach allows for water quality investors (i.e., public or private funding sources) to select conservation practices that align with investment preferences and goals. Table 1.1 contains estimates of annualized nitrogen and phosphorus load reduction cost efficiency for practices that are included in the Swan Lake Branch Watershed Plan. Many of these practices have additional on- and off-farm economic and ecosystem benefits that could also be considered as specific conservation practices are funded.

Table 1.1. Estimated annual nutrient reduction cost efficiency of conservation practices from the Swan Lake Branch Watershed conceptual plan. Nitrogen and phosphorus load reduction costs were annualized to reflect the typical lifespan of each practice.

						Watershed load reductions		**Cost per Pound of Reduction**	
	Practice	**Watershed plan goal**	**Unit**	**Cost per unit**	**Total cost**	**Nitrogen (lb N/yr)**	**Phosphorus (lb P/yr)**	**Nitrogen ($/lb N/yr)**	**Phosphorus ($/ton P/yr)**
Annual costs	Cover crops	6,000	acres	$50	$300,000	55,800	288	$5.38	$0.52
	Conversion of Cropland to Perennial Cover	200	acres	$193	$38,600	5,100	25	$7.57	$0.77
Initial costs	Drainage water management (50-year life)	200	acres	$63	$12,600	1,980	0	$0.13	
	Bioreactors (15-year life)	10	sites	$15,000	$150,000	6,327	0	$1.58	
	Saturated buffers (75-year life)	8	sites	$4,000	$32,000	2,561	0	$0.17	
	Nitrate removal wetlands (75-year life)	5	sites	$371,500	$1,857,500	94,168	687	$0.26	$0.02

Ultimately any land and water quality improvements made in the watershed will be driven by local desire, education and participation. The conceptual, monitoring, goal-based outreach and evaluation components of this watershed plan should provide a framework to guide efforts and focus resources in order to achieve the vision of the Swan Lake Branch Watershed.

2. Watershed Characteristics

2.1. General Information

The Swan Lake Branch Watershed encompasses 15,775 acres used primarily for agricultural production. Row crop agriculture occupies 89 percent of the watershed. Terrain in the watershed is predominately flat and includes small topographic depressions and wetlands known as prairie potholes. There are areas of steeper terrain in the eastern portion of the watershed along the two small streams. The primary stream in the Swan Lake Branch watershed is formed by two small streams joining just upstream form mouth with the North Raccoon River. The streams flow generally from west to east from the headwaters to its confluence with the North Raccoon River. A segment of the Swan Lake Branch has been designated by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) as a waterbody that should support recreation and aquatic life. Most of the stream channels in the watershed appear to be natural stream channels, there may be a few areas where past channelization has occurred. Prior to the late 1800s there was a Swan Lake located in the western portion of the watershed. The lake was drained and is now productive farm land. There is no public land in the watershed. Table 2.1.1 lists general information for the Swan Lake Branch stream segments and the 12-digit Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC) watershed.

Table 2.1.1. Watershed and stream information for the Swan Lake Branch.

Location	Northwest Dallas County
Waterbody ID (WBID)	04-RAC-1142
Segment classes	A1, B(WW-2)
Designated uses	Primary contact recreation, Aquatic life
WBID segment length	3.2 miles
Total length of all streams	23.8 miles
Watershed area	15,775 acres
Dominant land use	Row crop agriculture
Incorporated communities	None
HUC8 watershed	North Raccoon
HUC8 ID	07100006
HUC10 watershed	Swan Lake Branch – North Raccoon River
HUC10 ID	0710000615
HUC12 watershed	Swan Lake Branch
HUC12 ID	071000061502

2.2. Water and Wetlands

Surface water in the Swan Lake Branch Watershed includes Elm Branch, Swan Lake Branch and small unnamed tributary streams. Figure 2.2.1 shows the identified streams within the watershed. Figure 2.2.2 displays the wetlands in the Swan Lake Branch Watershed as identified by the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI), which are also summarized in Table 2.2.1. The NWI dataset was developed beginning in the 1970s by the US Fish and Wildlife Service via aerial photo interpretation.

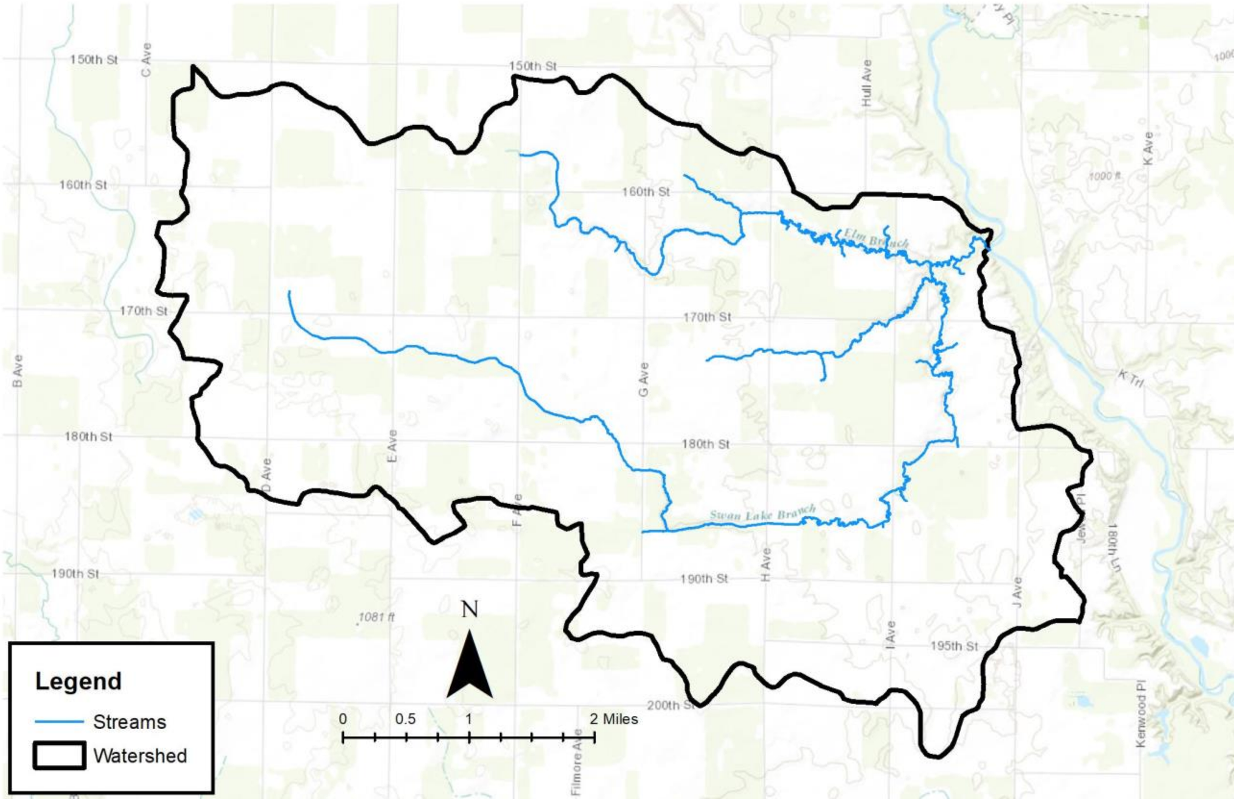


Figure 2.2.1. Streams identified in the Swan Lake Branch Watershed.

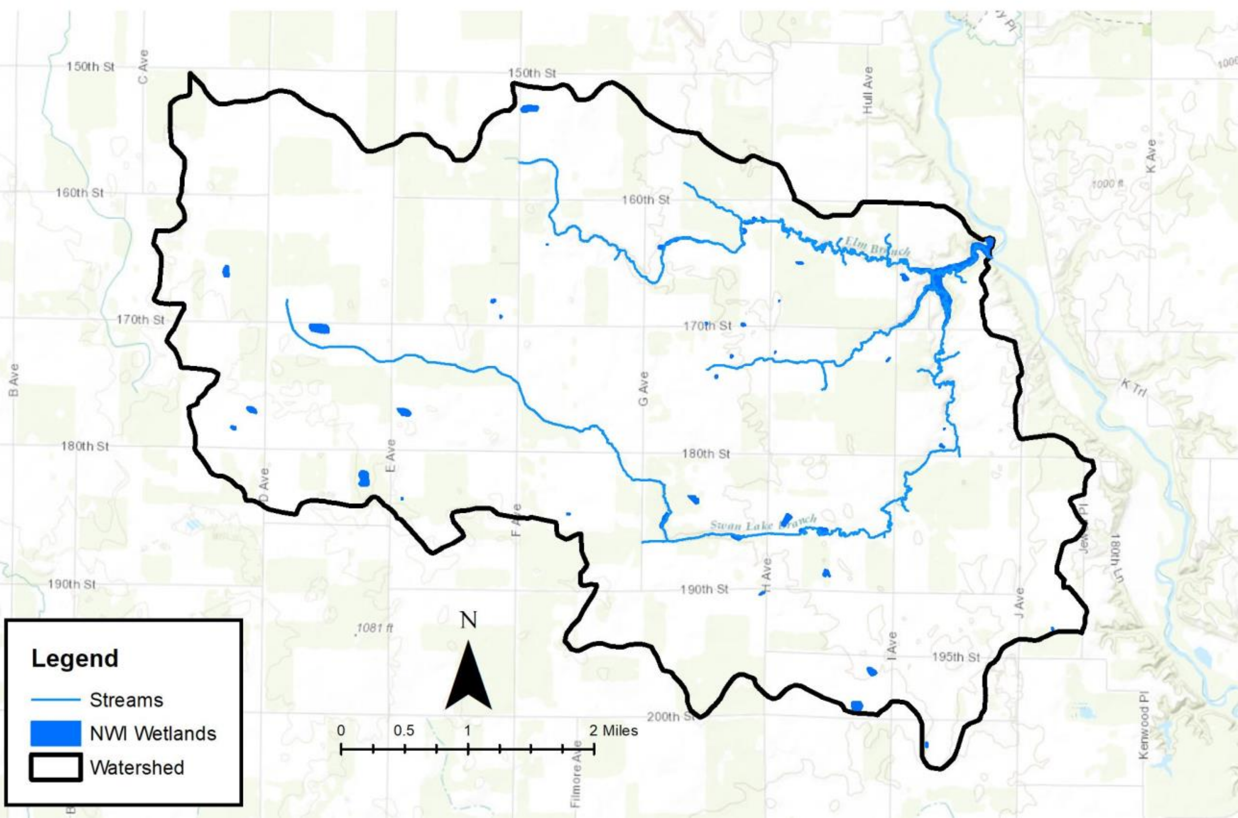


Figure 2.2.2. Wetlands in the Swan Lake Branch Watershed mapped in the NWI.

Table 2.2.1. Classification of wetlands in the Swan Lake Branch Watershed according to the NWI.

Type	Acres
Intermittently Exposed	1
Intermittently Flooded	33
Permanently Flooded	<1
Seasonally Flooded	10
Semipermanently Flooded	4
Temporarily Flooded	51
Total	100

2.3. Climate

Precipitation data obtained from the Iowa Environmental Mesonet for the Swan Lake Branch Watershed show annual total precipitation averaged 37.1 inches per year between 2000 and 2016, but a range of 23.6 to 52.8 inches per year for that 16-year period reveals large annual variability. Annual precipitation trends are shown in Figure 2.3.1. Precipitation is seasonal in the watershed, with May through August having the highest average monthly rainfall during the most recent 16 years. Monthly precipitation averages are displayed in Figure 2.3.2.

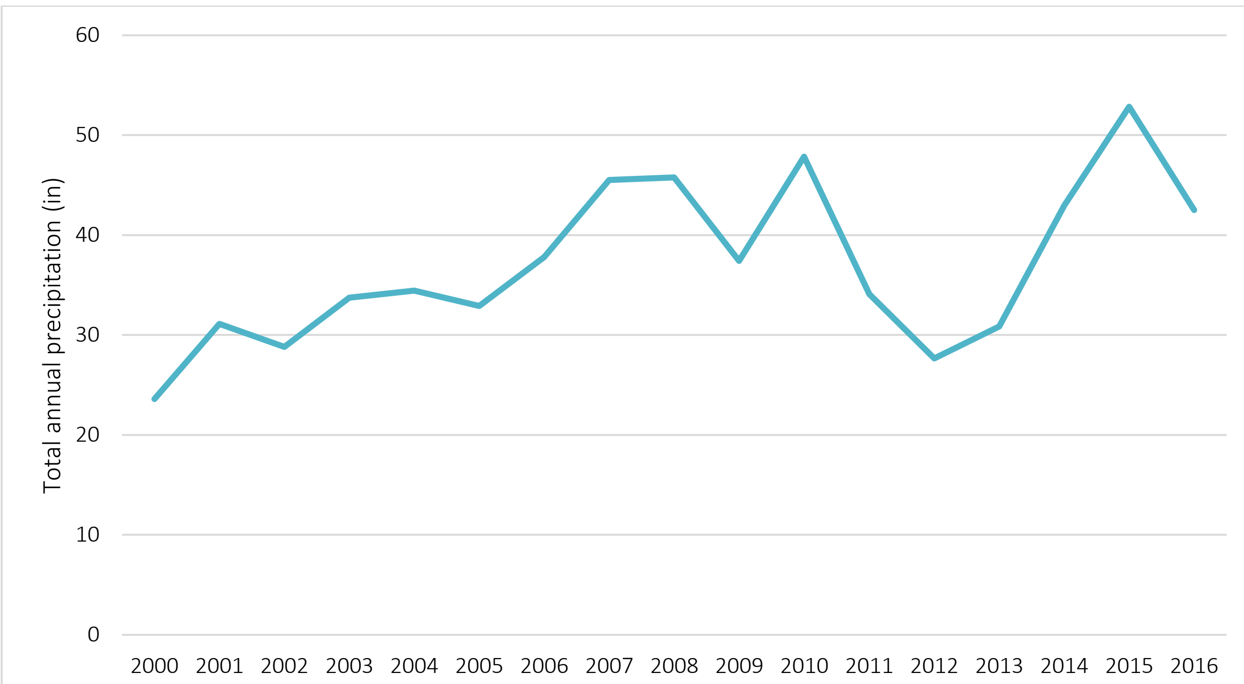


Figure 2.3.1. Total annual precipitation for the Swan Lake Branch Watershed from 2000 through 2016.

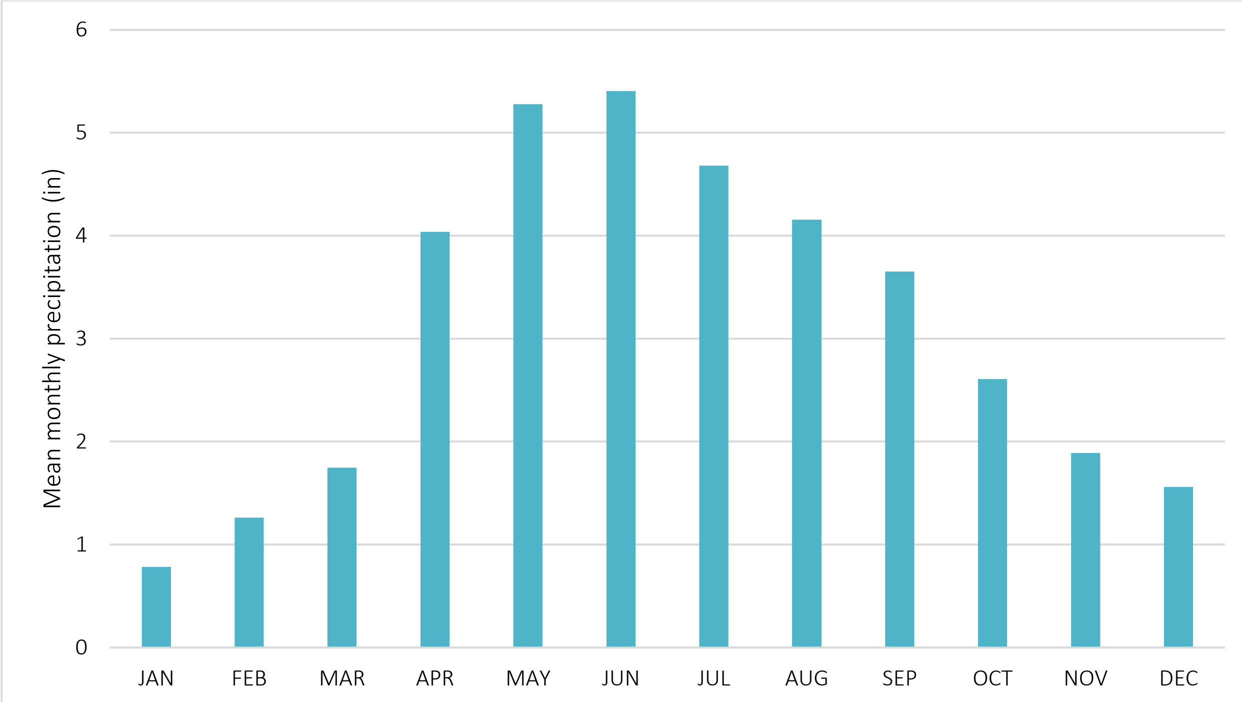


Figure 2.3.2. 2000 to 2016 average precipitation by month for the Swan Lake Branch Watershed.

2.4. Geology and Terrain

The Swan Lake Branch Watershed is located within the Des Moines Lobe landform region. The Des Moines Lobe was last glaciated approximately 12,000 years ago during the Wisconsin glaciation. This relatively recent glaciation is expressed on the present day landscape as poor surface drainage, limited stream network density and flat to gently rolling topography with low local relief. Commonly referred to as the Prairie Pothole region, the Des Moines Lobe is characterized by depressions and ridges. Due to the young geologic age of the region the predominant subsurface parent material is mixed glacial till. The watershed is also located within the Central Iowa and Minnesota Till Prairies Major Land Resource Area (MLRA 103). Land surface elevation in the watershed ranges from 912 to 1070 feet above sea level. Figure 2.4.1 shows elevations derived from Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) data. Figure 2.4.2 displays the spatial distribution of slope classes within the watershed, which are also listed in Table 2.4.1. Ninety percent of the watershed has slopes less than 5%.

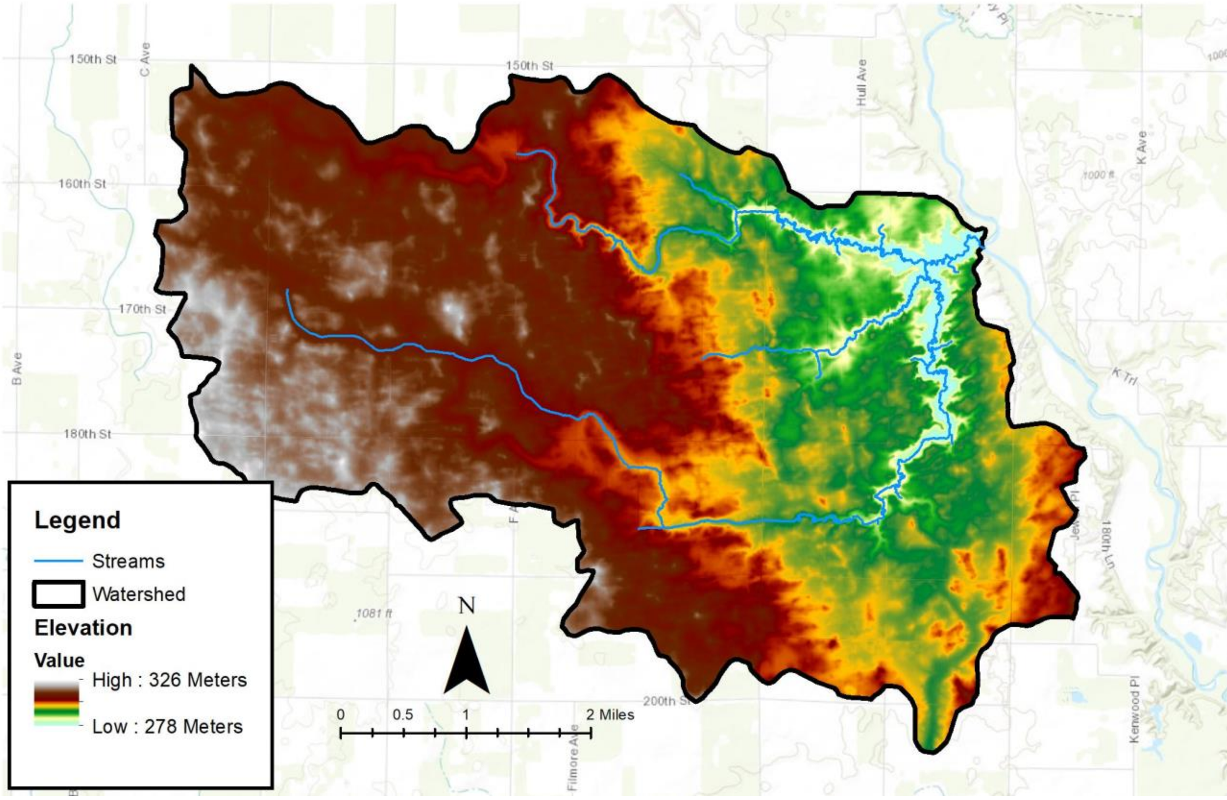


Figure 2.4.1. LiDAR-derived elevations within the Swan Lake Branch Watershed.

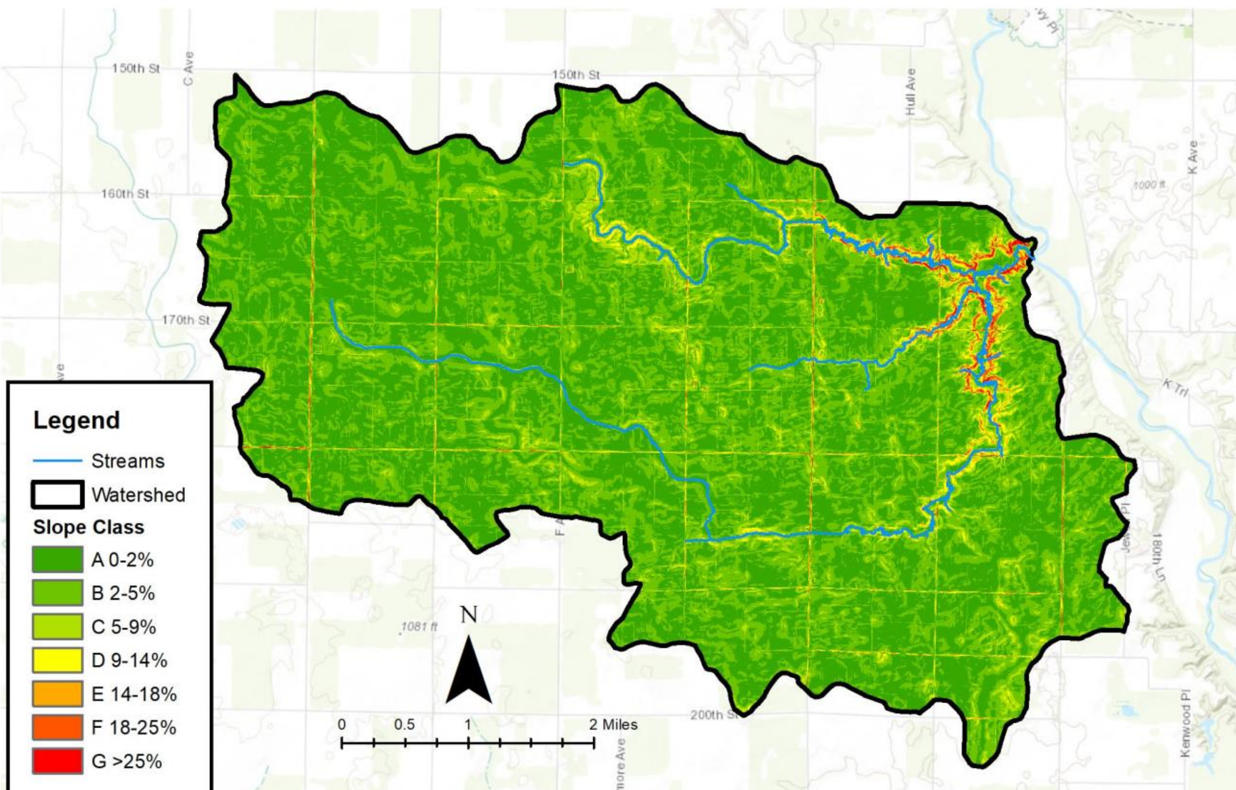


Figure 2.4.2. Swan Lake Branch Watershed slope classifications derived from elevation data.

Table 2.4.1. Extent of each slope class within the Swan Lake Branch Watershed.

Slope Class	Range	Acres	Percent
A	0-2%	8,378	53%
B	2-5%	5,798	37
C	5-9%	954	6
D	9-14%	322	2
E	14-18%	137	0.9
F	18-25%	110	0.7
G	> 25%	64	0.4

2.5. Soils

The most common soil association in the Swan Lake Branch Watershed is the Clarion-Nicollet-Webster soil association. Parent materials include primarily glacial till and outwash along with some alluvium. Native vegetation for these soils was tall and short grass prairie. Overall these soils have poor natural drainage but are highly productive if drained, so tile drainage is common for many soils in this association. The four most prevalent soil series in the watershed are Webster, Clarion, Canisteo and Nicollet which together comprise over 88 percent of the watershed. Figure 2.5.1 is a map of the most common soils within the watershed according to the Soil Survey Geographic Database (SSURGO) coverage developed by the National Cooperative Soil Survey and the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Descriptions of the Webster, Clarion, Canisteo and Nicollet soil series are given in Table 2.5.1.

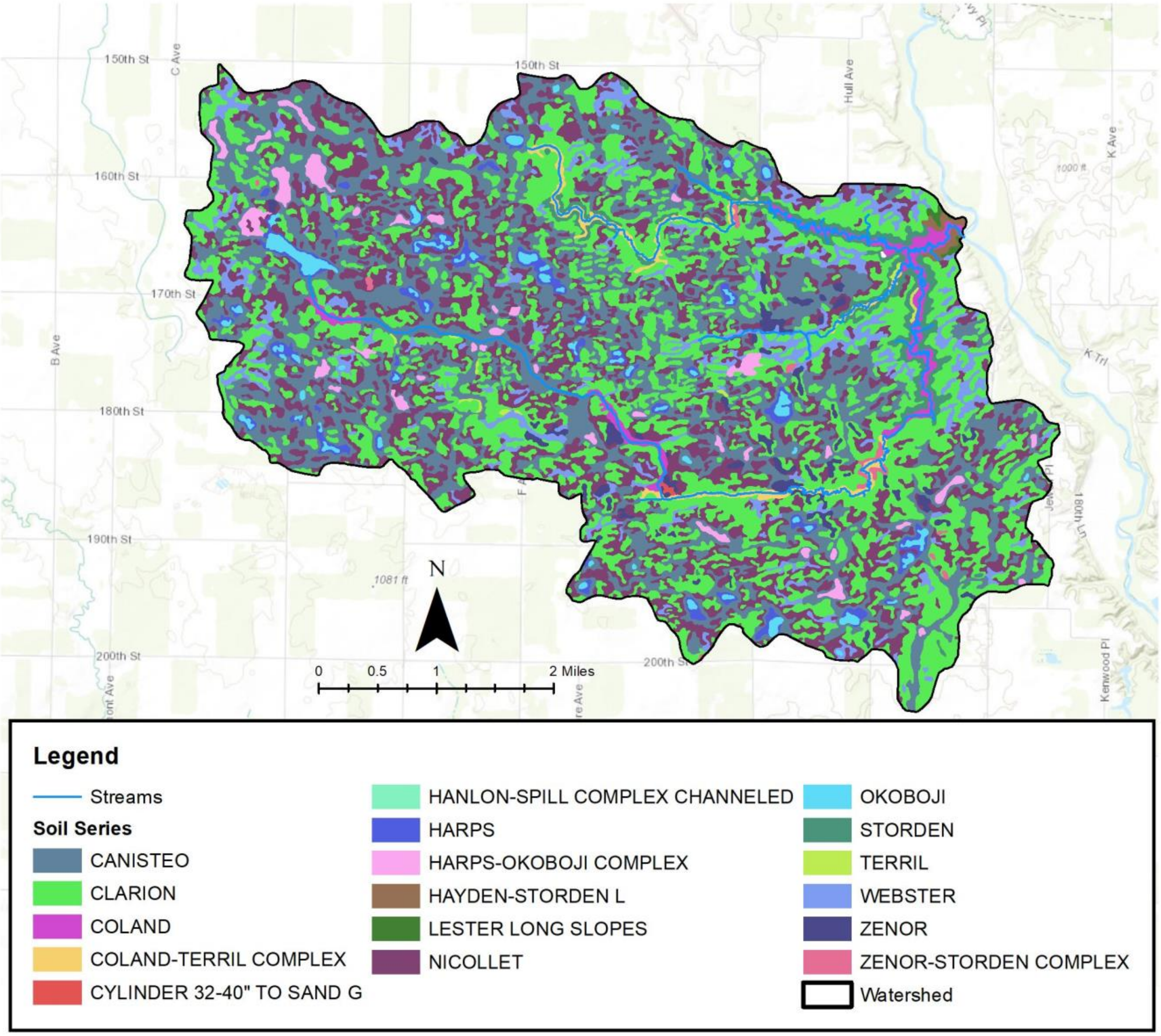


Figure 2.5.1. Swan Lake Branch Watershed soil map derived from SSURGO data.

Table 2.5.1. Official NRCS soil series descriptions.

Soil Series	Description
Webster	Very deep, poorly drained, moderately permeable soils formed in glacial till or local alluvium derived from till on uplands. Slope ranges from 0 to 3 percent.
Clarion	Very deep, moderately well drained soils on uplands. These soils formed in glacial till. Slopes range from 1 to 9 percent.
Canisteo	Very deep, poorly and very poorly drained soils that formed in calcareous, loamy till or in a thin mantle of loamy or silty sediments and the underlying calcareous, loamy till. These soils are on rims of depressions, depressions and flats on moraines or till plains. Slope ranges from 0 to 2 percent.
Nicollet	Very deep, somewhat poorly drained soils that formed in calcareous loamy glacial till on till plains and moraines. Slopes range from 0 to 5 percent.

Soil drainage properties affect surface and subsurface water movement within the watershed. These characteristics are summarized in Table 2.5.2. Approximately 41 percent of the soils in the Swan Lake Branch Watershed are classified as hydric, which means they are saturated, flooded or ponded during the growing season for sufficient duration to develop anaerobic conditions in the upper portion of the soil profile. Hydric classification is independent of soil drainage status, so tiled soils may be hydric. Hydric soils within the watershed are mapped in Figure 2.5.2.

Table 2.5.2. Drainage properties and general productivity of major soils in the Swan Lake Branch Watershed.

Soil Series	Acres	Percent	CSR2	Drainage Class	Hydrologic Group	Hydric Class
Webster	911	6%	87	Poorly drained	B/D	All hydric
Clarion	5,037	32%	80	Well drained	B	Not hydric
Canisteo	4,366	28%	82	Poorly drained	B/D	All hydric
Nicollet	3,596	23%	92	Somewhat poorly drained	B	Partially hydric

As in many other watersheds in the low relief regions in Iowa, much land within the Swan Lake Branch Watershed is likely to be artificially drained in order to make agriculture possible and productive. Public records of subsurface drainage infrastructure are nonexistent or sparse, but the USDA-Agricultural Research Service (ARS) has developed a geographic coverage of soils in Iowa that are likely to be drained. Figure 2.5.3 uses this coverage to show where tile drainage may be necessary to maximize agricultural productivity but may not reflect all areas that currently have drainage tile.

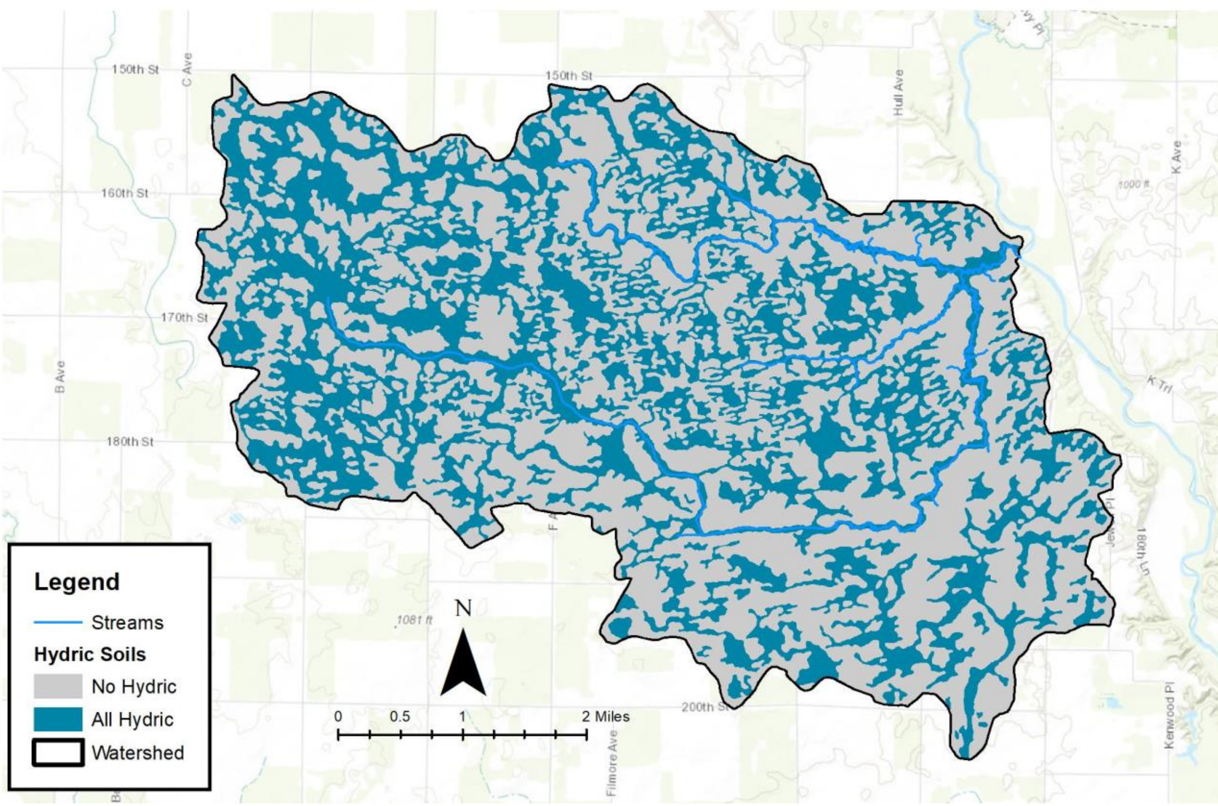


Figure 2.5.2. Soil map units in the Swan Lake Branch Watershed that are classified as hydric.

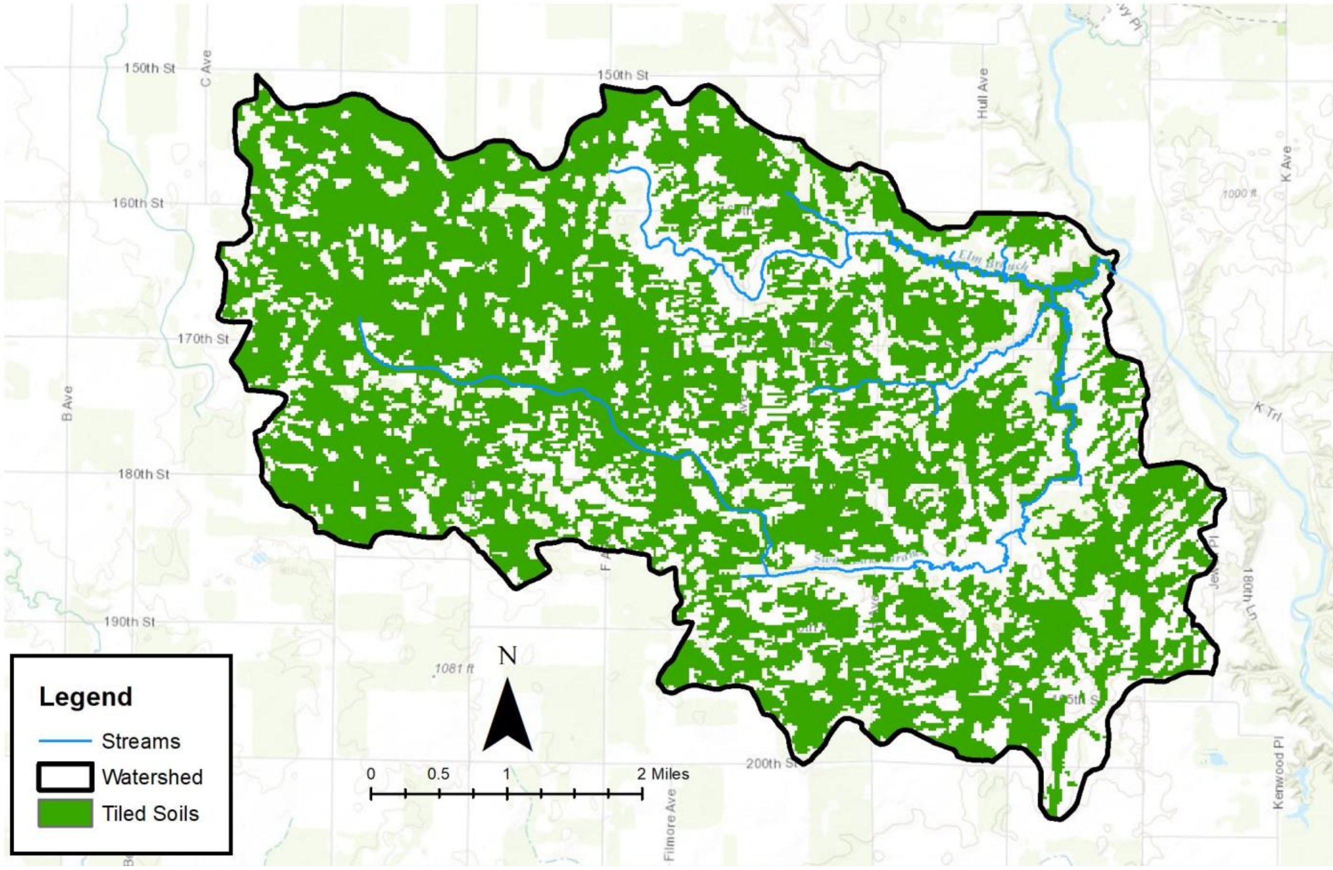


Figure 2.5.3. Areas in the Swan Lake Branch Watershed requiring tile drainage to optimize agricultural production.

Soil map units in Iowa are assigned Corn Suitability Rating 2 (CSR2) values, which are listed for the major soil series within the watershed in Table 2.5.2. Figure 2.5.4 displays the CSR2 values for land within the Swan Lake Branch Watershed. This map was generated by matching spatial SSURGO data to the Iowa Soil Properties and Interpretations Database (ISPAID) version 8.1. The CSR2 is an index that provides a relative ranking of soils mapped in Iowa based on their potential to be utilized for intensive row crop production and thus are sometimes used to compare yield potential. CSR2 scores range from 5 (severely limited soils) to 100 (soils with no physical limitations, no or low slope and can be continuously farmed). The rating system assumes adequate management, natural precipitation, artificial drainage where necessary, no negative effects from flooding and no land leveling or terracing.

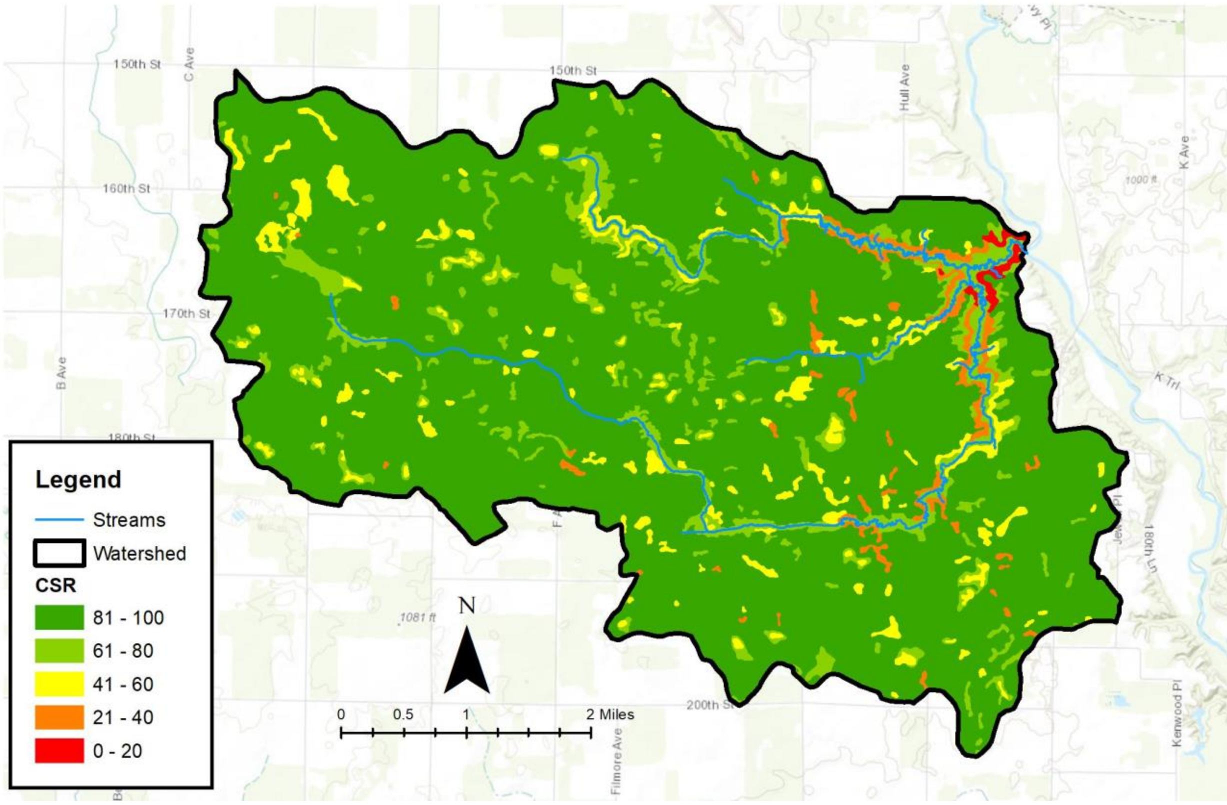


Figure 2.5.4. Corn Suitability Rating (CSR2) values for land in the Swan Lake Branch Watershed.

2.6. Land Use and Management

Land in the Swan Lake Branch Watershed is used primarily for row crop agriculture, which is a major change from its natural state. The General Land Office (GLO) first surveyed the land in Iowa between 1832 and 1859. Surveyors recorded descriptive notes and maps of the landscape and natural resources such as vegetation, water, soil and landform. The collection of historic GLO maps and survey notes is one of few sources of information about native vegetation before much of Iowa's landscape was converted to production agriculture. The GLO surveyors classified land within the Swan Lake Branch Watershed as 98 percent prairie, 1 percent timber and 1 percent water or wetlands. Figure 2.6.1 shows current streams connect and likely drain many of the historically wet portions of the watershed.

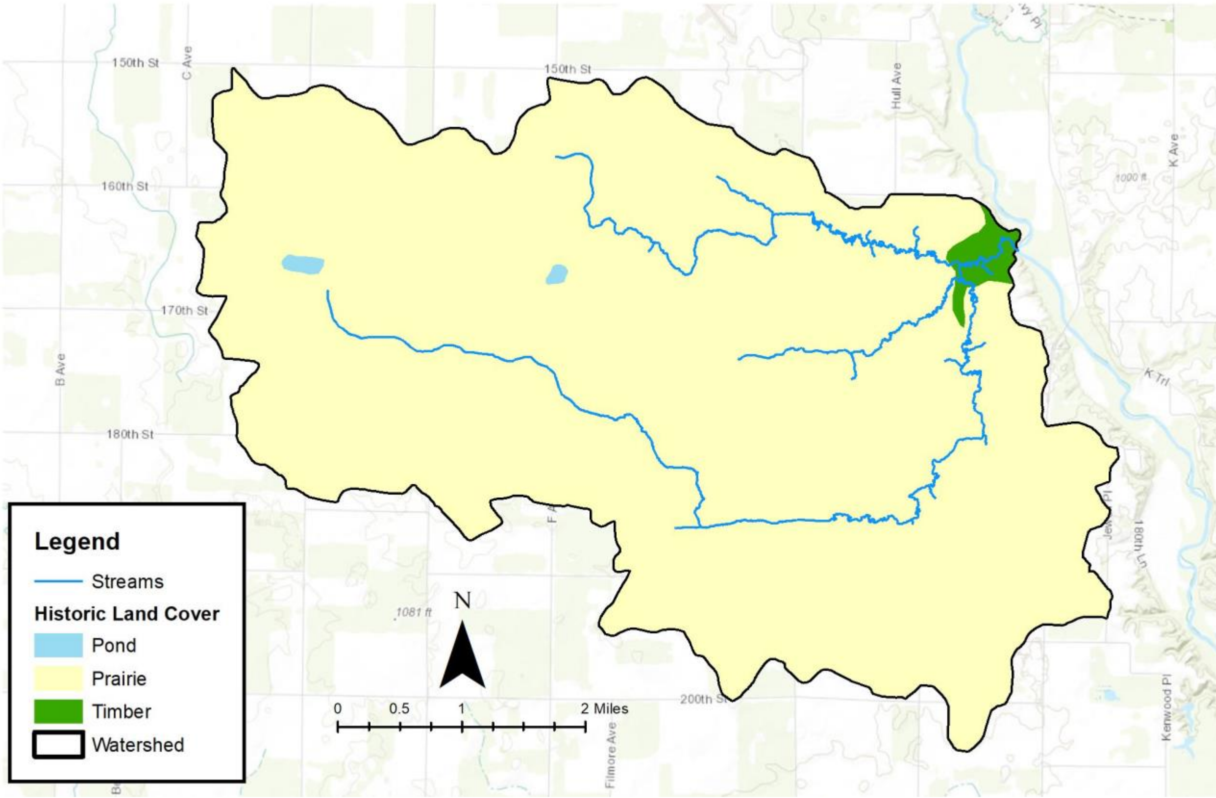


Figure 2.6.1. Pre-settlement land cover in the Swan Lake Branch Watershed according to the GLO survey in the mid-1800s (present day streams).

Recent and current land use practices were assessed using the USDA-National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) Cropland Data Layer (CDL) 2003 through 2016 information and high-resolution IDNR data from 2009. Land use trends based on CDL data are shown in Figure 2.6.2. The IDNR land use information was developed from aerial imagery and LiDAR elevation data. A summary of the high-resolution IDNR land use data is presented in Table 2.6.1 and Figure 2.6.3.

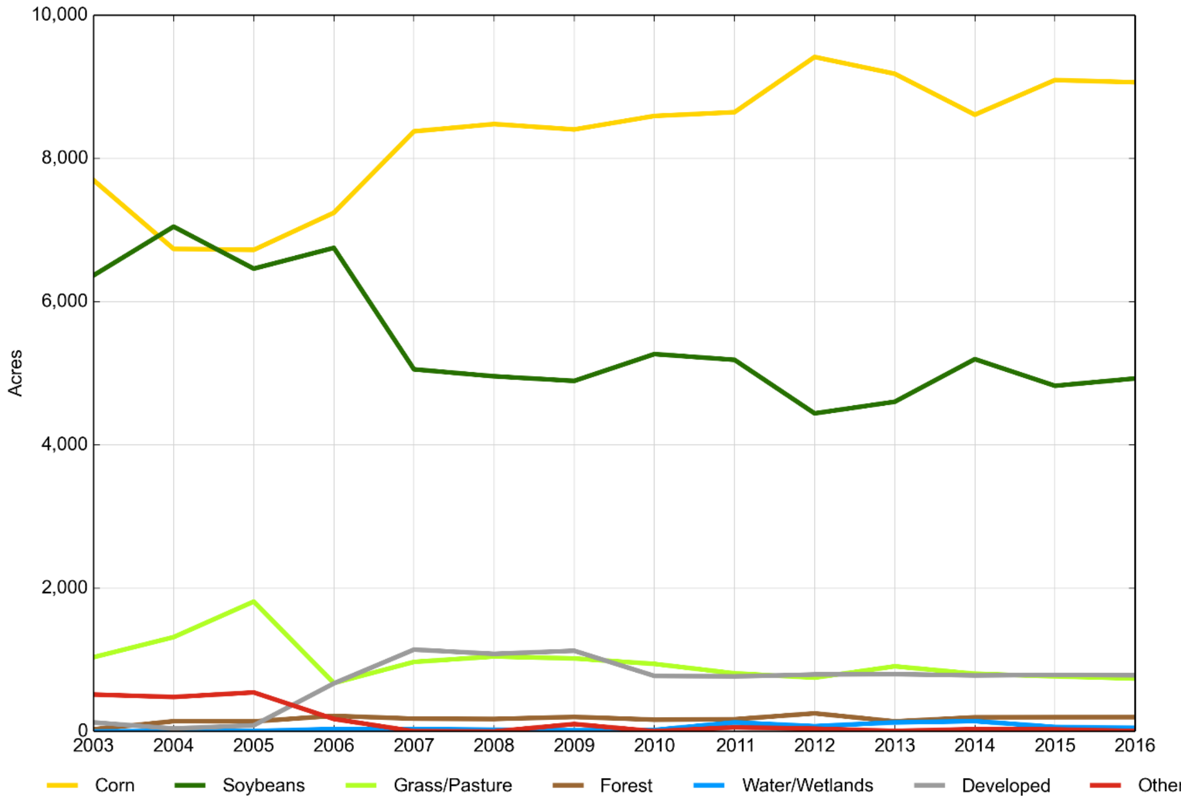


Figure 2.6.2. Swan Lake Branch Watershed 2003 through 2016 land use according to CDL data.

Table 2.6.1. Swan Lake Branch Watershed 2009 high-resolution land use according to IDNR data.

Land Use	Acres	Percent
Water	51.2	0.3%
Wetland	396.3	2.5%
Coniferous Forest	27.5	0.2%
Deciduous Short	170.9	1.1%
Deciduous Medium	84.1	0.5%
Deciduous Tall	33.3	0.2%
Grass 1	908	5.8%
Grass 2	280	1.8%
Corn	6,977	44.3%
Soybeans	6,420	40.7%
Barren / Fallow	151.3	1.0%
Structures	17.5	0.1%
Roads / Impervious	240.6	1.5%
Shadow / No Data	9.5	0.1%
Total	**15,767**	

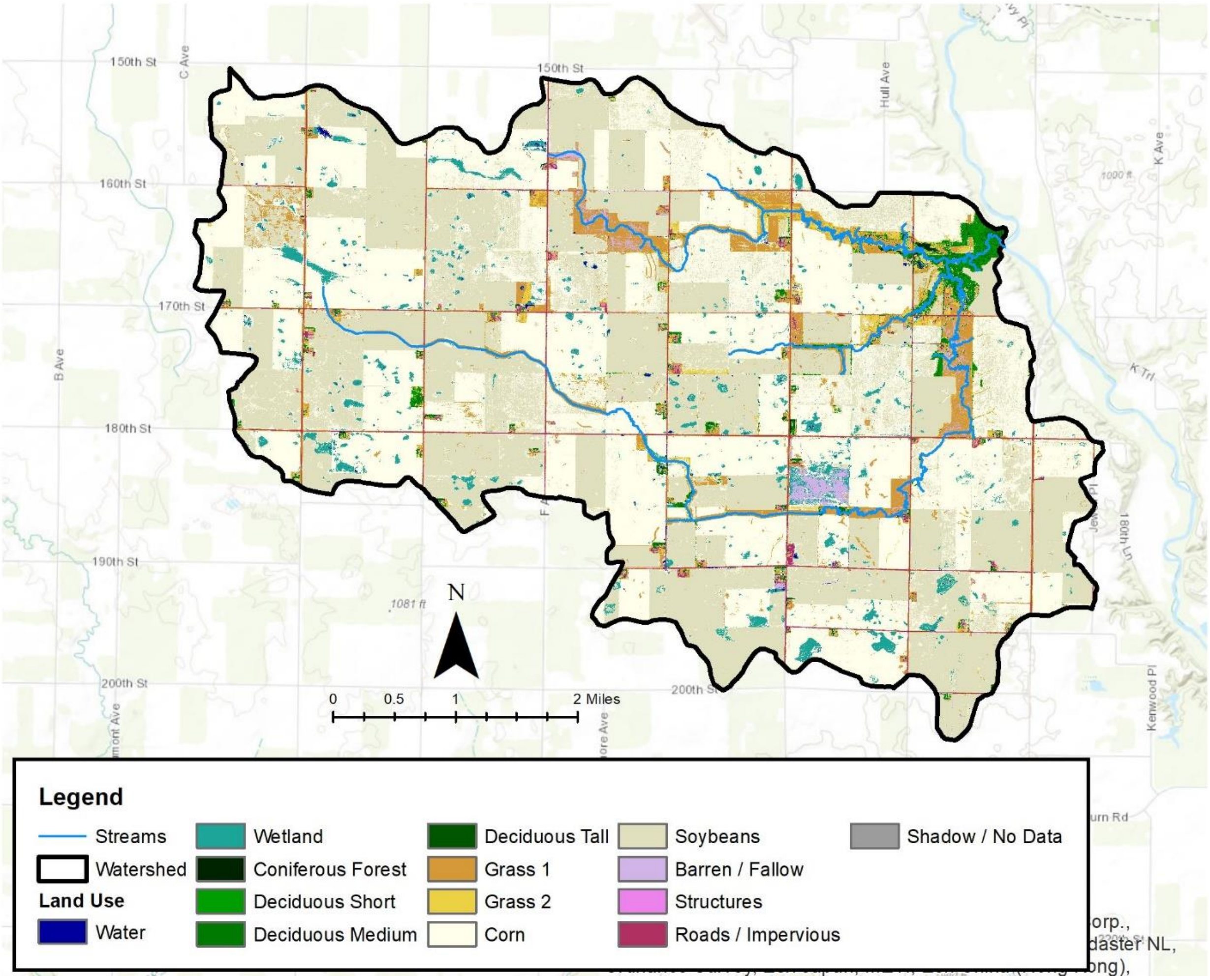


Figure 2.6.3. High-resolution 2009 land use map of the Swan Lake Branch Watershed.

2.7. Population

There are no incorporated communities within the watershed. According to US Census Bureau data, in 2010 the estimated population in the watershed was 221 people.

2.8. Existing Conservation Practices

Cataloging existing conservation infrastructure provides an important assessment of current conditions and is a useful exercise for determining the need for future conservation practice placement. Current conservation practices were assessed and catalogued using aerial photography, watershed surveys and stakeholder knowledge. Many conservation practices were identified within the watershed, but determining levels of in-field management practices (e.g., nutrient management, reduced tillage, cover crops) can be difficult, so it is possible that this inventory does not capture all conservation within the watershed. Perennial cover is present throughout the watershed; total estimated acres is approximately 1,502 based on recent data. Table 2.8.1 lists all practices and known existing implementation levels within the watershed.

Table 2.8.1. Inventory of Swan Lake Branch Watershed existing conservation practices as of 2017.

Practice	Quantity
No-till/Strip-till	Minimal
Cover crops	Minimal
Nutrient management	Unknown
Buffers within 100' of streams	78% grass or trees
Nitrate Removal Wetlands	0
Bioreactors	0
Saturated Buffers	160 acres treated
Timber/Trees	315 acres
Grassland	1,187 acres

2.9. Soil Erosion Assessment

Soil erosion in the Swan Lake Branch Watershed was estimated using factors from the Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation (RUSLE) for the various combinations of soils and land use within the watershed. RUSLE is a computer model used to evaluate the impact of different tillage and cropping systems on sheet and rill erosion. The major RUSLE model factors incorporate climate, soils, topography and land management. The interactions between these factors drive the model results, but land use, crop rotation and tillage system have the largest impacts on soil loss estimates. Conventional tillage (i.e., minimal crop residue cover) was assumed for all cropland to provide a conservatively large soil erosion estimate, so agricultural fields with conservation practices like reduced or no tillage and cover crops are likely to erode less. Based on the RUSLE analysis, sheet and rill erosion in the Swan Lake Branch Watershed average 2.7 tons per acre per year. The distribution of soil erosion rates across the watershed is shown in Figure 2.9.1. To put this estimate into context, most soils are assigned a maximum tolerable soil loss rate of 5 tons per acre per year by the NRCS. It is important to note that RUSLE estimates do not include any soil loss due to concentrated runoff such as ephemeral or classical gully erosion. However, overall risk for gully erosion within the watershed is low due to the minimally dissected landscape.

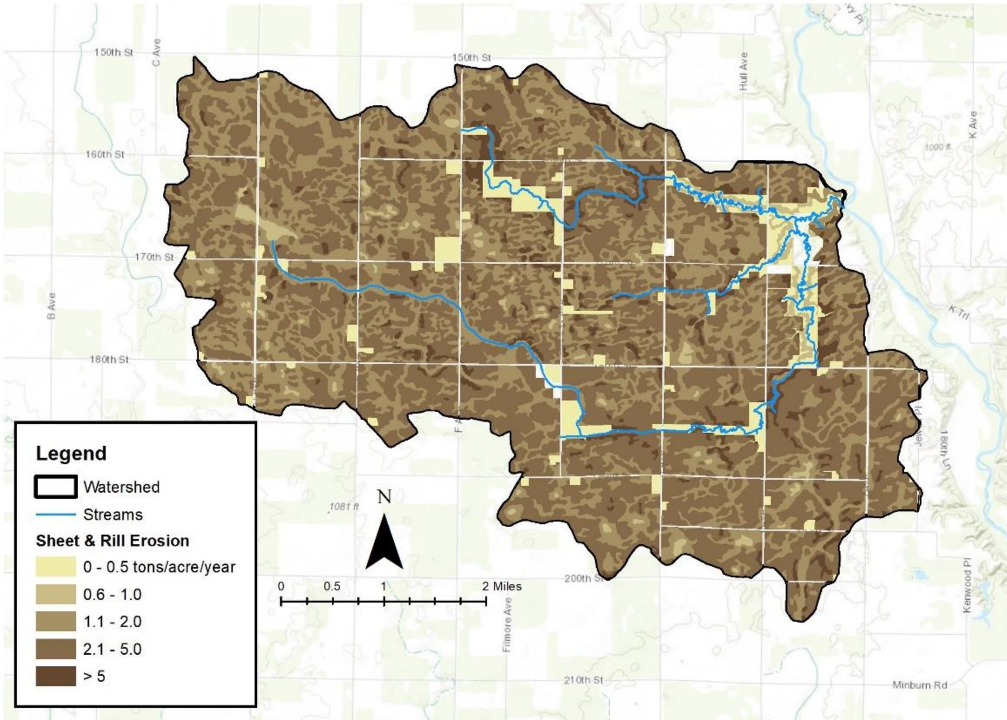


Figure 2.9.1. Estimated sheet and rill erosion rates based on soil types and land use in the Swan Lake Branch Watershed.

Not all sediment that moves small distances due to sheet and rill erosion ultimately leaves the watershed. Total sediment yield from the watershed is influenced by upland soil erosion rates, streambank erosion and the sediment delivery ratio (SDR), which reflects the proportion of sediment that is likely to be transported through and out of the watershed. The SDR depends on watershed size and shape, stream network density, proximity to streams and topography. The SDR for the Swan Lake Branch watershed is 3.83%. The total sediment estimated to reach streams from sheet and rill erosion is estimated to be 16,600 tons per year. Figure 2.9.1 shows areas of low and high sediment delivery to streams.

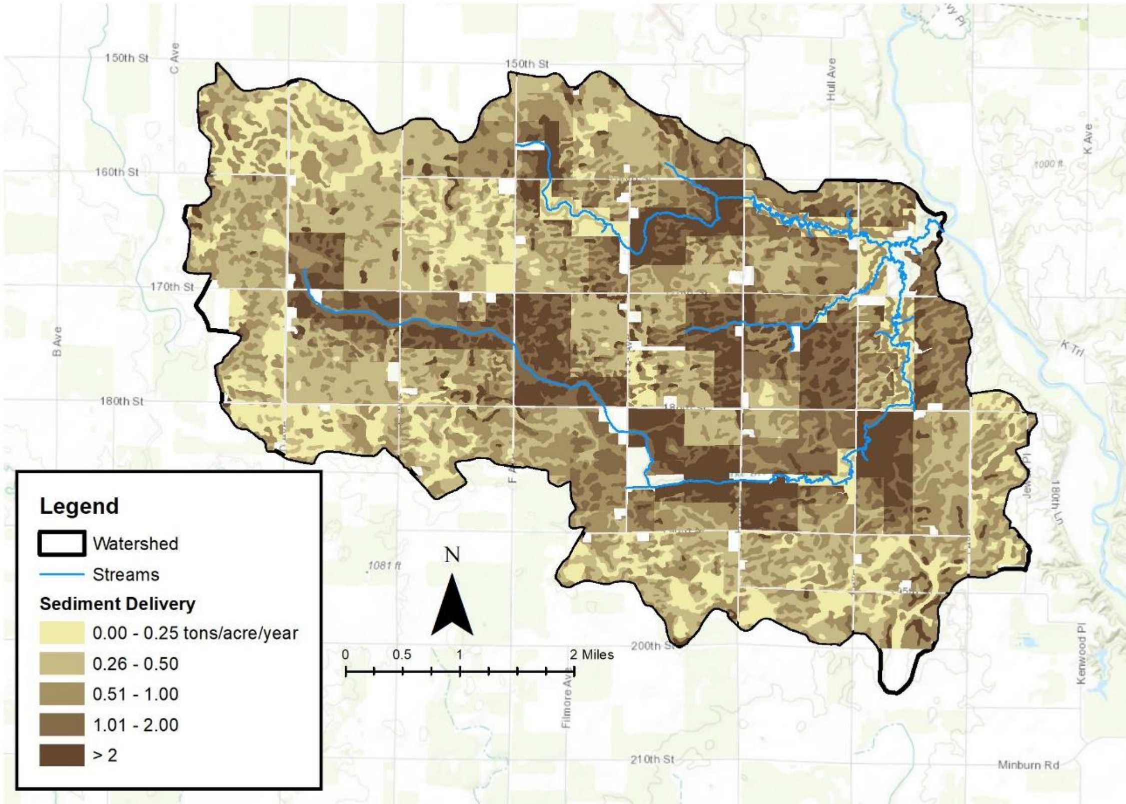


Figure 2.9.1. Estimated sediment delivery rates in the Swan Lake Branch Watershed.

3. Water Quality and Conditions

3.1. Raccoon River Water Quality Impairments

The Swan Lake Branch Watershed is a subwatershed of the Raccoon River Watershed (Figure 3.1.1). Downstream of the Swan Lake Branch Watershed the Raccoon River is impaired by nitrate and bacteria. These impairments impact the drinking water source of the city of Des Moines and recreation in the Raccoon River. Due to these impairments a Water Quality Improvement Plan (or Total Maximum Daily Load, TMDL) for nitrate and *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*, indicator bacteria) was developed by the IDNR and approved by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 2008.

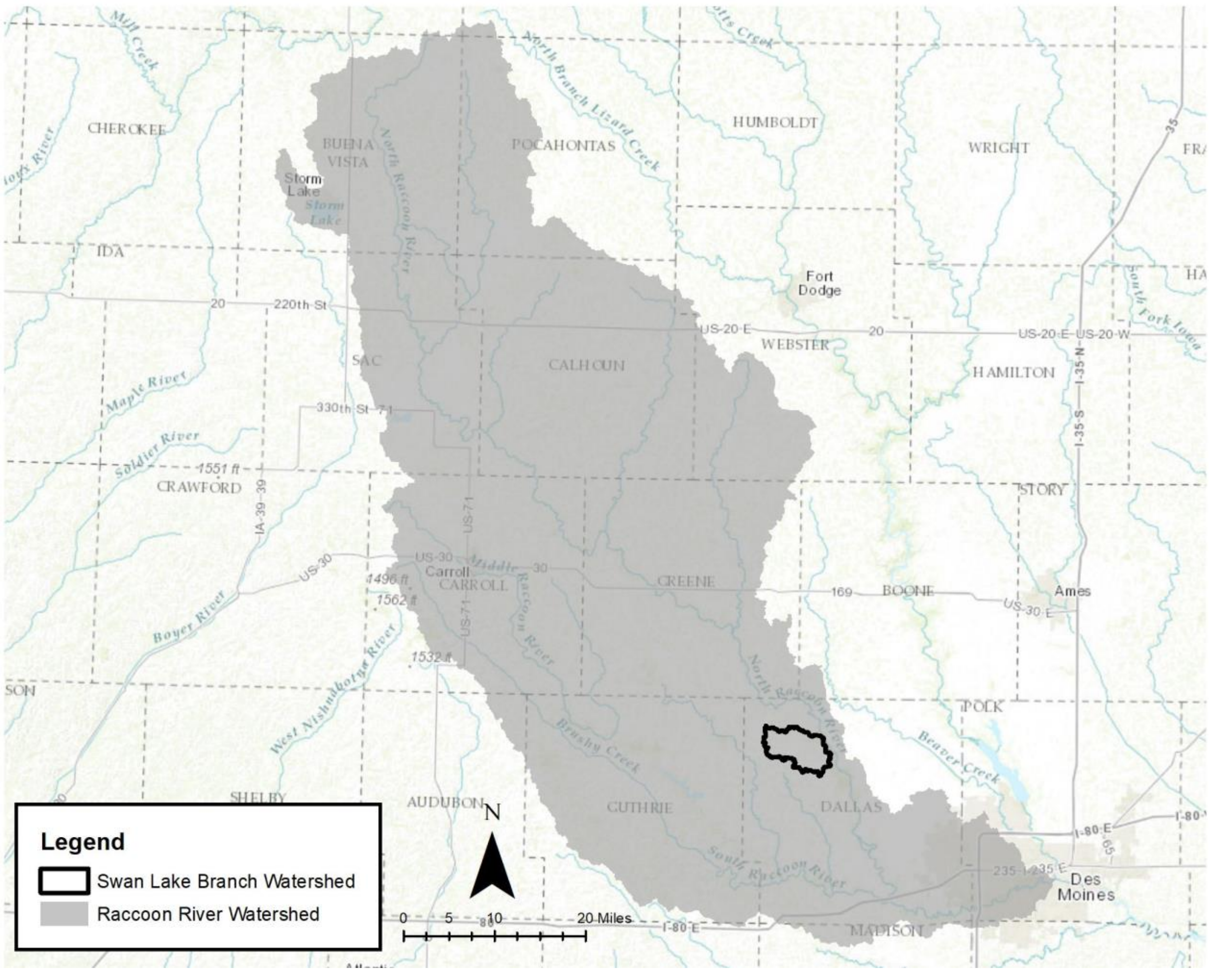


Figure 3.1.1. Location of the Swan Lake Branch Watershed within the Raccoon River Watershed.

The Iowa 2004 Integrated Report 305(b) assessment identified a nitrate-nitrogen (nitrate) impairment in the Raccoon River for segments IA 04-RAC-0010_1 and IA 04-RAC-001_2 extending from the confluence of the North Raccoon River and South Raccoon River to the confluence of the Raccoon River and Des Moines River. For the impaired segments the Class C (drinking water) designated use was assessed as "not supporting" due to nitrate levels exceeding state water quality standards and the EPA maximum contaminant level (MCL). The applicable water quality standard for nitrate is 10 milligrams per liter (mg/L). Accounting for a margin of safety (MOS) of 0.5 mg/L and the MCL, the target maximum daily nitrate concentration is 9.5 mg/L. For the segments with the indicator bacteria impairments, the Class A1 (primary contact recreation) designated use was assessed as "not supporting" due to pathogen levels exceeding the applicable water quality standards of a seasonal geometric mean of 126 colony forming units (CFU) per 100 mL of water (CFU/100 mL) and a single sample maximum of 235 CFU/100 mL during the March 15 to November 15 recreation season. (Based on former water quality standards, the Class A designated use of these stream segments was assessed as "partially supporting" at the time of TMDL development.) Including a MOS of 35 CFU/100 mL and the MCL, the target single sample maximum pathogen concentration is 200 CFU/100 mL. A TMDL was developed to calculate the maximum allowable nitrate and *E. coli* loads for the impaired segments of the Raccoon River to ensure compliance with water quality standards.

The Raccoon River TMDL addresses nitrate impairments for the segments of the Raccoon River immediately upstream of Des Moines (IA 04-RAC-0010_1 and IA 04-RAC-0010_2). The TMDL identified nonpoint sources of nitrate as the primary cause of the Class C impairment. The Swan Lake Branch Watershed is upstream of the segments of the Raccoon River used by the city of Des Moines for drinking water, so the following summary of the Raccoon River TMDL focuses on those segments.

The Raccoon River drains a watershed of 3,625 square miles from the headwaters of the North Raccoon River in northwest and west central Iowa to the mouth of the Raccoon River at its confluence with the Des Moines River in the city of Des Moines. The Raccoon River Watershed (Figure 3.1.1) is located primarily within the Des Moines Lobe (DML) landform region and the North Raccoon River Watershed is located entirely within the DML, which is a prairie pothole landscape characterized by low topographic relief, limited surface drainage and local depressions and wetlands. Land use in the watershed is approximately 73 percent row crops, 19 percent grass, 4 percent forest, 3 percent developed and 1 percent water and wetlands. In the North Raccoon River Watershed the proportion of row crops exceeds 90 percent locally in some areas.

Surface water from the Raccoon River is used by the Des Moines Water Works (DMWW) to provide drinking water to approximately 500,000 residents. The TMDL indicates that nitrate concentrations in the Raccoon River at DMWW from 1996 to 2005 ranged from 0 to 18.3 mg/L with an average of 6.45 mg/L. Nitrate concentrations between 1972 and 2000 were found to peak during April through June with additional increases during November and December. The TMDL divides nitrate loading between point sources and nonpoint sources. The TMDL reports 10 percent of the nitrate in the Raccoon River at DMWW can be attributed to point sources and the remaining 90 percent is from nonpoint sources. The TMDL further divides nonpoint sources into the categories listed in Table 3.1.1 for three North Raccoon River Watershed subwatersheds.

Table 3.1.1. Nonpoint source nitrate inputs in tons per year (t/yr) for three subwatersheds of the Raccoon River Watershed.

Nonpoint Source	N. Raccoon at Sac City	N. Raccoon at Jefferson	Raccoon at Van Meter
Fertilizer (t/yr)	15,202	33,418	63,429
Soil Mineralization (t/yr)	23,605	51,278	93,747
Legume (t/yr)	8,013	18,800	42,685
Manure (t/yr)	11,117	19,778	34,598
Septic Systems (t/yr)	12	20	49
Turf Grass (t/yr)	684	1,528	3,721
Atmospheric Deposition (t/yr)	7,223	16,419	36,424
Wildlife (t/yr)	14	34	194
Total Nonpoint Inputs (t/yr)	**65,870**	**141,275**	**274,847**

In addition to measured water quality data, the TMDL used the results of a water quality model to evaluate streamflow and pollutant loads in the watershed. The Soil and Water Assessment Tool (SWAT) was calibrated and run for the Raccoon River Watershed to simulate daily water quality from 1986 to 2004. SWAT model input data included climate, topography, land use, soils, animal feeding operations, manure application, wastewater treatment plants and demographic information. SWAT simulation results estimated that tile flow contributes 26 percent of streamflow and 44 percent of baseflow in the watershed. The modeled average nitrate loading rate was 22 pounds per acre (lb/ac) with loading rates exceeding 27 lb/ac in some subwatersheds in the North Raccoon River Watershed. The United States Geological Survey (USGS) ESTIMATOR program was used to estimate annual nitrate loads and concentrations for three subwatersheds in the North Raccoon River Watershed. These values, along with the reported point source load contributions within each subwatershed, are summarized in Table 3.1.2.

Table 3.1.2. Estimated 1999 to 2005 annual nitrate flow-weighted concentrations, loads and source allocations for three Raccoon River Watershed subwatersheds.

	N. Raccoon at Sac City	N. Raccoon at Jefferson	Raccoon at Van Meter
Watershed Area (ac)	448,000	1,036,160	2,202,240
Nitrate-N Concentration (mg/L)	11.0	13.7	7.8
Nitrate Loading Rate (lb/ac)	20.1	22.9	13.5
Total N Load (t)	4,502	11,864	14,865
Point Source Load (t/yr)	874	1,072	1,960
Nonpoint Source Load (t/yr)	3,628	10,792	12,905
Point Source Contribution (%)	19.4	9.0	13.2
Nonpoint Source Contribution (%)	80.6	91.0	86.8

The TMDL states a 48 percent reduction in daily nonpoint source nitrate loading to the Raccoon River is necessary to attain a maximum daily nitrate concentration of 9.5 mg/L in order to meet drinking water quality standards. It is worth noting that such reduction is needed at maximum Raccoon River discharge. A mean reduction of 22 percent would achieve average nitrate load reduction goals. The TMDL also reports a maximum *E. coli* load reduction of 99.8 percent from point sources and nonpoint sources combined is needed to meet water quality standards.

3.2. Swan Lake Branch Water Quality

Very little water quality information is available for streams in the Swan Lake Branch Watershed. The Iowa DNR ADBNet 305(b) Water Quality Assessment Database information for segment 04-RAC-1142 of Swan Lake Branch indicates that the 3.2 mile stream segment has designated use classes of primary contact recreation (Class A1) and aquatic life (Class B(WW-2)). The 2016 assessment for this stream segment notes that the waterbody is considered "not assessed" due to insufficient water quality information.

A partnership of 13 agricultural retailers known as Agriculture's Clean Water Alliance (ACWA) has monitored water quality in the Raccoon River and Des Moines River watersheds since 1999. Many tributaries to these rivers have been monitored, but no monitoring occurred in the Swan Lake Branch Watershed until 2017. Two sampling locations were established in the watershed, one site on Elm Branch and one site on Swan Lake Branch. The sample locations are shown on Figure 7.1.1. Nitrate-N and turbidity results for 2017 are shown on Figure 3.2.1 and Figure 3.2.2.

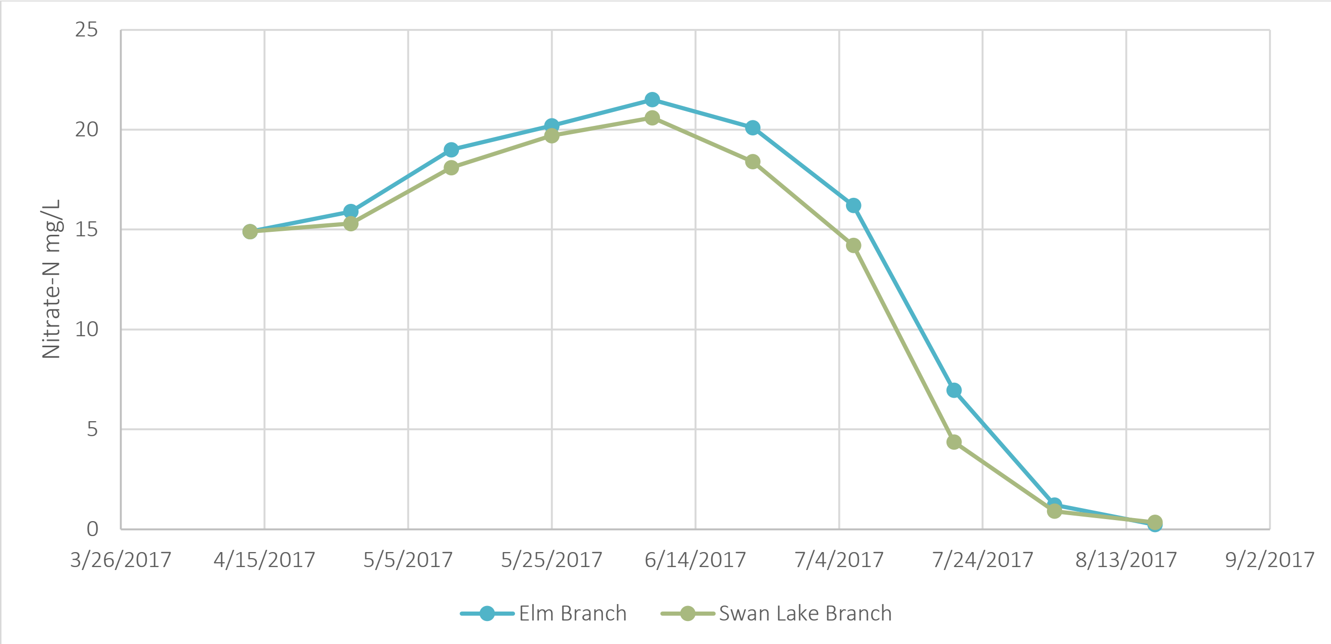


Figure 3.2.1. 2017 stream Nitrate-N levels at two monitoring locations in the Swan Lake Branch watershed.

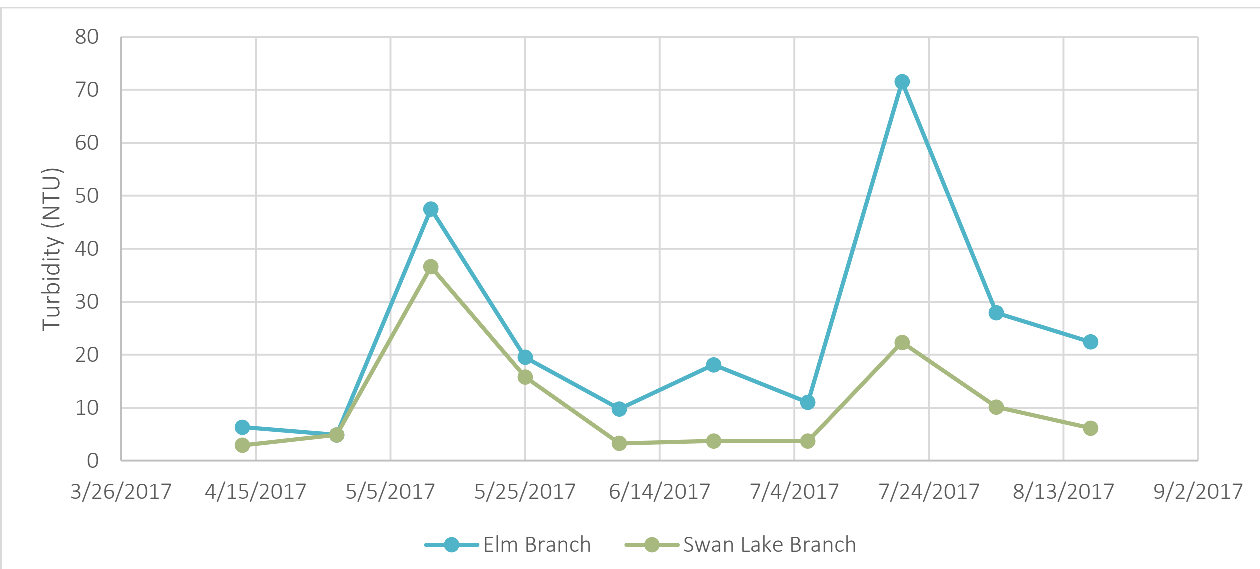


Figure 3.2.2. 2017 stream turbidity levels at two monitoring locations in the Swan Lake Branch watershed.

3.3. Swan Lake Branch Watershed Point and Nonpoint Sources

The INRS incorporates both point and nonpoint sources. There are no permitted point sources in the Swan Lake Branch Watershed. Therefore, this watershed plan addresses only nonpoint nutrient sources and prioritizes agricultural conservation practices as the best methods to improve water quality in the Swan Lake Branch Watershed.

4. Goals and Objectives

This watershed management plan is a guiding document. Water and soil quality will only improve if watershed conservation activities and best management practices (BMPs) are implemented. This will require active engagement of diverse local stakeholders; collaboration of local, state and federal agricultural and conservation agencies; and funding. In addition to BMP implementation, water monitoring should also be increased. Monitoring is a crucial activity to assess the status of water quality goals, standards and designated uses; to determine if water quality is improving, degrading or remaining unchanged; and to assess the effectiveness of implementation activities and the possible need for additional or alternative BMPs.

This plan is designed to be used by local agencies, watershed managers and citizens for decision support and planning purposes. The BMPs listed below represent a suite of tools that will help achieve water quality, soil health, agronomic and socioeconomic goals if appropriately utilized. It is up to all stakeholders to determine exactly how to best implement them. Locally driven efforts have proven to be the most successful in obtaining significant water quality improvements.

Before the watershed plan is implemented the overall goals and objectives must be identified, as they will guide implementation approaches and activities. The goals listed in this plan are not permanent. While the goals and objectives have been developed with input from local stakeholders based on the best information available and the current needs and opportunities for the watershed, changing needs and desires within the watershed, economy or Farm Bill or emerging water and soil quality improvement practices and technologies may mean that these goals and strategies will need to be reevaluated and revised. It is therefore essential to allow for sufficient flexibility to respond to changing needs and conditions while still providing a strong guiding mechanism for future conservation efforts.

The statewide goals of the INRS provided an important starting point for goal development by stakeholders in the Swan Lake Branch Watershed. The INRS is a scientific and technological framework for nutrient reduction in Iowa waters and the Gulf of Mexico from both nonpoint and point nutrient sources. The overall goals of the INRS are to reduce nitrogen and phosphorus loads by 45 percent. The INRS states that nonpoint sources need to reduce nitrogen loading by 41 percent and phosphorus loading by 29 percent in order to achieve overall nutrient reduction goals.

The Nonpoint Source Nutrient Reduction Science Assessment component of the INRS was initiated in 2010 to support development of the INRS approach for nonpoint sources by determining the nitrogen and phosphorus reduction effectiveness of specific practices. The agricultural conservation practices identified in the science assessment were broadly classified as nutrient management, land use change and edge-of-field practices. The science assessment illustrated that a combination of practices will be required to achieve nonpoint source nitrogen and phosphorus load reduction goals. The conceptual plan for the Swan Lake Branch Watershed identified in Section 5 incorporates many of the nonpoint source practices assessed and included in the INRS.

Through the watershed planning process the following goals addressing agriculture, soil and water have been identified:

1. **Identify cost effective solutions**
2. **Provide for profitable and productive agriculture -** The Swan Lake Branch Watershed is agricultural. This strong social and economic identity should be sustained and enhanced.
3. **Create conditions for healthy soils and water -** This plan reduces soil erosion and improves water quality. A nitrogen reduction target of 41% and a 29% reduction in phosphorus are the nonpoint source nutrient reduction goal included in the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy.

4. **Minimize downstream impacts**
5. **Work with urban and rural stakeholders to implement**

This watershed plan uses the year 2010 as the baseline for conservation practice implementation and determining progress towards reaching goals by 2037 because 2010 conditions reflect the pre-INRS status of the watershed. Watershed models were developed to determine the baseline and future nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment loads plus associated reductions in the Swan Lake Branch Watershed. Table 4.1 provides estimates of watershed loading rates for the 2010 baseline and conditions during and after the implementation of practices identified in this watershed plan. Table 4.2 provides estimates of percent load reduction for each phase relative to the 2010 baseline. The phases and associated practices and implementation levels are detailed in Section 6. A practice-based model was used to determine the nitrogen load reductions based on practice nitrate reduction efficiencies from the Iowa Science Assessment of Nonpoint Source Practices to Reduce Nitrogen Transport in the Mississippi River Basin section of the INRS. Soil erosion projections were based on the watershed RUSLE model results. For the purposes of this plan, only sediment sheet and rill erosion was used for calculations. Streambank and gully erosion were not estimated. A phosphorus enrichment ratio of 1.6 pounds of phosphorus per ton of sediment delivery was used to estimate phosphorus loading.

Table 4.1. Estimated baseline (2010), current (2017/18) and future nitrogen and phosphorus export from the Swan Lake Branch Watershed for 5-year phases until full watershed plan implementation anticipated by 2037.

	Units	2010 baseline	2017/18 conditions	2022 target	2027 target	2032 target	2037 target
Nitrogen load	pounds/year	401,910	399,510	339,341	297,526	267,374	236,005
Phosphorus load	pounds/year	2,217	2,217	1,901	1,645	1,415	1,233

Table 4.2. Modeled nutrient load reductions from the 2010 baseline in the Swan Lake Branch Watershed for current 2017/18 conditions and each 5-year phase of watershed plan implementation.

	Units	2010 baseline	2017/18 conditions	2022 target	2027 target	2032 target	2037 target
Nitrogen load	% reduction	-	1%	16%	26%	33%	41%
Phosphorus load	% reduction	-	0%	14%	26%	36%	44%

5. Conceptual Plan

Best management practices are part of the foundation for achieving water quality, soil health and flood reduction goals. BMPs include practices and programs designed to improve water quality and other natural resource concerns such as changes in land use or management, structural pollutant control and changes in social norms and human behavior pertaining to watershed resources along with their perception and valuation. Efforts are made to encourage long-term BMPs, but this depends upon landscape characteristics, land tenure, commodity prices and other market trends that potentially compete with conservation efforts. With this in mind, it is important to identify all possible BMPs needed to achieve the watershed goals. From an initial list of potential practices, priority practices were identified by narrowing the list to those practices most acceptable to watershed stakeholders. Watershed planning facilitators asked advisory group members to score practices based on the level of effort to adopt a particular practice.

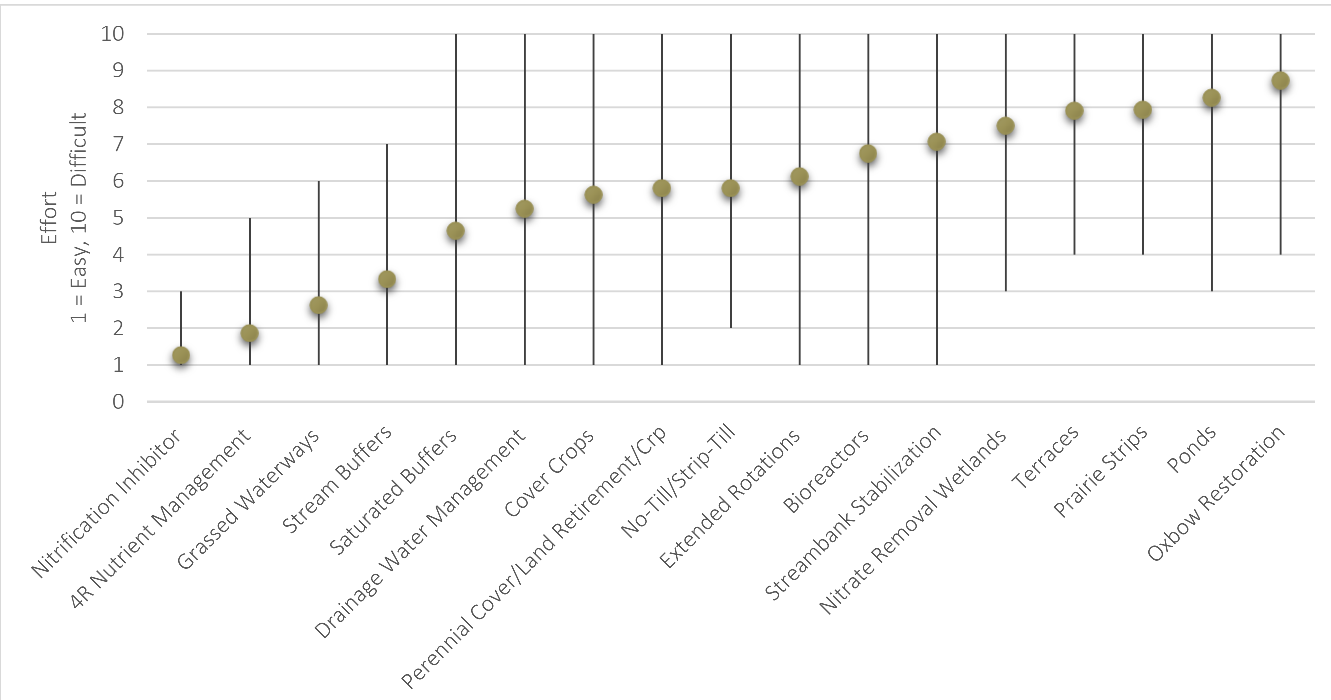


Figure 5.1. Illustration of effort ranking for conservation practices.

When selecting and implementing BMPs, it is important to identify if a particular practice is feasible in a given location. Site feature suitability and practice alignment with stakeholder values should be considered. It also is important to determine how effective the practice will be at achieving goals, objectives and targets. Table 5.1 provides a list of BMPs identified by watershed stakeholders and a rating of each practice's efficacy to address identified water and soil goals. While only the practices italicized in Table 5.1 are included in the conceptual plan and nutrient reduction calculations, the other practices will be important to consider when making decisions about water and soil improvement. Figure 5.2 provides a map of a conceptual BMP implementation scenario that sites BMPs in locations intended to achieve maximum benefit (e.g., nitrate removal wetlands placed at strategic locations or bioreactors placed at drainage tile outlets). See Appendix A for larger conceptual plan maps.

Table 5.1. Best management practices and relative impact scores (3 = High impact, 2 = Moderate impact, 1 = Low impact, 0 = No impact). Italicized BMPs are those included in the conceptual plan.

	Practice	Soil health	Nitrogen reduction	Phosphorus reduction
In-field	4R Nutrient Management	1	1	1
	Nitrification Inhibitor	0	1	0
	Cover Crops	*3*	*3*	*3*
	Perennial Cover	*3*	*3*	*3*
	Extended Rotations	3	2	2
	Prairie Strips	2	1	3
	No-Till/Strip-Till	3	0	3
	Terraces	2	1	3
	Grassed Waterways	1	0	2
	Drainage Water Management	*0*	*3*	*0*
Edge-of-field	*Bioreactors*	*0*	*3*	*1*
	Saturated Buffers	*0*	*3*	*1*
	Oxbow Wetland Restoration	0	2	1
	Buffers	0	1	3
In-stream	Ponds	0	1	3
	Nitrate Removal Wetlands	*0*	*3*	*1*
	Streambank Stabilization	0	0	2

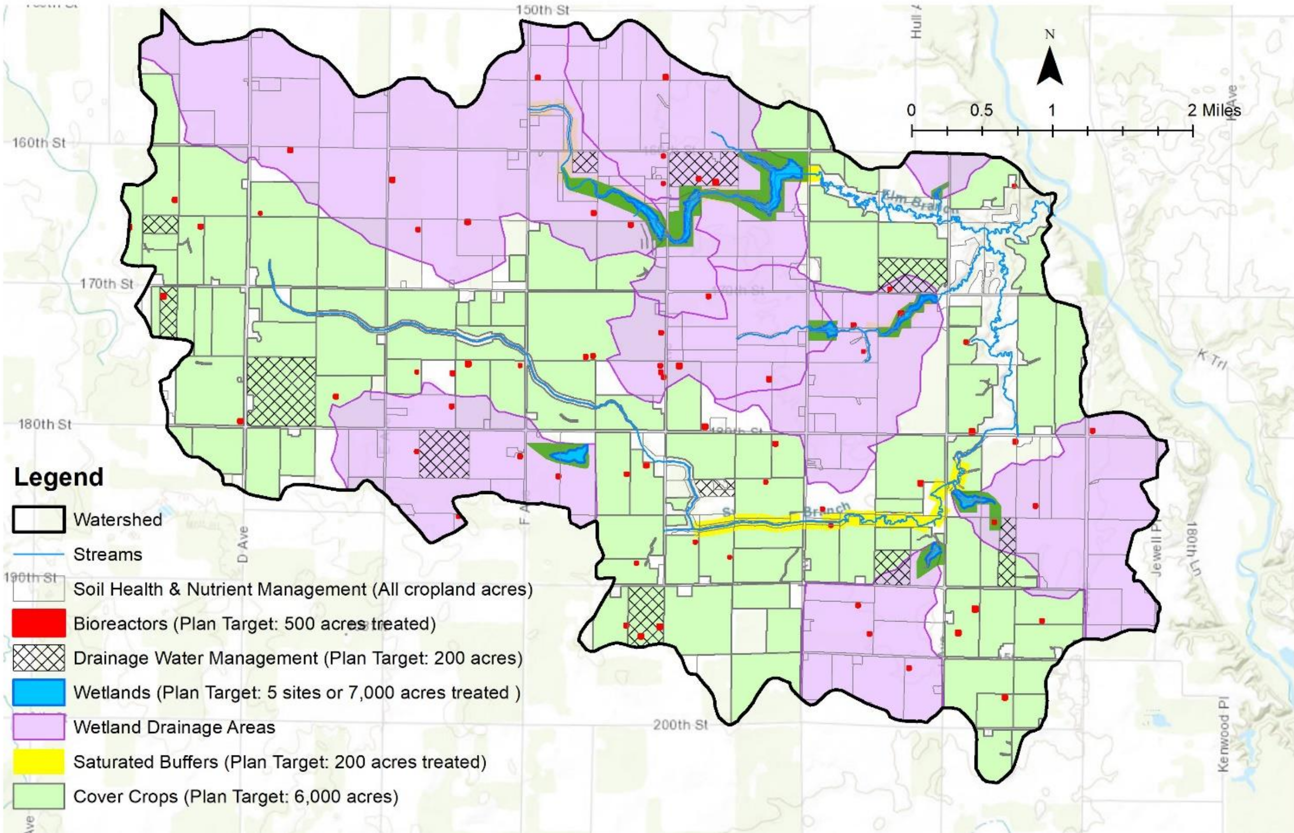


Figure 5.2. Conceptual plan for BMP implementation in the Swan Lake Branch Watershed. More implementation opportunities are shown on the map than are needed to reach plan goals. Appendix A contains detailed, larger maps.

The BMP conceptual plan presented in Figure 5.2 is ambitious, but this level of implementation is needed to achieve the goals identified in this watershed management plan. This scenario is one of a variety of potential combinations of BMPs that would allow for this plan's goals to be reached. Deviations from the proposed implementation plan should be made with the knowledge that additional or alternative practices may then be needed in other locations within the watershed to ensure that goals are met. For example, cover crops grown within a wetland drainage area may not result in the same water quality benefit at the watershed outlet as cover crops grown downstream of a wetland.

A team of USDA-Agricultural Research Service scientists have developed the Agricultural Conservation Planning Framework (ACPF) to facilitate the selection and implementation of conservation practices in watersheds with predominately agricultural land use. The ACPF outlines an approach for watershed management and conservation. The framework is conceptually structured as a pyramid (Figure 5.3). This conservation pyramid is built on a foundation of soil health. The priority cover crop zones delineated in Figure 5.2 have been identified for maximum water quality improvement potential at the outlet of the Swan Lake Branch Watershed, but such practices that build soil health will result in additional benefits including erosion control, water retention, flood reduction, increased soil organic matter and improved nutrient cycling. Therefore management practices that improve soil health like cover cropping and reducing tillage should be promoted and implemented on all cropland within the watershed. Following the conservation pyramid concept, structural practices to control and treat water should then be targeted to specific in-field, edge-of-field and in-stream locations where maximum water quality benefits can be realized.

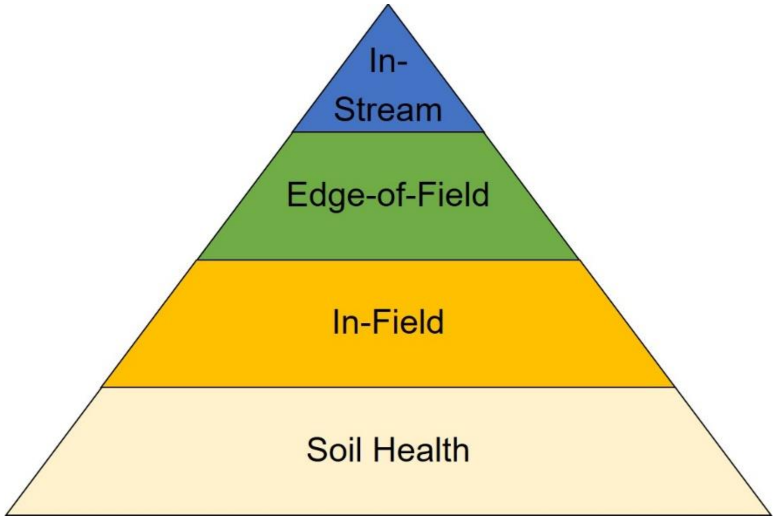


Figure 5.3. The Agricultural Conservation Planning Framework conservation pyramid adapted from the ACPF documentation.

The ACPF includes a mapping toolbox to identify potential locations for conservation practice adoption. Selected results of applying these siting tools to the Swan Lake Branch Watershed have been incorporated into this conceptual plan. Appendix B contains detailed ACPF maps for all potential BMPs within the watershed. The ACPF maps contain many practices in more locations than necessary to achieve water quality goals, so along with the conceptual plan displayed in Figure 5.2 serving as the overarching guide, the ACPF results can be used to adapt practice adoption as needed during the implementation phase of the watershed project.

The practices proposed in this conceptual plan were selected primarily for their soil health and water quality impacts to maintain focus on the watershed plan goals for the Swan Lake Branch Watershed. The recommended practices will mitigate some risk of bacteria transport to streams in the Swan Lake Branch Watershed and the Raccoon River downstream, but additional practices should be adopted where applicable in order to address the bacteria impairments in the Raccoon River. Such practices include adhering to manure management plans, maintaining manure applicator certifications, using setback distances for manure application, updating septic systems, constructing monoslope buildings for livestock, maintaining or planting stream buffers, constructing stream crossings for cattle and taking precautions to avoid over-application of manure or equipment failure. Together with the practices identified in the conceptual plan and implementation schedule, these practices should contribute to reduced nutrient and bacteria loads in both streams in the Swan Lake Branch Watershed and the Raccoon River.

6. Implementation Schedule

Implementation schedules are intended to serve as a reference tool to recognize tasks scheduled for the upcoming year and to identify and focus the necessary resources for the current phase of the project. The implementation schedule should be adaptable and updated on a regular basis due to shifting priorities, unexpected delays and new opportunities.

The 20-year phased implementation schedule was approved by watershed stakeholders and should be used to set yearly objectives and gauge progress. It should be noted that practices included in the implementation schedule only include those identified to reach the watershed plan goals. Other practices such as structural runoff control (e.g., grassed waterways, contour filter strips), extended rotations, stream buffers and streambank stabilization should be promoted wherever appropriate. Existing perennial cover should be maintained to continue provision of diverse water quality, soil health and wildlife and pollinator habitat benefits.

Table 6.1. Watershed plan implementation schedule separated into four 5-year phases for the Swan Lake Branch Watershed.

Practice	Existing level	Unit	2018-2022 goal	2023-2027 goal	2028-2032 goal	2033-2037 goal	Total watershed plan goal
Cover crops	0	acres	1,000	2,000	2,000	1,000	6,000
Perennial cover	1,502	acres	*Add 200 acres*				200
Drainage water management	0	acres	40	160	0	0	200
Bioreactors (est. 50 acres treated per bioreactor)	0	acres treated	500	0	0	0	500
Saturated buffers (est. 50 acres treated per saturated buffer)	160	acres treated	200	0	0	0	200
Nitrate removal wetlands (est. 1,400 acres treated per wetland)	0	sites	2	1	1	1	5

7. Monitoring Plan

Monitoring is an essential component of watershed plan implementation and provides an opportunity to assess progress. Monitoring can come in many different forms including water monitoring, biological surveys, soil and plant tissue sampling as well as social assessments. This section describes recommendations for future monitoring actions to document improvements resulting from watershed plan implementation.

7.1. Stream Monitoring

Perhaps the most important monitoring activity is stream monitoring due to the watershed plan goals of reducing nitrogen and phosphorus loads. Along with modeled nutrient reductions, water monitoring results will be key indicators of water quality improvement in the Swan Lake Branch Watershed. Monitoring data within the watershed is sparse. A small network of stream sites could be established to build a baseline database and track water quality trends as the watershed plan is implemented.

Location information for two potential sites in the watershed where stream water samples may be collected is contained in Table 7.1.1. Additional sites in the watershed may allow for greater precision in water quality analysis and could be used to prioritize subwatersheds for intensified BMP implementation. The three proposed sites and their drainage areas are displayed in Figure 7.1.1. The Elm Branch and Swan Lake Branch sites were monitored by the Iowa Soybean Association during the 2017 water year.

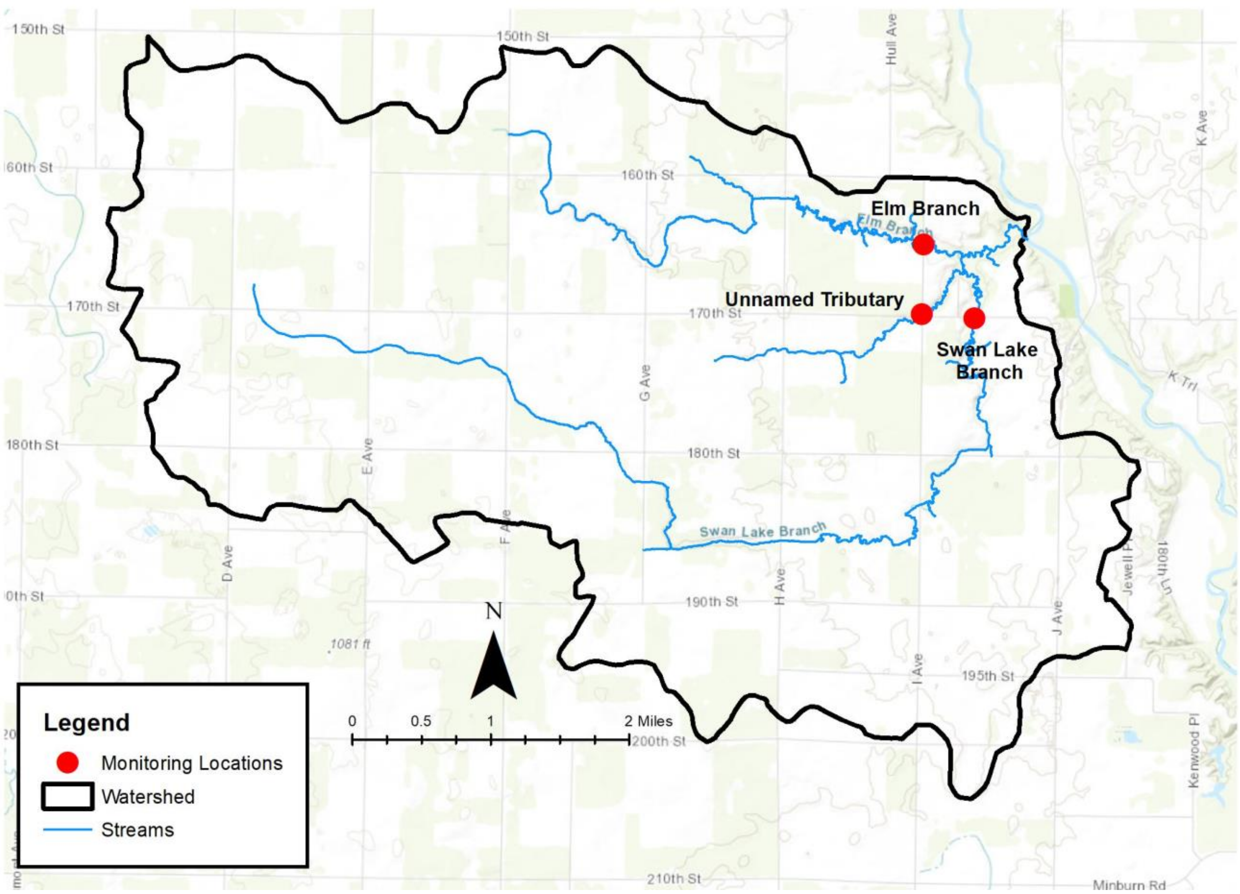


Figure 7.1.1. Potential Swan Lake Branch Watershed stream monitoring sites.

Table 7.1.1. Location information for a proposed stream water monitoring network within the Swan Lake Branch Watershed.

Site ID	Longitude	Latitude	Notes
Elm Branch	-94.125	41.798	RR60 with ACWA monitoring
Swan Lake Branch	-94.118	41.791	RR61 with ACWA monitoring
Unnamed Tributary	-94.125	41.791	

This monitoring site network would allow for consistent water quality information to be gathered throughout the entire watershed. Ideally, bi-weekly samples should be collected beginning in April and extending through October. At a minimum, the samples should be analyzed for nitrate, phosphorus and sediment.

In addition to water grab sampling, stream discharge also should be recorded in order to determine nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment loading. One method to capture stream discharge is to measure the stream stage and use a hydrograph to calculate discharge. The US Geological Survey (USGS) Water Science School provides an overview of this process.

7.2. Biological Monitoring

In addition to chemical and physical indicators of water quality, the biological community of a stream reflects its overall health. Surveys of benthic macroinvertebrate species in streams are excellent biological indicators of water quality. More diverse communities and presence of sensitive species reflect good quality streams. The IOWATER program provides protocols and recommendations for assessing the stream biological community in its Biological Monitoring Manual. Existing biological monitoring data are stored in the IDNR BioNet database.

7.3. Field Scale Water Monitoring

In addition to monitoring streams in the Swan Lake Branch Watershed, water quality monitoring at finer scales should be conducted to assess the effectiveness of individual conservation practice installations. Water samples at this scale should be collected from either tile water exiting subsurface drainage systems or surface runoff from a targeted area. Monitoring surface runoff is difficult because runoff events are episodic and often missed via regularly scheduled monitoring programs. Tile water monitoring is easier because tiles tend to flow more consistently. However, monitoring tile water may only provide data on nitrate loss because the majority of phosphorus and sediment loss occurs via surface runoff.

Tile monitoring should be targeted to drainage systems that drain a single field to allow for changes in management practices to be isolated and detectable. Tile outlets that are easily accessible and provide the opportunity to capture sufficient tile flow should be selected for monitoring. Flow volume from tiles can be calculated by measuring the time needed to fill a container of known volume or by using flow sensors such as pressure transducers. Tile flow, nutrient concentration and tile system drainage area can be used to calculate the nutrient loading rate (e.g., pounds of nitrate loss per acre per year) at a tile outlet.

7.4. Soil Sampling

Agricultural soils contain many nutrients, especially where fertilizer or manure have been applied. At a minimum, soil samples should be analyzed for phosphorus, potassium, nitrogen and organic matter, which affects nutrient cycling. Improved soil fertility data will better inform nutrient management, which can result in the multiple benefit scenario of increased profitability and decreased nutrient export due to improved nutrient application. Additionally, collection of soil samples in coordination with field scale water monitoring could improve understanding of the relationship between nutrient management practices, soil fertility, soil health and water quality. Soil samples should be collected for multiple years, particularly if agronomic management practices are altered or in-field conservation practices such as cover crops, are implemented. In-season soil nitrate testing can be used to inform adaptive nutrient management practices with the goals of improving agronomic production and reducing nutrient losses. Tests to measure soil health and biological activity also could be utilized to quantify additional benefits of management practices that build soil health like no-till and cover crops.

7.5. Plant Tissue Sampling

The end-of-season corn stalk nitrate test is a tool used to evaluate the availability of nitrogen to the corn crop. Nitrate concentrations measured from stalk sections for the lower portion of a corn plant taken after the plant reaches maturity are indicative of nitrogen available to the plant. The corn plant will move available nitrogen to the grain first. By measuring the amount of nitrogen left after grain fill, a determination can be made as to how much nitrogen was left in the plant relative to what was needed for optimal grain yield. This is a very basic and easy management evaluation tool. It should be noted the test is a point in time and producers should collect samples over multiple years to account for weather and seasonal variations before modifying operations.

7.6. Social Surveys

Biophysical assessments are useful benchmarks of natural resource quality, but conservation practices only will be adopted and implemented in the Swan Lake Branch Watershed if local stakeholders recognize and value the necessary alignment of BMPs with both individual farming operations and broader watershed goals. Surveys are one tool that should be used to periodically assess awareness and attitudes regarding the general issue of water quality and the goals of this watershed plan. For example, a detailed survey could be conducted during or after each 5-year phase of the implementation schedule (Table 6.1). Results could be used to modify approaches as needed during the subsequent 5-year implementation phase. Surveys also could be paired with specific educational events like field days to assess the effectiveness of different outreach formats, which could improve information and education strategies as the project proceeds.

8. Information and Education Plan

Behavior patterns of all stakeholders, and especially producers and landowners, must be considered in both BMP design and implementation strategies for water quality projects. To affect changes in behavior, goal-based outreach that addresses the actual and defined needs of key stakeholders is critical. It will also be important to leverage preexisting relationships and previous successes to build a community of support and knowledge around producers and landowners who will actively be adjusting their operations. Many obstacles to the adoption of conservation practices may be overcome by providing adequate education and outreach regarding how land management practices influence nonpoint source pollutant losses to surface water resources. Knowledge increases awareness, which may then motivate changes in behavior.

As with any watershed project, a goal-based outreach plan will need to be designed to facilitate the goals set by stakeholders and to support the timeline defined in this watershed plan. With a 20-year implementation schedule, progress can be hindered if expectations are not managed both initially and throughout the project. First, awareness and participation should be raised among farmers, landowners and conservation experts to build community confidence that action is being taken. Next, the broader community should be invited to learn about and participate in the watershed project. The following tables summarize an information and education approach, outreach tools and potential partners. Potential project partners and media outlets were identified during the watershed planning process.

Table 8.1. Components of the information and education plan.

Goal	Increase awareness and adoption of practices to achieve watershed social, land and water goals.
Target audiences	Primary: Producers, landowners and technical experts. Secondary: Residents, educators, students and others.
Messages	Need to be tailored for farmer engagement, public, decision makers and media. Different audiences respond differently to specific messages, so an outreach plan that incorporates an understanding of what motivates each audience to engage will help the project be successful.

Table 8.2. Outreach strategies and tools.

Logo and other branding	Stream signs	Coffee shop fliers
Website and social media	Conservation practice signs	Conservation icons or graphics
Fact sheets	IOWATER volunteer workshops	Guest speakers at other events
Direct mailings	Youth outdoor learning	
Demonstration field days	Urban/ag learning exchanges	
Watershed boundary signs	Stream cleanup events	

Table 8.3. Potential project partners, contacts and local media.

Potential project partners	Dallas Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioners Landus Cooperative Heartland Cooperative Iowa Agriculture Water Alliance Iowa Department of Natural Resources Iowa Farm Bureau Federation Iowa Pork Producers Association Iowa Soybean Association Iowa State University Extension Cities of Des Moines and Perry USDA-Agricultural Research Service USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service Bock Family Foundation Iowa Corn Growers Association Stine Seed Company
Other government, agriculture & outdoor groups	Youth educational groups Ducks Unlimited Pheasants Forever Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation Dallas County Board of Supervisors Dallas County Conservation Board North Raccoon River Watershed Management Coalition County Drainage Districts
Media	The Perry News Dallas County News Des Moines Register Farm Bureau Spokesman WHO 1040 AM Des Moines KDLS 1310 AM Perry

9. Evaluation Plan

Project evaluation and recognition of successes and challenges is a critically important step in implementing any watershed plan. This section lays out a self-evaluation process for project partners to gauge project progress in four categories: project administration, attitudes and awareness, performance and results. These four indicator categories are described in the following sections. A project evaluation worksheet can be found in Appendix C.

9.1. Project Administration

- **Yearly partner review meeting.** Watershed project partners should host an annual review meeting. This will provide an opportunity to evaluate project progress using an evaluation matrix.
- **Quarterly project partner update.** Each quarter, project leadership should ensure project goals and objectives are being accomplished, plan logistics and coordinate field days, events and monitoring.

9.2. Attitudes and Awareness

- **Farmer and landowner surveys.** Periodically a survey should be conducted with a statistically valid sample of farmers and landowners in the watershed. Results of the surveys should be used to determine changes in attitudes and behaviors.
- **Field day attendance.** Field days are an important outreach component of watershed projects. To gauge the impact of the field days, a short survey should be administered at the conclusion of each field day. The goal of the surveys will be to determine if understanding or attitudes were changed or practices have been or will be adopted as a result of the field day events.
- **Regional and statewide media awareness.** Media awareness and promotion of the project should be tracked by collecting and cataloging all articles and stories related to the project.

9.3. Performance

- **Practice adoption.** Locations of implemented practices should be tracked over the life of the project. Practice adoption rates will be aggregated to the watershed scale and reported to partners.
- **Practice retention.** Retention of management practices, such as cover crops, should be emphasized. Yearly follow-up with farmers implementing practices will help gauge practice retention trends.

9.4. Results

- **Practice scale monitoring.** Tile water or edge-of-field monitoring results should be used to gauge water quality improvements at the field scale. Individual results should be provided to farmer participants. All monitoring data should be aggregated to the watershed scale and shared with other famers, landowners and partners. This aggregated data also may be used in a publication to bring broader recognition to local and other Iowa water quality efforts.
- **Stream scale monitoring.** In-stream water monitoring sites should be used to determine if long-term water quality improvements are being realized. Year to year improvements will likely be undetectable but long-term progress on the order of 10 years or more may be measurable if significant practice implementation occurs in the watershed.
- **Soil and agronomic tests.** Scientifically valid methods should be used to determine soil and agronomic impacts of practice adoption. These results will be shared with farmer participants. All soil and agronomic results should be aggregated to the watershed scale and shared with other farmers, landowners and partners.
- **Modeled improvements.** The project should work with appropriate groups or individuals to estimate soil and water improvements resulting from practice implementation.

10. Estimated Resource Needs

An estimate of resource needs is crucial to maintain current financial support and to gain support from potential funding sources. Table 10.1 provides an estimate of the total cost to implement conservation practices identified in this plan. Annual BMP implementation costs are estimated at $338,600 per year and initial structural costs are estimated to be $2,052,100. Some practices, such as nutrient management, reduced tillage and cover crops, may result in long-term cost savings to farmers and landowners. Therefore cost-share or incentive payment rates may need to be evaluated during the implementation phase of this plan. These cost estimates are in 2017 dollars; actual water quality investment needs likely will be higher due to inflation.

Table 10.1. Estimated resource needs (in 2017 dollars) to reach the Swan Lake Branch Watershed BMP implementation level goals.

	Practice	Watershed plan goal	Unit	Cost per unit	Total cost
Annual costs	Cover crops	6,000	acres	$50	$300,000
	Conversion of Cropland to Perennial Cover	200	acres	$193	$38,600
Initial costs	Drainage water management (50-year life)	200	acres	$63	$12,600
	Bioreactors (15-year life)	10	sites	$15,000	$150,000
	Saturated buffers (75-year life)	8	sites	$4,000	$32,000
	Nitrate removal wetlands (75-year life)	5	sites	$371,500	$1,857,500

Cover crop costs include seed, labor and termination cost estimates from Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Ag Decision Maker tools. The estimated perennial cover annual cost is the watershed weighted average Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) soil rental rate. Costs for drainage water management, bioreactors and saturated buffers are based on typical total installation costs but can vary depending on timing, material availability and contractor experience. It is assumed drainage water management will be installed on existing or new tile drainage systems. The cost estimate provided does not include the cost for new drainage systems, only the cost to install the control structures is included. Nitrate removal wetland costs were estimated from Iowa CREP data.

The initial investment needed to construct all proposed structural practices (drainage water management, bioreactors, saturated buffers and wetlands) is estimated at $2,052,100. Annual investments are necessary to increase and maintain adoption and implementation of management practices (cover crops and perennial cover). The estimated yearly total for these practices fully implemented is $338,600 per year. Cost-share payments may not be permanently available, so alternative funding sources for management practices may need to be pursued or developed or individuals may need to realize the long-term economic and environmental value of such practices to justify costs. For example, cover crop cost estimates do not account for improved soil health and nutrient use efficiency and associated short- and long-term benefits. The dollars necessary to fund structural and management practices could come from many different sources including farmers and landowners, downstream municipalities, other local or regional stakeholders and conservation organizations.

Additional costs associated with watershed improvement are estimated to begin at approximately $75,000-125,000 per year to fund salary, benefits and training for a watershed coordinator; information and education supplies and events; monitoring activities; and office space, computer, phone and vehicle.

11. Funding Opportunities and Approaches

To achieve the goals of this watershed plan, significant resources will be needed. Current funding mechanisms provided by local, state and federal units of government may not be adequate to address all goals outlined in this plan, so creative approaches to secure sustainable funding may be needed. Appendix D provides a listing of current local, state and federal programs and grants that may be able to provide resources for plan implementation. The following list provides ideas to leverage nontraditional resources. Further research is needed to determine feasibility.

- **Locally organized cover crop seeding programs.** Farmers and landowners are often busy with harvest during the prime cover crop seeding time period. To simplify cover crop adoption, cover crop seeding programs could be developed at the SWCD, County Conservation Board or local farm cooperatives. For example, the Mitchell SWCD has developed a "One Stop Cover Crop Shop" program to facilitate and expedite the cover crops cost-share application, planning and planting process for farmers.
- **Local cover crop seed production.** Access to and cost of cover crop seed may become problematic as adoption of cover crops increases in Iowa and the Upper Mississippi River Basin. A solution to this problem is to promote local production of cover crop seed, such as cereal rye. Typical yield of rye is 30 to 50 bushels per acre, so a seeding rate of 1.5 bushels per acre means that every acre of rye grown for seed would allow a rye cover crop to be planted on 20 to 33 acres of row crop land. To avoid taking productive land out of corn and soybean production, rye plantings could be targeted to marginal soils or lands.
- **Conservation addendums to agricultural leases.** More than half of Iowa's farmland is cash rented or crop shared, and an increase in this trend presents issues for ensuring proper conservation measures are in place on Iowa farms. Conservation addendums may be a way to ensure both the landowner and the tenant agree on conservation. Addendums could include any conservation measure, but the practices included in this plan would be of most benefit. A standard conservation addendum could be developed and shared with all absentee landowners in the Swan Lake Branch Watershed.
- **Conservation easements.** Land easements have proven successful in preservation of conservation and recreation land in Iowa (e.g., Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, Wetland Reserve Enhancement Program). Some landowners may be interested in protecting sensitive land for extended periods of time or into perpetuity. For these landowners, long-term conservation easements may be a good fit.
- **Nontraditional watershed partners.** Traditional watershed partners (e.g., IDALS, IDNR, SWCD, NRCS) likely will not have the financial resources to fully implement this plan, so local project partners should seek nontraditional partners to assist with project promotion and funding. Involvement could be in the form of cash or in-kind donations.
- **Nutrient trading.** Water quality trading programs are market-based programs involving the exchange of pollutant allocations between sources within a watershed. The most common form of trading occurs when trading nutrient credits between point and nonpoint sources. Trading programs could be established to trade nutrient credits. Trading within the larger Raccoon River Watershed may be appropriate to increase potential nutrient trading partners.
- **Recreational leases.** Recreational leases, such as hunting leases, may be promoted as a tool to increase landowner revenue generated from conservation lands, particularly those in perennial cover such as wetlands or grasslands.
- **Equipment rental programs.** Farmers are often hesitant to invest in new conservation technologies that require new equipment or implements. Project partners could invest in conservation equipment, such as a strip-till bar or cover crop drill, and then rent the equipment to interested farmers. In addition to building community support for the watershed project, such cooperation can lower overall practice costs.
- **Reverse auctions.** Reverse auctions, or pay for performance programs, can be a cost-effective way to allocate conservation funding. In some watersheds where reverse auctions have been used, the environmental benefits per dollar spent have been significantly more efficient than traditional cost-share programs such as the USDA-NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). In a reverse auction,

landowners or farmers compete to provide a service (or conservation practice) to a single buyer (e.g., SWCD). All bids are analyzed for their environmental benefits and the organizer (e.g., SWCD) begins providing funds to the most efficient bids (environmental benefit per dollar) until all available resources have been allocated.

- **Watershed organization.** Often the most successful watershed projects are led by formal watershed organizations. Groups can be formed via a nonprofit organization, 28E intergovernmental agreement, Watershed Management Authority or other agreement or organization. Most watershed projects have significant partner involvement, each with an existing mission or goal. A watershed organization with a dedicated mission to improve land and water quality in the Swan Lake Branch Watershed may prove to be more successful than existing groups working together without formal organization. If established, a local watershed organization should convene regularly to evaluate progress, strategize and set specific work plans to ensure progress is made towards the 2037 watershed plan goals.
- **Subfield profit analysis.** Farmers understand some locations within a field produce higher yields and profits, so analyzing the distribution of long-term profitability within fields may be an important selling point for conservation. Technology to analyze profitability within crop fields is available and has been used in Iowa. Incorporating profitability analysis into conservation planning could result in higher profit margins and increased conservation opportunities on land that consistently yields zero or lost revenue.

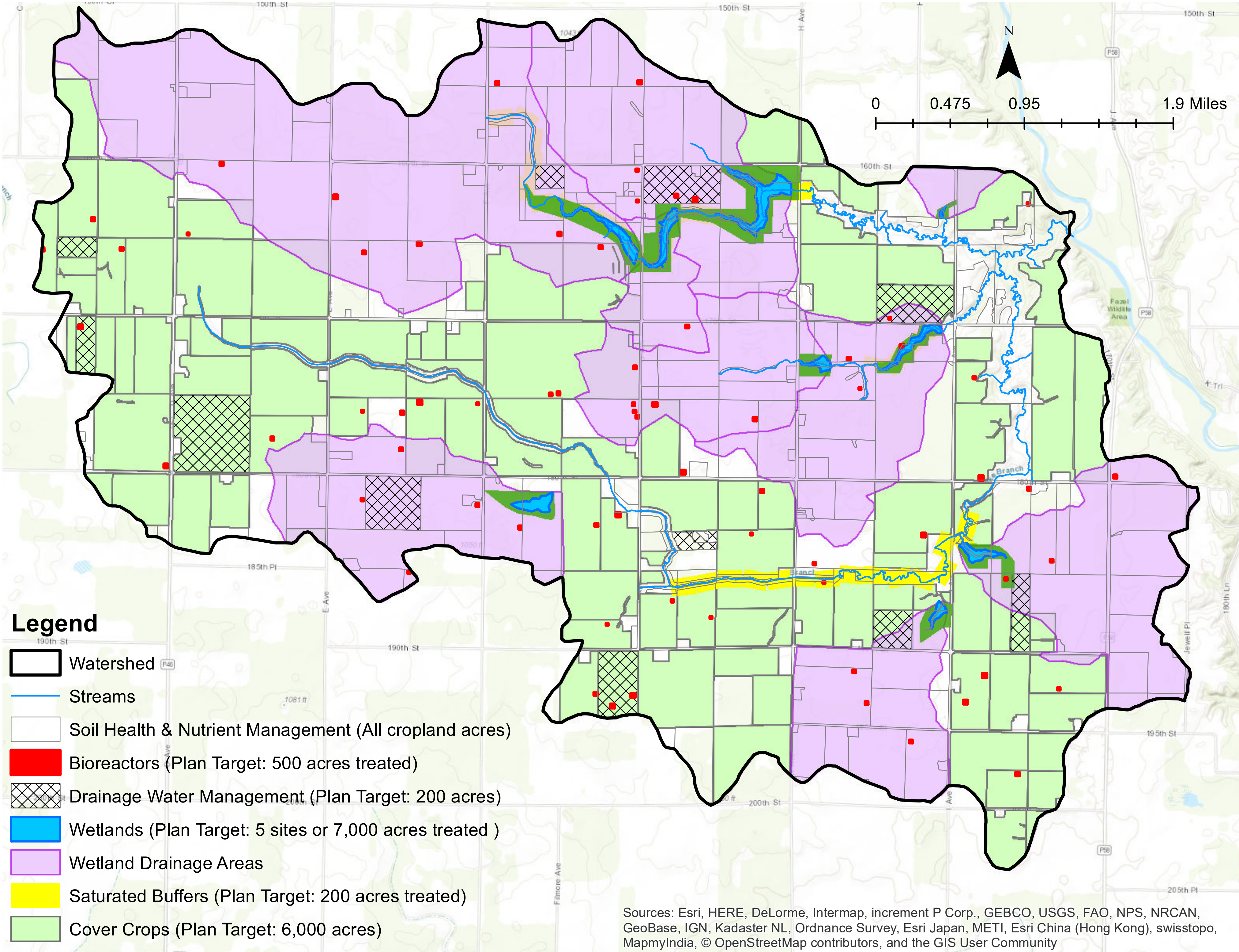
12. Roles and Responsibilities

Watershed improvement is an ambitious undertaking that requires commitment, collaboration and coordination among multiple entities. Clearly defined roles and duties can facilitate task assignments and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the watershed project. The following list describes the general responsibilities of various groups in the Swan Lake Branch Watershed.

- **Farmers.** Engage with watershed plan implementation; farm, field and subfield evaluation; conservation practice implementation; and knowledge sharing.
- **Landowners.** Engage with tenants on conservation planning, incorporation of conservation addendums to lease agreements and conservation practice implementation.
- **City of Des Moines.** Engage with watershed plan implementation and potentially provide funding to implement conservation practices that result downstream benefits.
- **Dallas Soil and Water Conservation District commissioners.** Provide project leadership, participate in project meetings and events, hire staff, advocate for project goals and promote project locally and regionally.
- **Natural Resources Conservation Service.** Provide conservation practice design and engineering services, project partnership, house project staff and provide office space, computer, phone and vehicle.
- **Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship.** Provide technical support to project, provide the opportunity to receive state funding for soil and water conservation and provide a contact for the Iowa CREP program.
- **Iowa Department of Natural Resources.** Provide technical assistance and advice and water quality monitoring as necessary.
- **Dallas County Conservation Board.** Provide project partnership, easement management and public education.
- **Dallas County supervisors.** Engage with project to determine and pursue mutual benefits.
- **Agribusinesses.** Engage project partners and promote project goals and opportunities to members and customers.
- **Commodity groups.** Engage project partners, promote project goals and opportunities to members and provide agronomic and environmental services as appropriate.
- **Conservation groups.** Engage project partners, provide planning services and promote practices that have habitat and water quality benefits.
- **Media.** Develop stories related to the watershed project and maintain contact with local sources of information.

Appendix A

Conceptual Plan Maps


N
0
0.475
0.95
1.9 Miles
Legend
Watershed
Streams
Soil Health & Nutrient Management (All cropland acres)
Bioreactors (Plan Target: 500 acres treated)
Drainage Water Management (Plan Target: 200 acres)
Wetlands (Plan Target: 5 sites or 7,000 acres treated)
Wetland Drainage Areas
Saturated Buffers (Plan Target: 200 acres treated)
Cover Crops (Plan Target: 6,000 acres)
Sources: Esri, HERE, DeLorme, Intermap, increment P Corp., GEBCO, USGS, FAO, NPS, NRCAN, GeoBase, IGN, Kadaster NL, Ordnance Survey, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), swisstopo, MapmyIndia, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

Appendix B

Agricultural Conservation Planning Framework Results Atlas

Swan Lake Branch Watershed
Agricultural Conservation Planning Framework Results Atlas

Overview

The Agricultural Conservation Planning Framework (ACPF) provides datasets and mapping tools that can be used to identify suitable locations for agricultural conservation practices. The geographic information system (GIS) tools utilize inputs including elevation, land use, and soils data to characterize watersheds and identify appropriate sites for practices that enhance soil health and water quality by improving drainage, runoff, and riparian management. The ACPF was developed by the USDA-Agricultural Research Service National Laboratory for Agriculture and the Environment.

Results

The results of applying ACPF tools to a watershed provide a suite of potential conservation practice opportunities. Results should be refined based on local and expert input to develop actionable watershed plans that address local conditions and goals. ACPF output is therefore best utilized as scientific data to support decision making and planning in agricultural watersheds. The following atlas of ACPF result maps for this watershed display all conservation practice outputs derived from analysis of the watershed with the GIS toolbox. Practices are mapped based on site suitability and may or may not reflect existing conservation infrastructure.

The following maps include watershed assessments of land use, tile drainage, and runoff risk derived with ACPF tools. The remaining maps are arranged into three sections: drainage practices, runoff practices, and riparian management. Conservation drainage practices include bioreactors, saturated buffers, carbon-enhanced saturated buffers, drainage water management, nitrate removal wetlands, and perennial cover or tile intake buffers in topographic depressions. Runoff control practices include contour buffer strips, grassed waterways, and water and sediment control basins. Practices such as nutrient management, no-till/reduced tillage, and cover crops are not explicitly mapped by ACPF tools according to the philosophy that such soil health building practices are appropriate for all agricultural land. The final section of maps includes the results of applying the ACPF riparian function assessment to the stream channels in the watershed. Recommended riparian functions are classified as critical zone (high potential for runoff control and denitrification), multi-species buffer (moderate potential for both runoff control and denitrification), deep-rooted vegetation (denitrification prioritized), stiff stemmed grasses (runoff control prioritized), and streambank stabilization.

Map Index

1. Watershed Overview
2. Land Use
3. Tile Drainage
4. Runoff Risk
5. Drainage Treatment Practices
6. Runoff Control Practices
7. Riparian Management Practices

References

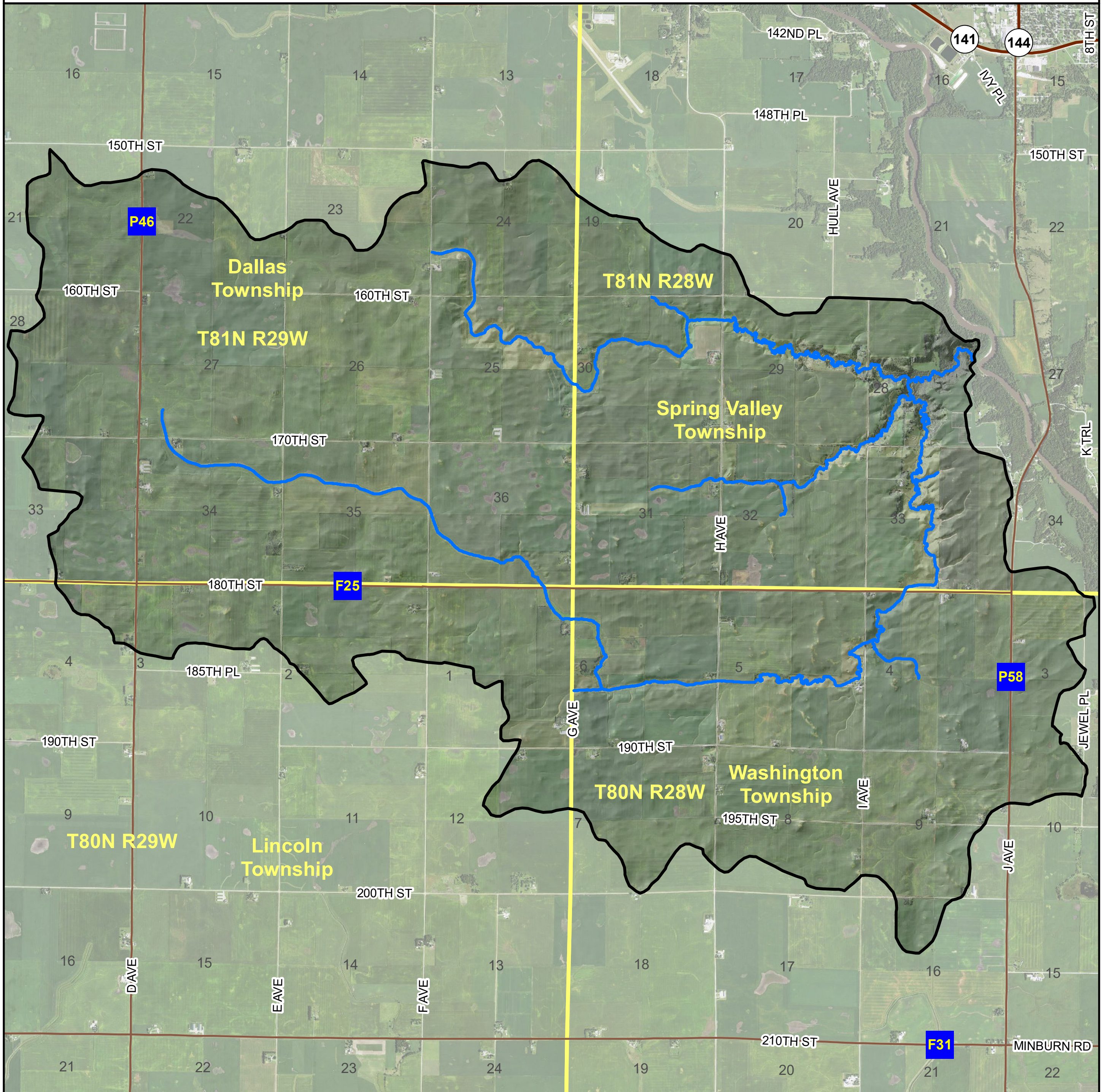
ACPF manual: Porter, S.A., M.D. Tomer, D.E. James, and K.M.B. Boomer. 2015. Agricultural Conservation Planning Framework: ArcGIS®Toolbox User's Manual. USDA Agricultural Research Service, National Laboratory for Agriculture and the Environment, Ames Iowa. http://northcentralwater.org/acpf/

General concepts behind the ACPF: Tomer, M.D., S.A. Porter, D.E. James, K.M.B. Boomer, J.A. Kostel, and E. McLellan. 2013. Combining precision conservation technologies into a flexible framework to facilitate agricultural watershed planning. Journal of Soil and Water Conservation 68:113A-120A. http://www.jswconline.org/content/68/5/113A.full.pdf+html

Development of specific practice siting tools: Tomer, M.D., S.A. Porter, K.M.B. Boomer, D.E. James, J.A. Kostel, M.J. Helmers, T.M. Isenhart, and E. McLellan. 2015. Agricultural Conservation Planning Framework: 1. Developing multi-practice watershed planning scenarios and assessing nutrient reduction potential. J. Environ. Qual. 44(3):754-767. https://dl.sciencesocieties.org/publications/jeq/articles/44/3/754

Development of the riparian classification scheme: Tomer, M.D., K.M.B. Boomer, S.A. Porter, B.K. Gelder, D.E. James, and E. McLellan. 2015. Agricultural Conservation Planning Framework: 2. Classification of riparian buffer design-types with application to assess and map stream corridors. J. Environ. Qual. 44(3):768-779. https://dl.sciencesocieties.org/publications/jeq/articles/44/3/768

Swan Lake Branch Watershed (071000061502)
Agricultural Conservation Planning Framework Results Atlas



Watershed Boundary

Streams

0 0.5 1 Miles

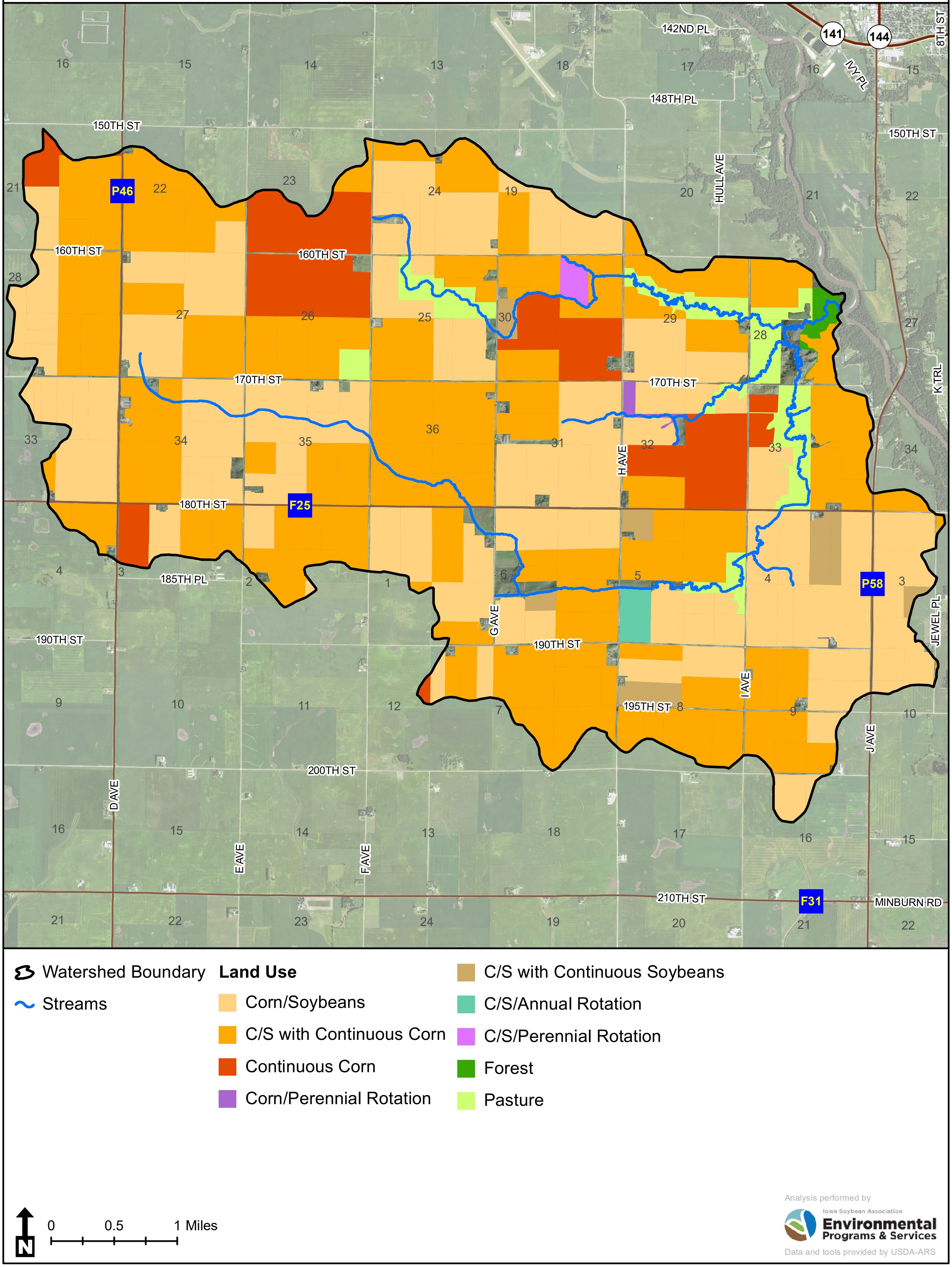
N

Analysis performed by

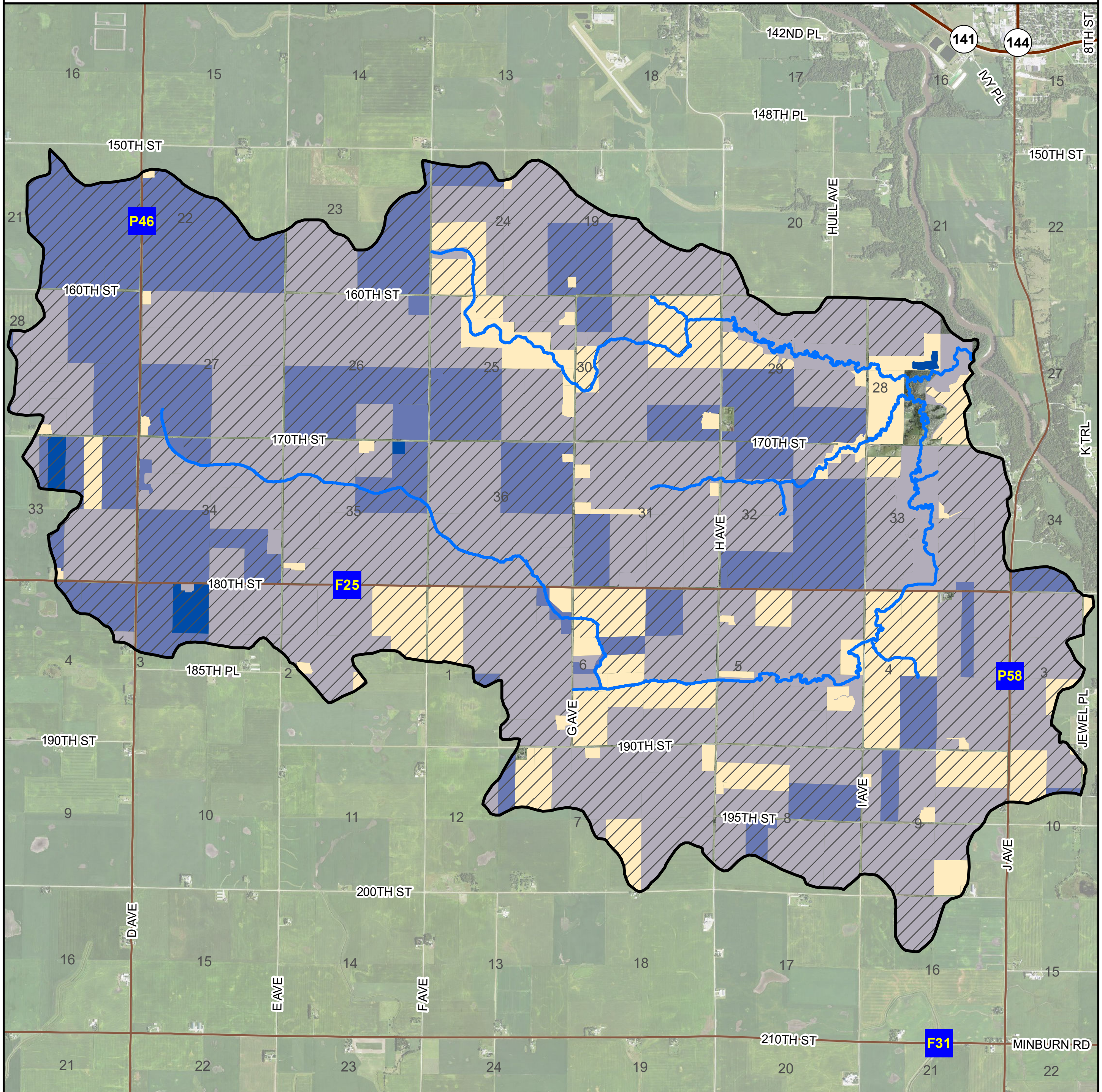
Iowa Soybean Association Environmental Programs & Services

Data and tools provided by USDA-ARS

Swan Lake Branch Watershed (071000061502)
Agricultural Conservation Planning Framework Land Use



Swan Lake Branch Watershed (071000061502)
Agricultural Conservation Planning Framework Tile Drainage



Watershed Boundary
Streams
Tile Drainage Likely

Percent Hydric Soils

- 75 to 100%
- 50 to 75%
- 25 to 50%
- 0 to 25%

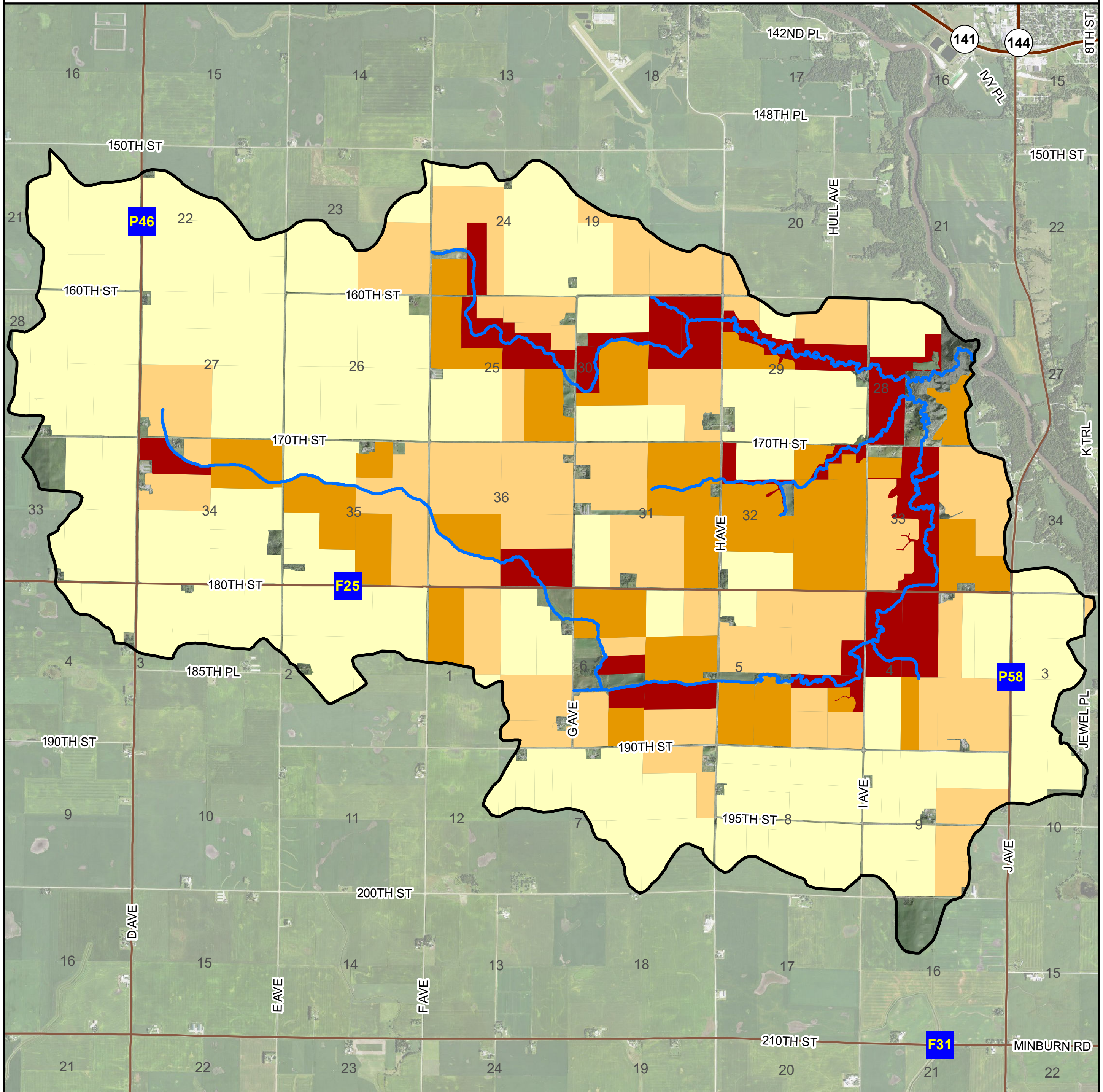
0 0.5 1 Miles

N

Analysis performed by Iowa Soybean Association Environmental Programs & Services

Data and tools provided by USDA-ARS

Swan Lake Branch Watershed (071000061502)
Agricultural Conservation Planning Framework Runoff Risk



Watershed Boundary

Streams

Runoff Risk

Critical

Very High

High

Present

0 0.5 1 Miles

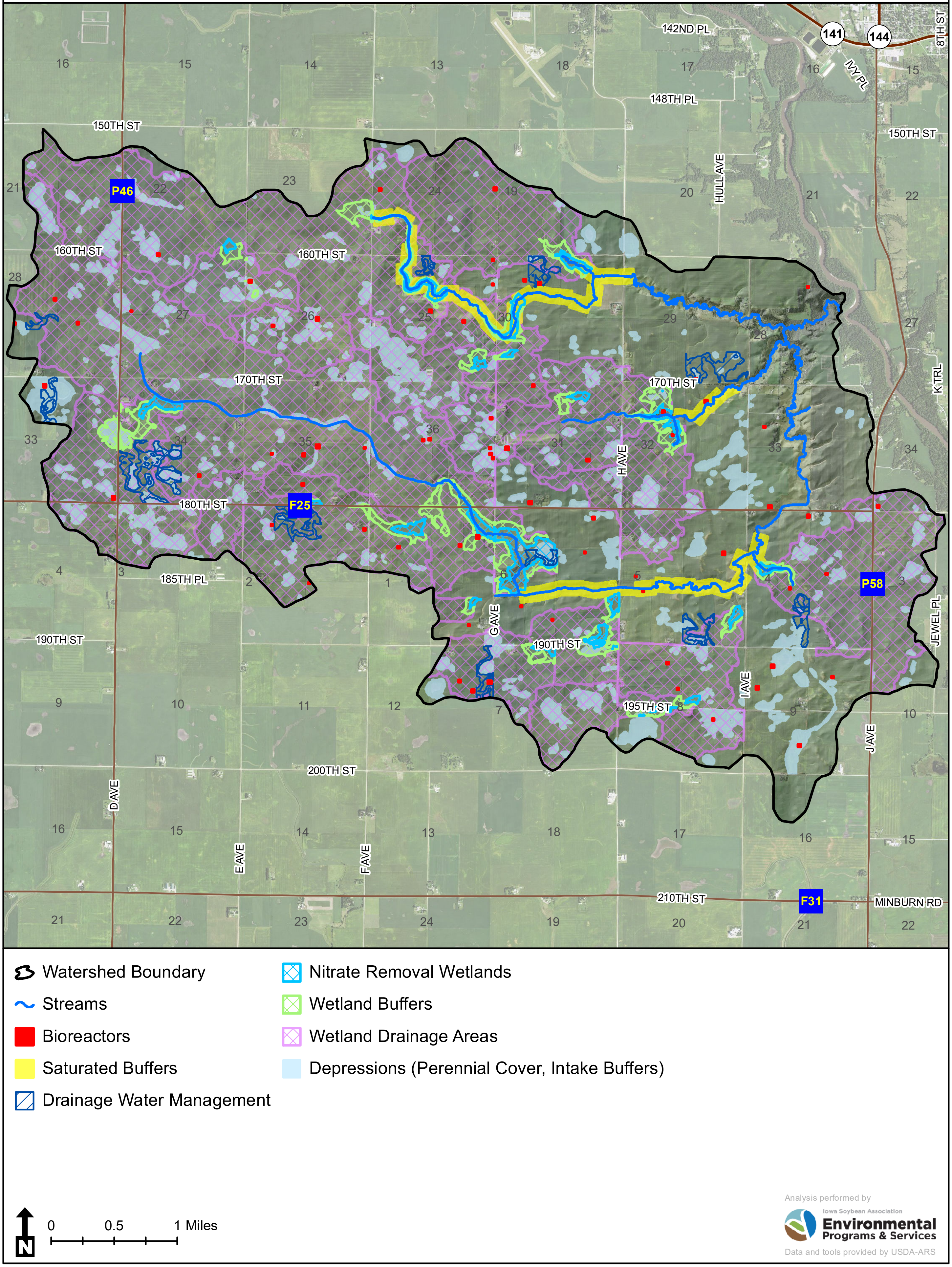
N

Analysis performed by

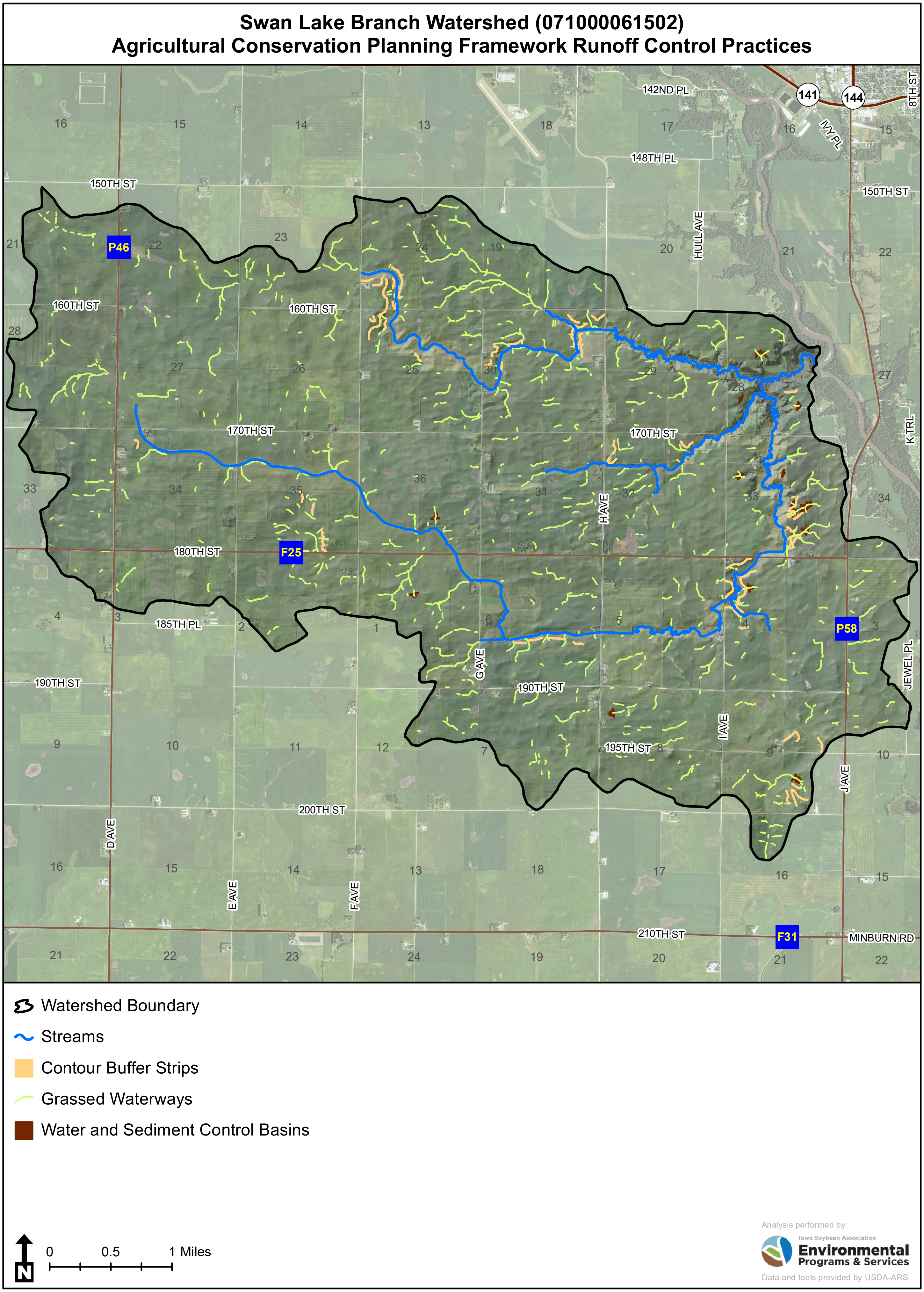
Iowa Soybean Association Environmental Programs & Services

Data and tools provided by USDA-ARS

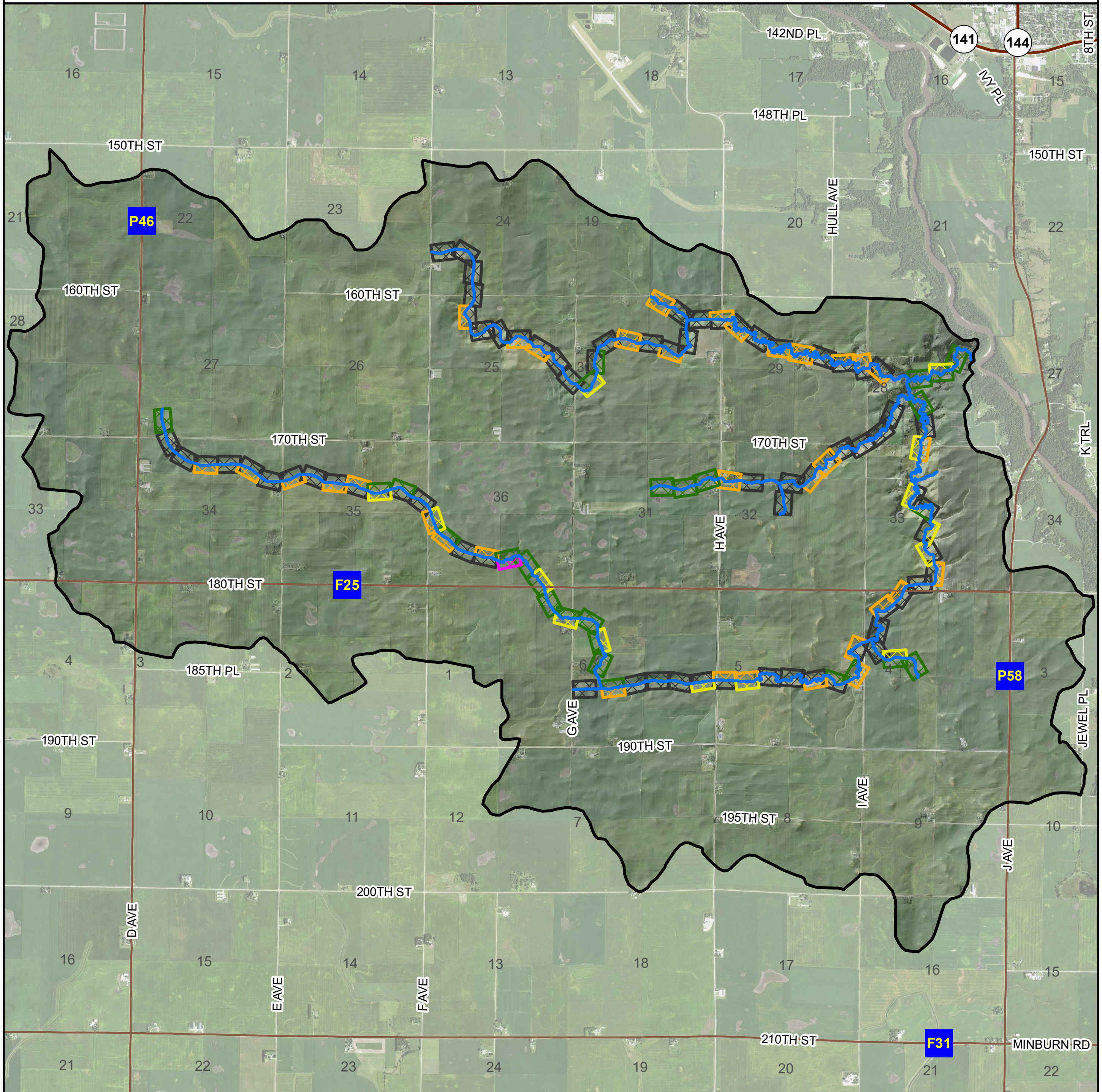
Swan Lake Branch Watershed (071000061502)
Agricultural Conservation Planning Framework Drainage Treatment Practices



Swan Lake Branch Watershed (071000061502)
Agricultural Conservation Planning Framework Runoff Control Practices



Swan Lake Branch Watershed (071000061502)
Agricultural Conservation Planning Framework Riparian Management Practices



Watershed Boundary

Streams

Riparian Function

- Critical Zone
- Multi Species Buffer
- Deep Rooted Vegetation
- Stiff Stemmed Grasses
- Stream Bank Stabilization

N

0 0.5 1 Miles

Analysis performed by Iowa Soybean Association Environmental Programs & Services

Data and tools provided by USDA-ARS

Appendix C

Watershed Project Self-Evaluation Worksheet

Watershed Project Self-Evaluation Worksheet

Purpose
This self-evaluation worksheet is a means to assess annual watershed project progress and to identify areas of strength and weakness. The evaluation worksheet should be completed annually by project leaders and partners. Results should be compiled and shared with all project partners.

Evaluation Watershed Project: ______________________________

Evaluator Name: _________________

Evaluation Date: _________________

Evaluation Time Period: _________________ to _________________

Project Administration	**Exceeds**	**Meets**	**Partially Meets**	**Does Not Meet**	**NA**
Project annual review meeting held.					
Watershed partners represent a broad and diverse membership and most interests in the watershed.					
Watershed partners understand their responsibilities and roles.					
Watershed partners share a common vision and purpose.					
Watershed partners are aware of and involved in project activities.					
Watershed partners understand decision making processes.					
Watershed meetings are well-organized and productive.					
Watershed partners advocate for the mission.					

Attitudes and Awareness	**Exceeds**	**Meets**	**Partially Meets**	**Does Not Meet**	**NA**
Positive changes in attitudes, beliefs and practices have occurred in the watershed.					
Field days and other events have been held in the watershed.					
Watershed project has received publicity via local and regional media outlets.					

Performance	Exceeds	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	NA
Yearly _____________ (insert conservation practice) implementation goals have been met.					
Yearly _____________ (insert conservation practice) implementation goals have been met.					
Yearly _____________ (insert conservation practice) implementation goals have been met.					
Yearly _____________ (insert conservation practice) implementation goals have been met.					
Yearly _____________ (insert conservation practice) implementation goals have been met.					
Yearly _____________ (insert conservation practice) implementation goals have been met.					
Yearly _____________ (insert conservation practice) implementation goals have been met.					
Yearly _____________ (insert conservation practice) implementation goals have been met.					
The majority of implemented conservation practices have been retained after cost-share payments ended.					

Results	Exceeds	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	NA
Monitoring of _________ (insert variable) has shown progress towards reaching plan goals.					
Monitoring of _________ (insert variable) has shown progress towards reaching plan goals.					
Monitoring of _________ (insert variable) has shown progress towards reaching plan goals.					
Impact (financial or other) to farmers and landowners has been positive or minimal.					
Modeled impacts on ____________ (insert variable) have shown progress towards reaching plan goals.					
Modeled impacts on ____________ (insert variable) have shown progress towards reaching plan goals.					
Modeled impacts on ____________ (insert variable) have shown progress towards reaching plan goals.					

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats Analysis

Thinking about the goals of the watershed plan, brainstorm the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOTs) relevant to the project. Identification of SWOTs is important as they help shape successful watershed plan implementation.

Strengths	Opportunities
Weaknesses	**Threats**

Appendix D

Potential Funding Sources

Appendix D: Potential Funding Sources

Public Funding Sources

Program	Description	Agency/Organization
Iowa Financial Incentives Program	50 percent cost-share available to landowners through 100 SWCDs for permanent soil conservation practices.	IDALS-DSCWQ
No-Interest Loans	State administered loans to landowners for permanent soil conservation practices.	IDALS-DSCWQ
District Buffer Initiatives	Funds for SWCDs to initiate, stimulate, and incentivize signup of USDA programs, specifically buffers.	IDALS-DSCWQ
Iowa Watershed Protection Program	Funds for SWCDs to provide water quality protection, flood control, and soil erosion protection in priority watersheds; 50-75 percent cost-share.	IDALS-DSCWQ
Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program	Leveraging USDA funds to establish nitrate removal wetlands in north central Iowa with no cost to landowner.	IDALS-DSCWQ
Soil and Water Enhancement Account - REAP Water Quality Improvement Projects	REAP funds for water quality improvement projects (sediment, nutrient and livestock waste) and wildlife habitat and forestry practices; 50-75 percent cost-share. Used as state match for EPA 319 funding. Tree planting, native grasses, forestry, buffers, streambank stabilization, traditional erosion control practices, livestock waste management, ag drainage well closure and urban storm water.	IDALS-DSCWQ
State Revolving Loans	Low interest loans provided by SWCDs to landowners for permanent water quality improvement practices; subset of DNR program.	IDALS-DSCWQ
Watershed Improvement Fund	Local watershed improvement grants to enhance water quality for beneficial uses, including economic development.	IDALS-DSCWQ
General Conservation Reserve Program	Encourages farmers to convert highly erodible land or other environmentally sensitive land to vegetative cover; farmers receive annual rental payments.	USDA-FSA
Continuous Conservation Reserve Program	Encourages farmers to convert highly erodible land or other environmentally sensitive land to vegetative cover, filter strips or riparian buffers; farmers receive annual rental payments.	USDA-FSA
Farmable Wetland Program	Voluntary program to restore farmable wetlands and associated buffers by improving hydrology and vegetation.	USDA-FSA
Grassland Reserve Program	Provides funds to grassland owners to maintain, improve and establish grass. Contracts of easements up to 30 years.	USDA-FSA
Environmental Quality Incentives Program	Provides technical and financial assistance for natural resource conservation in environmentally beneficial and cost-effective manner; program is generally 50 percent cost-share.	USDA-NRCS
Wetland Reserve Program	Provides restoration of wetlands through permanent and 30 year easements and 10 year restoration agreements.	USDA-NRCS
Emergency Watershed Protection Program	Flood plain easements acquired via USDA designated disasters due to flooding.	USDA-NRCS
Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program	Cost-share contracts to develop wildlife habitat.	USDA-NRCS
Farm and Ranchland Protection Program	Purchase of easements to limit conversion of ag land to non-ag uses. Requires 50 percent match.	USDA-NRCS
Cooperative Conservation Partnership Programs	Conservation partnerships that focus technical and financial resources on conservation priorities in watersheds and airsheds of special significance.	USDA-NRCS
Conservation Security Program	Green payment approach for maintaining and increasing conservation practices.	USDA-NRCS
Conservation Innovation Grants	National and state grants for innovative solutions to a variety of environmental challenges.	USDA-NRCS

Regional Conservation Partnership Program	Grants from national, state or Critical Conservation Area funding pools to promote formation of partnerships to facilitate conservation practice implementation. Each partner within a project must make a significant cash or in-kind contribution.	USDA-NRCS
Conservation Stewardship Program	Encourages farmers to begin or continue conservation through five-year contracts to install and maintain conservation practices and adopt conservation crop rotations.	USDA-NRCS
Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration — Section 206	Restoration projects in aquatic ecosystems such as rivers, lakes and wetlands.	US Army Corps
Habitat Restoration of Fish and Wildlife Resources	Must involve modification of the structures or operations of a project constructed by the Corps of Engineers.	US Army Corps
Section 319 Clean Water Act	Grants to implement NPS pollution control programs and projects in watersheds with EPA approved watershed management plans.	EPA/DNR
Iowa Water Quality Loan Fund	Source of low-cost financing for farmers and landowners, livestock producers, community groups, developers, watershed organizations and others.	DNR
Sponsored Projects	Wastewater utilities can finance and pay for projects, within or outside the corporate limits, that cover best management practices to keep sediment, nutrients, chemicals and other pollutants out of streams and lakes.	DNR/Iowa Finance Authority
Resource Enhancement and Protection Program	Provides funding for enhancement and protection of State's natural and cultural resources.	DNR
Streambank Stabilization and Habitat Improvement	Penalties from fish kills used for environmental improvement on streams impacted by the kill.	DNR/IDALS-DSCWQ
State Revolving Fund	Provides low interest loans to municipalities for waste water and water supply; expanding to private septics, livestock, storm water and NPS pollutants.	DNR
Watershed Improvement Review Board	Comprised of representatives from agriculture, water utilities, environmental organizations, agribusiness, the conservation community and state legislators and provides grants to watershed and water quality projects.	WIRB
Iowa Water Quality Initiative	Initiated by IDALS-DSCWQ as a demonstration and implementation program for the Nutrient Reduction Strategy. Funds are targeted to 9 priority HUC-8 watersheds.	IDALS-DSCWQ
Fishers and Farmers Partnership	Fishers & Farmers Partnership for the Upper Mississippi River Basin is a self-directed group of nongovernmental agricultural and conservation organizations, tribal organizations and state and federal agencies working to achieve the partnership's mission "… to support locally-led projects that add value to farms while restoring aquatic habitat and native fish populations."	US Fish and Wildlife Service and others

Private Funding Sources

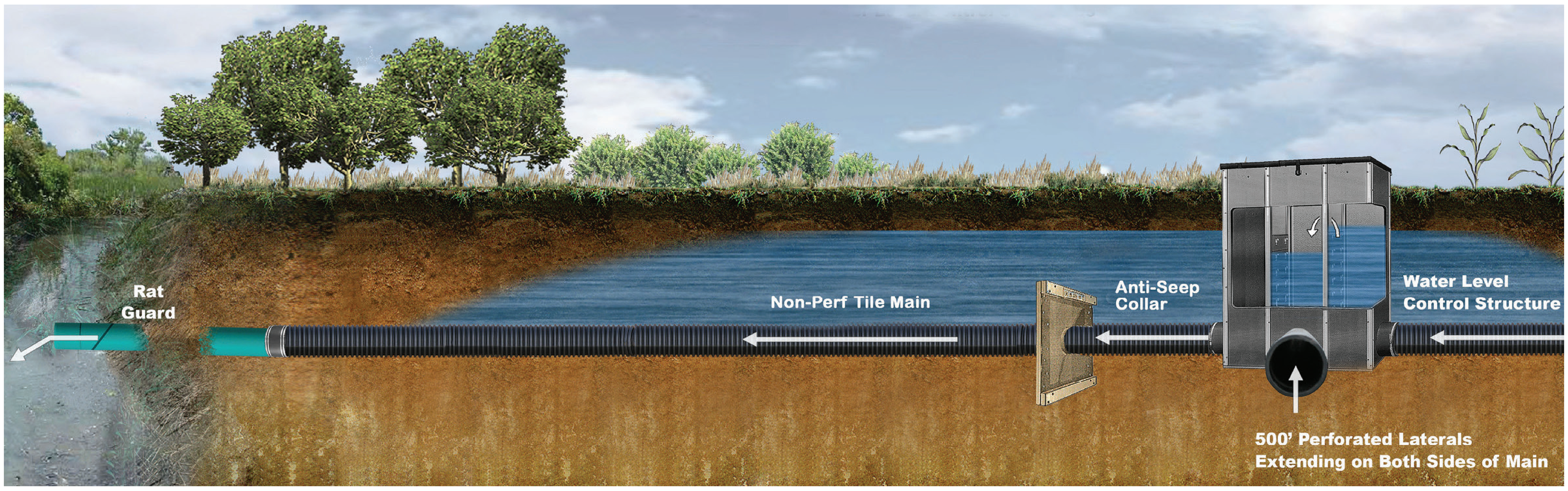
Program	Description	Website
Field to Market® Alliance	Field To Market® is a diverse alliance working to create opportunities across the agricultural supply chain for continuous improvements in productivity, environmental quality and human well-being. The group provides collaborative leadership that is engaged in industry-wide dialogue, grounded in science and open to the full range of technology choices.	https://www.fieldtomarket.org/members/
International Plant Nutrition Institute (IPNI)	The IPNI is a not-for-profit, science-based organization dedicated to the responsible management of plant nutrition for the benefit of the human family.	http://www.ipni.net
Iowa Community Foundations	Iowa Community Foundations are nonprofit organizations established to meet the current and future needs of our local communities.	http://www.iowacommunityfoundations.org/
Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation	Private nonprofit conservation organization working to ensure Iowans will always have beautiful natural areas — to bike, hike and paddle; to recharge, relax and refresh; and to keep Iowa healthy and vibrant.	http://www.inhf.org
McKnight Foundation — Mississippi River Program	Program goal is to restore the water quality and resiliency of the Mississippi River.	www.mcknight.org/grant-programs/mississippi-river
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF)	NFWF provides funding on a competitive basis to projects that sustain, restore and enhance our nation's fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats.	www.nfwf.org
National Wildlife Foundation	Works to protect and restore resources and the beneficial functions they offer.	www.nwf.org
The Fertilizer Institute (TFI)	TFI is the leading voice in the fertilizer industry, representing the public policy, communication and statistical needs of producers, manufacturers, retailers and transporters of fertilizer. Issues of interest to TFI members include security, international trade, energy, transportation, the environment, worker health and safety, farm bill and conservation programs to promote the use of enhanced efficiency fertilizer.	http://www.tfi.org
The Nature Conservancy (TNC)	TNC is the largest freshwater conservation organization in the world — operating in 35 countries with more than 300 freshwater scientists and 500 freshwater conservation sites globally. TNC works with businesses, governments, partners and communities to change how water is managed around the world.	http://www.nature.org
Trees Forever — Working Watersheds Program	Annually work with 10-15 projects in Iowa that emphasize water quality through our Working Watersheds: Buffers and Beyond program.	www.treesforever.org/
Walton Family Foundation — Environmental Program	Work to achieve lasting change by creating new and unexpected partnerships among conservation, business and community interests to build durable solutions to big problems.	www.waltonfamilyfoundation.org/environment

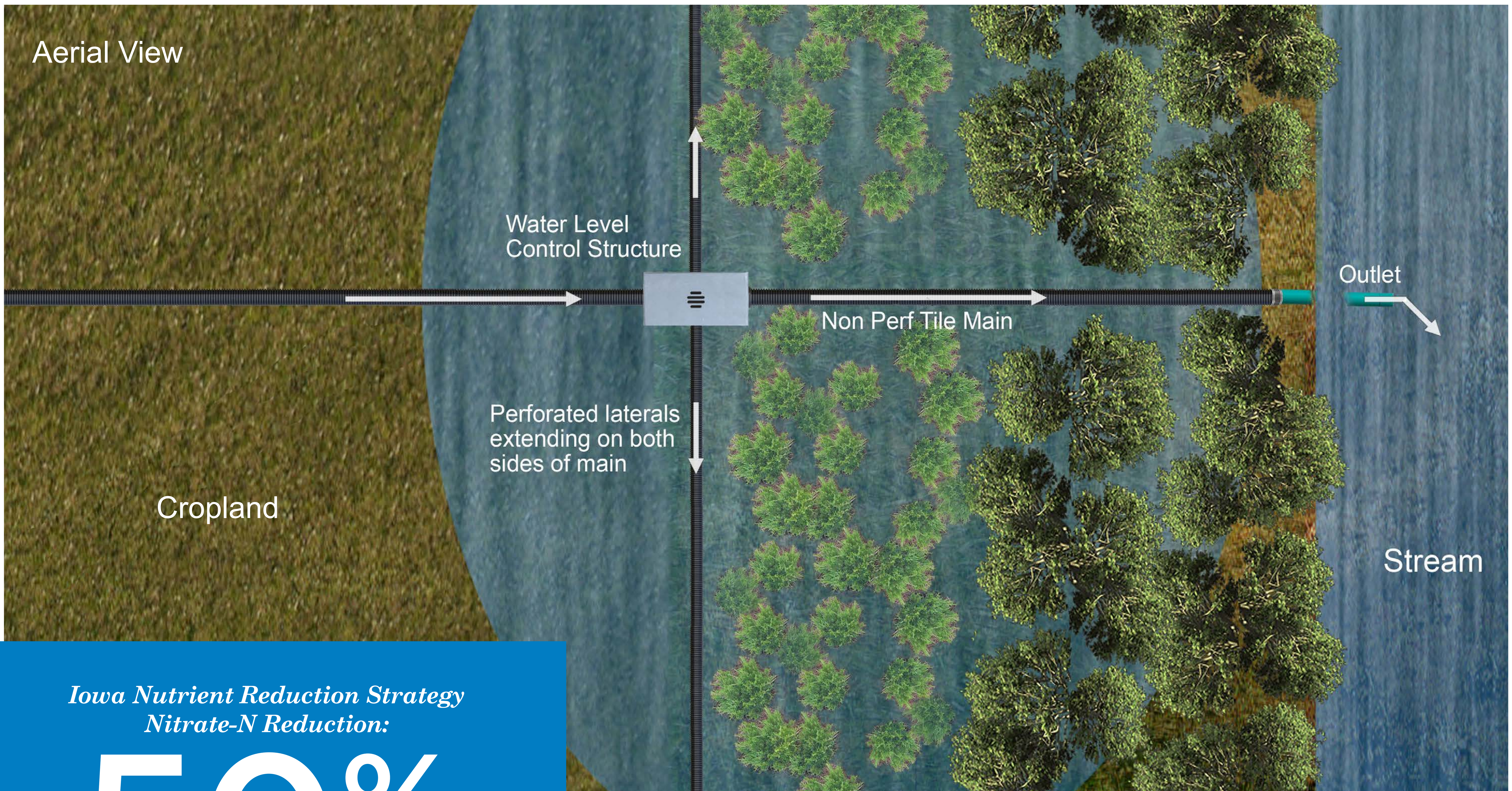
Appendix E

Practice Informational Flyers

SATURATED BUFFER

Saturated buffers allow nutrients to be removed by redistributing tile water into the riparian buffer soil profile before reaching the stream.





Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy Nitrate-N Reduction:

50%

on average

images courtesy of Agri Drain

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BIOREACTOR

Bioreactors redirect tile water to an underground bed of woodchips, spurring nitrate removal.

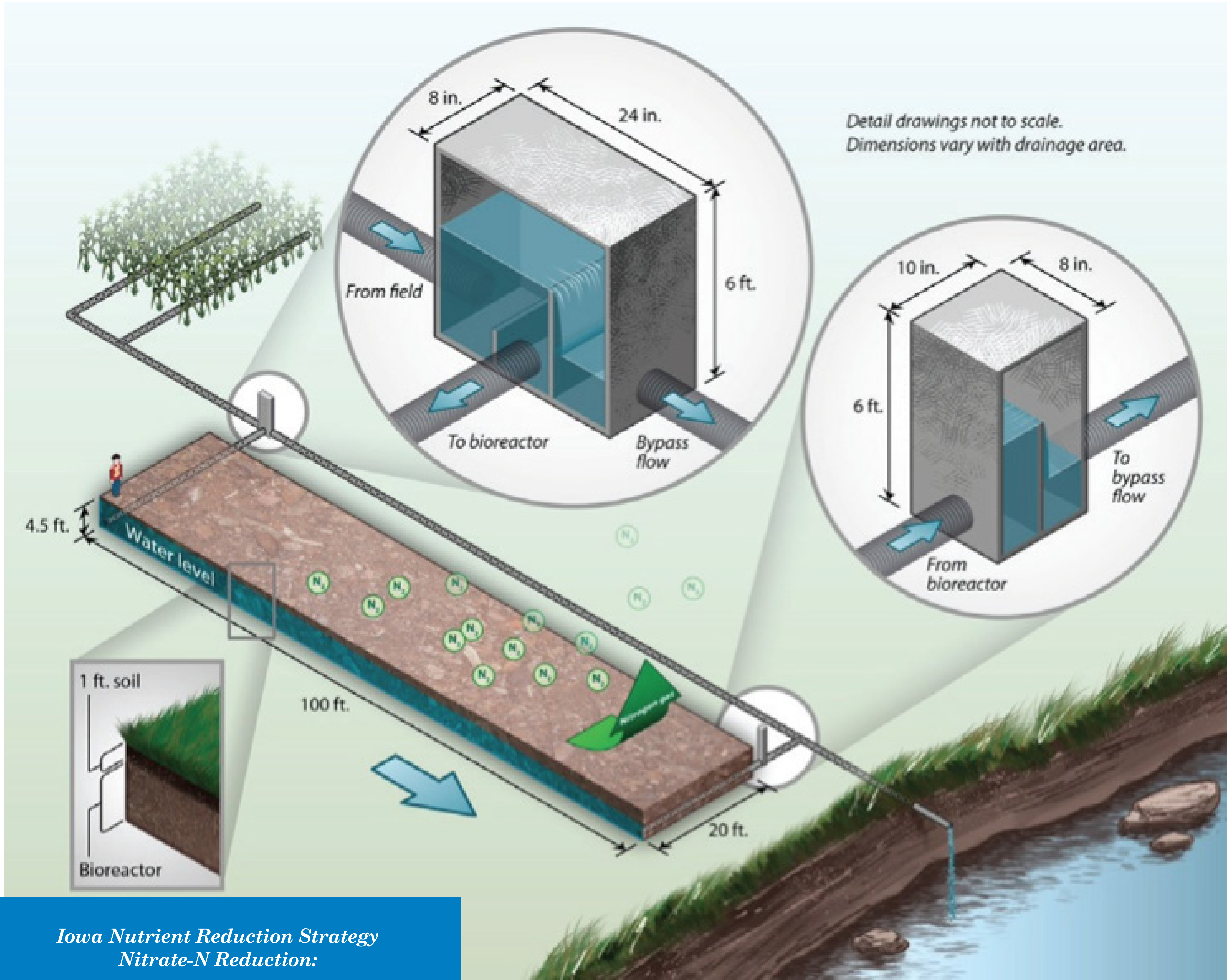

image courtesy of Iowa State University

Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy Nitrate-N Reduction:

43%

on average

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WETLAND

A wetland is a shallow vegetated pool that helps filter pollutants, control flooding and provide wildlife habitat.

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DRAINAGE WATER MANAGEMENT

Drainage water management uses a series of control structures to manage field drainage on flat land (0.5-1 percent slope) by storing water in the soil profile when drainage is not beneficial to crop production.

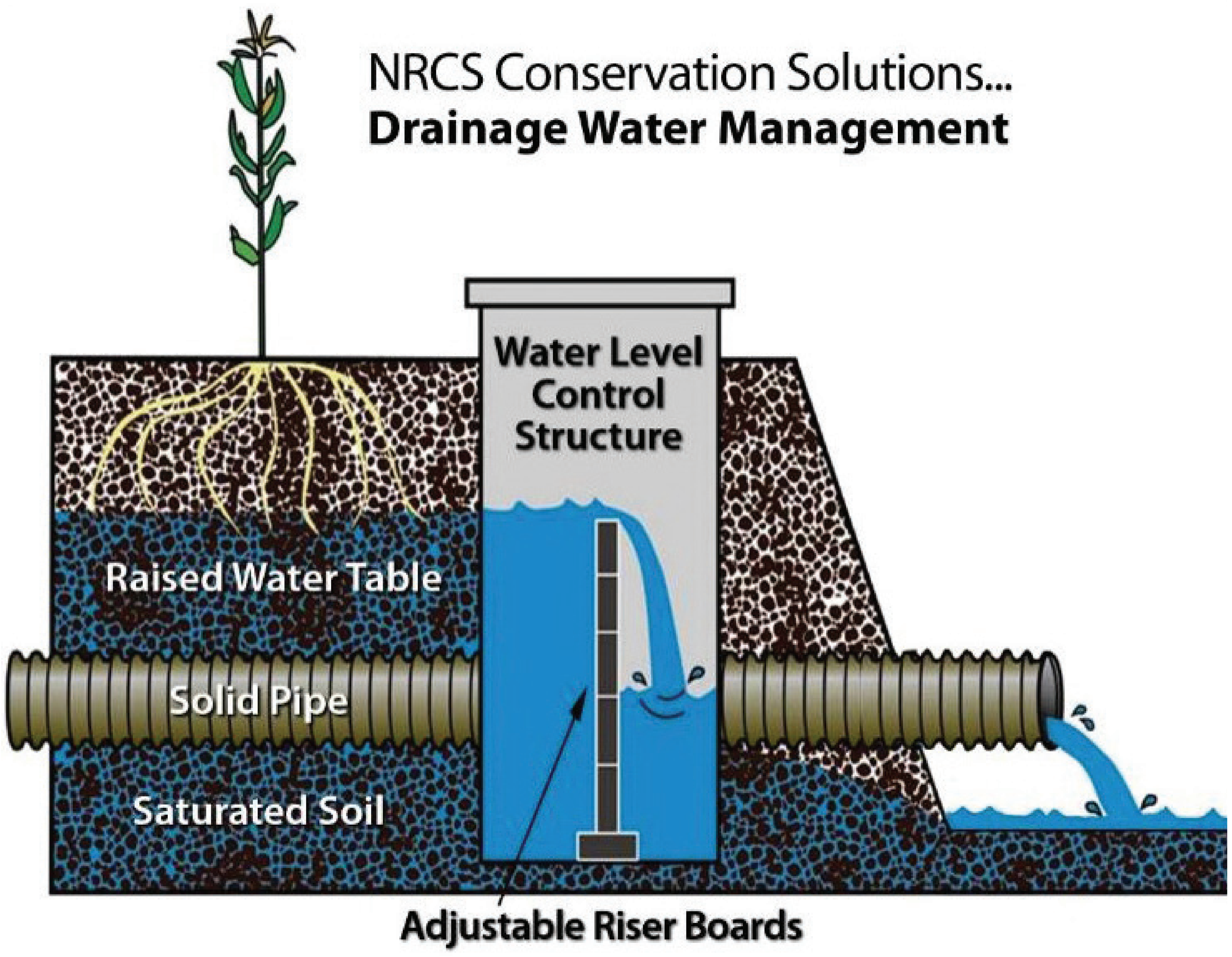

image courtesy of USDA-NRCS

Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy Nitrate-N Reduction:

33%

on average

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COVER CROPS

Cover crops are grown during the fall and spring between corn and soybeans to reduce nitrogen loss and erosion.

Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy
Nitrate-N Reduction:

28-30%

on average

Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy
Phosphorus Load Reduction:

29%

on average

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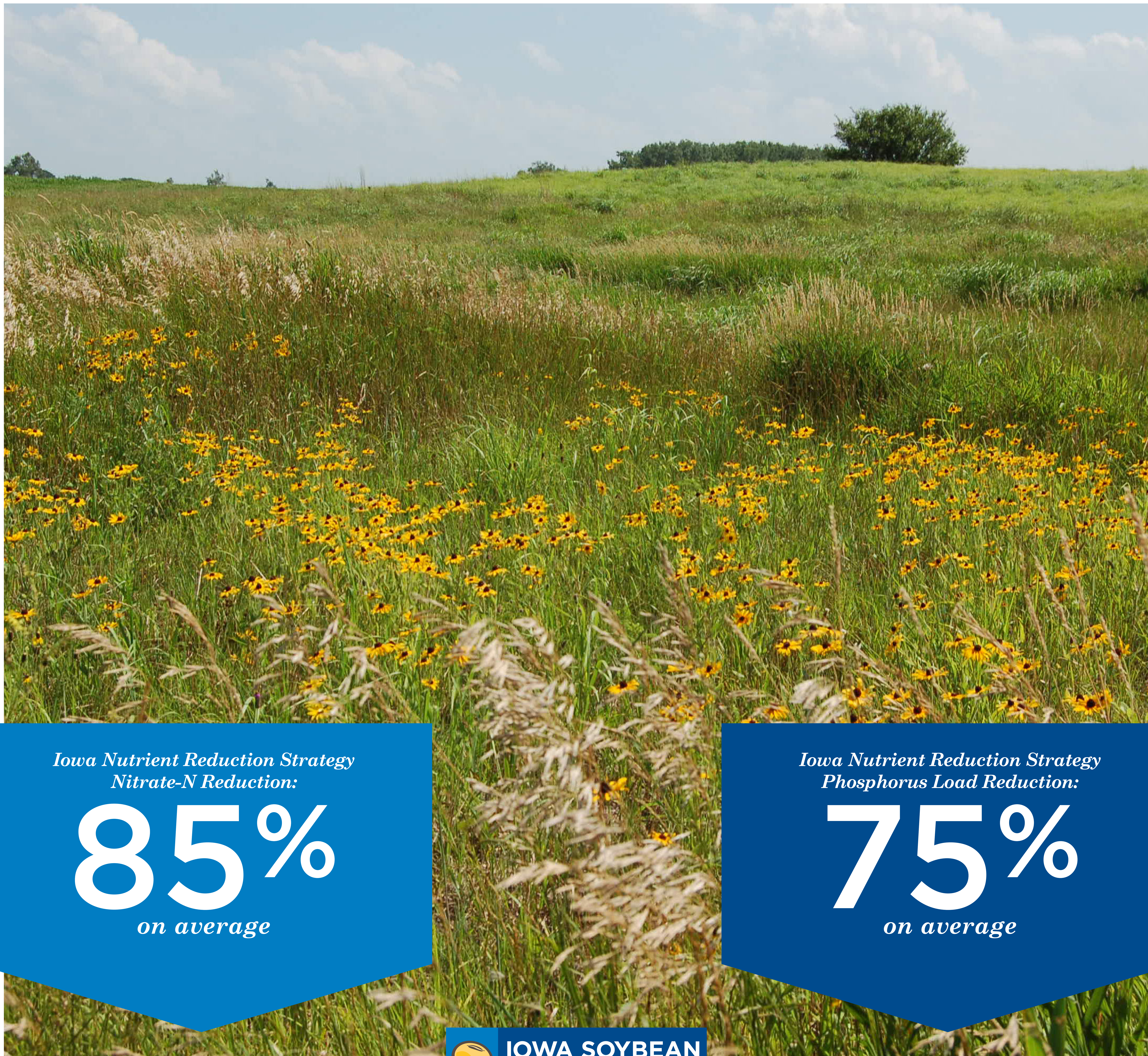
POLLINATOR & WILDLIFE HABITAT

Habitat restoration transitions environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production to diverse native plant species that improve environmental quality as well as pollinator and wildlife habitat.



Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy Nitrate-N Reduction:

85%

on average

Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy Phosphorus Load Reduction:

75%

on average

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Appendix F

Watershed Plan 2-Page Factsheet

Swan Lake Branch
Watershed Plan

What is a watershed?

A watershed is an area of land that drains to a common point. The Swan Lake Branch watershed contains 15,775 acres of Dallas county. The watershed meets with the North Raccoon River southwest of Perry.

Why is there a watershed plan for the Swan Lake Branch Watershed?

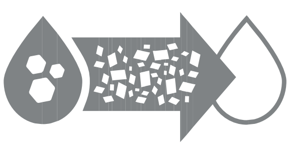
The Swan Lake Branch watershed was selected by the Iowa Soybean Association as priority area for an upstream-downstream partnership between farmers and landowners and the City of Des Moines. The first step was to develop a watershed plan to identify conservation practice opportunities in the watershed. Farmers and landowners from the watershed along with assistance from the Iowa Soybean Association developed a watershed plan to address the following goals by 2037:

1. Identify cost effective solutions
2. Provide for profitable and productive agriculture
3. Create conditions for healthy soils and water
4. Minimize downstream impacts
5. Work with urban and rural stakeholders

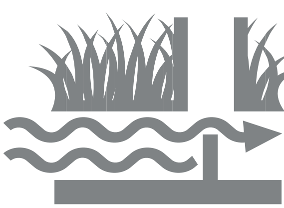
What conservation practices are included in the watershed plan?

Due to the ambitious watershed plan goals, conservation practice adoption will be necessary throughout the entire watershed. The following practices along with their target implementation levels are included in the watershed conceptual plan (see map on reverse).

Saturated Buffers (5 structures) Tile water is routed into a riparian buffer. Plants and microbes in the buffer naturally remove nitrates from water as it percolates towards the stream.



Bioreactors (10 structures) Tile water is routed into a trench filled with wood chips. Microbes living in the wood chips remove nitrates from the water through a process called denitrification. The treated water is then returned to the stream with less nitrates.



Drainage Water Management (200 acres) A control structure is used to temporarily raise the water table. This reduces the overall amount of drainage throughout the year. Excess water can be drained before field operations by managing the control structure.

Nitrate Removal Wetlands (5 sites) Restored or constructed wetlands can benefit water quality by removing nitrates and sediment. Wetlands also reduce flooding by temporarily holding excess water during and after major precipitation events.

Cover Crops (6,000 acres) Cover crops sequester nitrogen when cash crops are not actively growing. Cover crops also reduce soil erosion and phosphorus loss.

No-Till/Strip-Till (All cropland) Reducing or eliminating tillage improves soil health, reduces soil erosion and decreases phosphorus loss.

Nutrient Management (All cropland) Managing the rate, timing, source and stability of nutrient applications can simultaneously improve both return on investment through increased yield and water quality through decreased nutrient loss.

Perennial Cover (maintain existing acres plus 200 additional acres) Perennial grasses, shrubs and trees provide many benefits including wildlife habitat and reduced nutrient loss. Existing cover should be maintained to continue these ecosystem services.

Conservation isn’t cheap! How much will it cost?

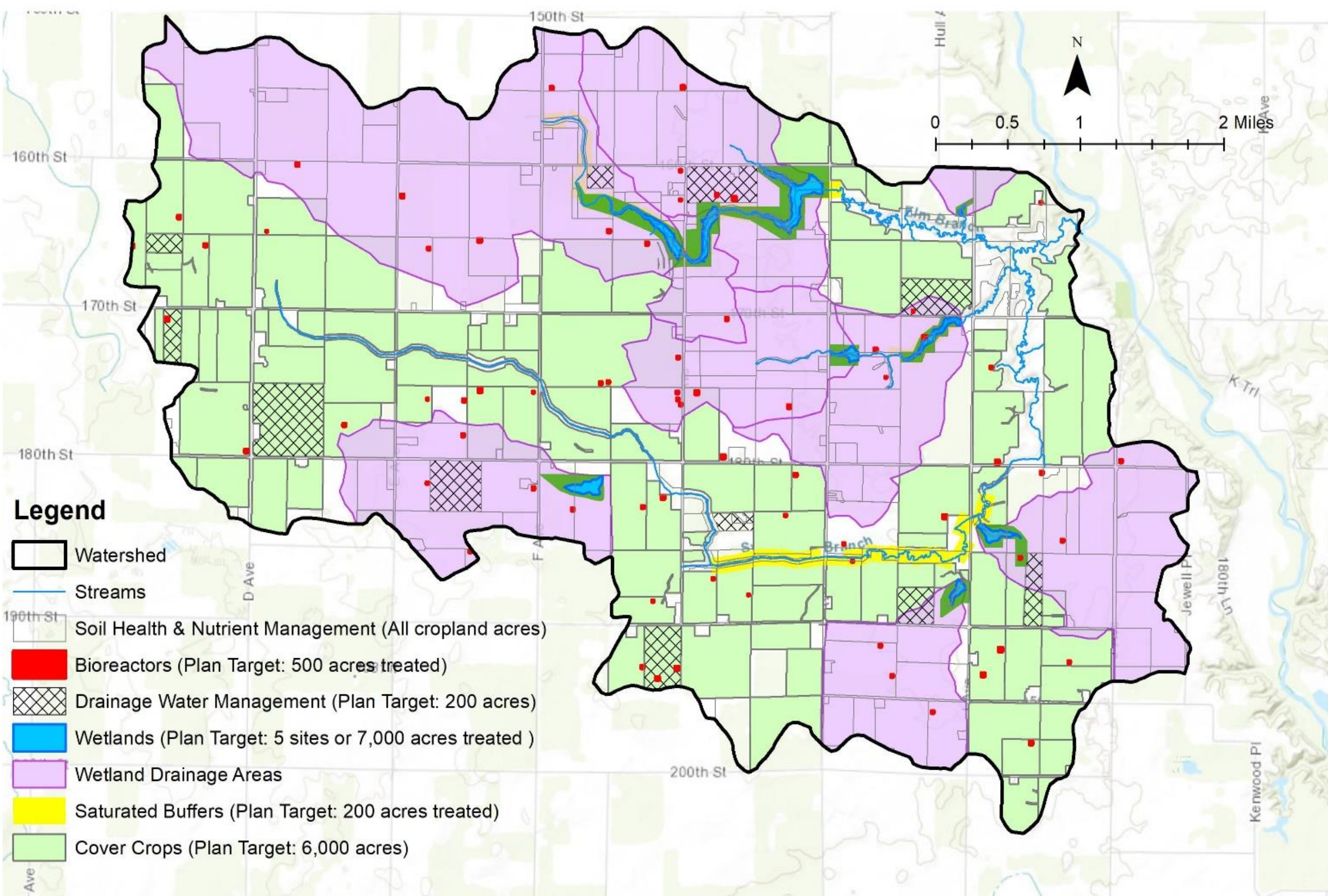
While some changes may result in cost savings, others can impose significant one-time or annually recurring costs.

	Practice	Watershed plan goal	Unit	Cost per unit	Total cost	Watershed load reductions		Cost per Pound of Reduction	
						Nitrogen (lb N/yr)	Phosphorus (lb P/yr)	Nitrogen ($/lb N/yr)	Phosphorus ($/ton P/yr)
Annual costs	Cover crops	6,000	acres	$50	$300,000	55,800	288	$5.38	$0.52
	Conversion of Cropland to Perennial Cover	200	acres	$193	$38,600	5,100	25	$7.57	$0.77
Initial costs	Drainage water management (50-year life)	200	acres	$63	$12,600	1,980	0	$0.13	
	Bioreactors (15-year life)	10	sites	$15,000	$150,000	6,327	0	$1.58	
	Saturated buffers (75-year life)	8	sites	$4,000	$32,000	2,561	0	$0.17	
	Nitrate removal wetlands (75-year life)	5	sites	$371,500	$1,857,500	94,168	687	$0.26	$0.02

Total estimated cost to fully implement the Swan Lake Branch Watershed plan are $338,600 for annual management practice costs plus $2,052,100 for one-time infrastructures costs. Cost share is available for many of the practices.

Where are practices needed?

The conceptual plan shown below is one of a variety of potential combinations of practices to reach the watershed plan goals. The locations shown on the map are believed to be the most suitable for practice installation, especially for the structural practices. Site surveys will be required to determine true installation potential.



Who do I contact for more information about the watershed plan?

The key contact for the Swan Lake Branch Watershed Plan is Adam Kiel, Operations Manager of Water Resources at the Iowa Soybean Association. Adam can be reached at 515-334-1022 or akiel@iasoybeans.com