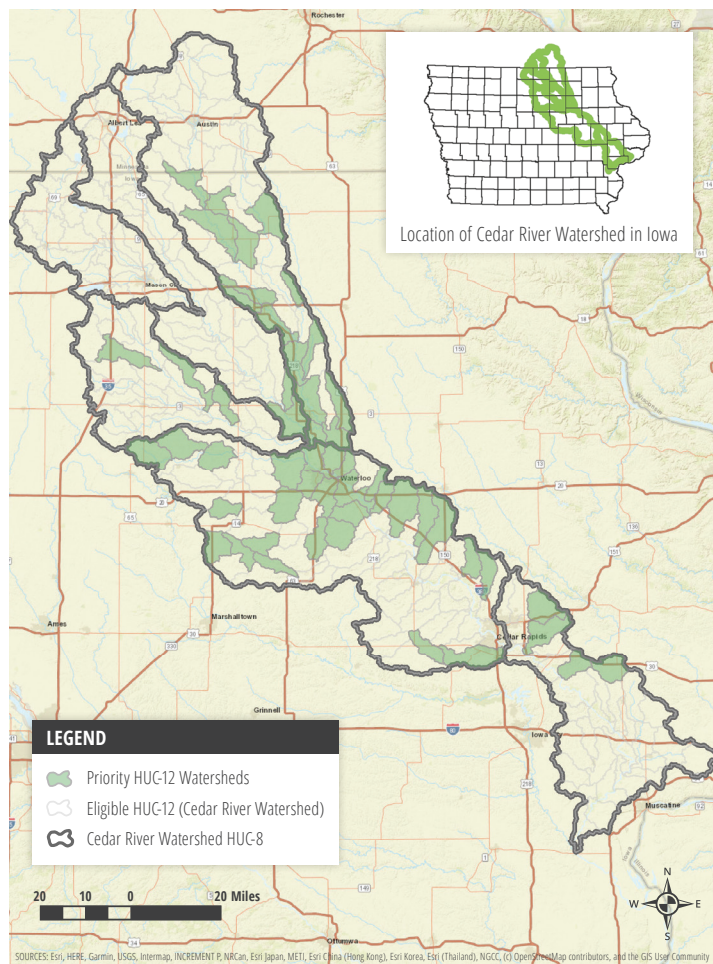


Cedar River Source Water Partnership



PROTECTING WATER QUALITY

What is the Cedar River Source Water Partnership?

The City of Cedar Rapids bears an important responsibility: to provide clean, safe, and great tasting drinking water to our residents and businesses. The safety of our water has never been in question, and through a new partnership with farmers, we will continue to ensure the quality of our drinking water source into the future.

The Cedar River Source Water Partnership (CRSWP) is an urban-rural partnership designed to improve drinking water quality by helping farmers implement simple practices on their land. The CRSWP is a **\$16 million** project funded by United States Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS) and 13 partners dedicated to improving water quality in Iowa.

The project is funded through the USDA-NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP), which promotes coordination of NRCS conservation activities with partners to expand our collective ability to address on-farm, watershed, and regional natural resource concerns.

Why does this matter for Cedar Rapids?

By actively partnering with farmers, the City is working to reduce the amount of nitrate that runs off farm fields. Nitrate is a fertilizer that is beneficial to crops, but rainfall can wash nitrate off farmland and into streams and rivers — too much of it in drinking water is harmful to humans. While nitrate levels have never reached unsafe levels in the City's water supply, the amount of nitrate in the Cedar River has been increasing over time. Our partnership with farmers is essential to reduce the amount of nitrate that reaches the Cedar River.



FARMERS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE AND PROTECT WATER QUALITY

Cedar Rapids is committed to protecting drinking water quality. The CRSWP provides financial incentives and technical support to farmers, with **\$4.9 million** in USDA-NRCS funds dedicated to helping pay for conservation practices on cropland. The remaining \$2.1 million in USDA-NRCS funds will go to education and outreach, as well as help for farmers to make smart decisions about what will work best on their land, utilizing the following practices.

Conservation Practices

Iowa growers in the Cedar River Watershed may qualify for cost-share incentives* to implement the following conservation practices:

Cover Crops: Cover crops are grasses, legumes, and forbs planted for seasonal vegetative cover to reduce erosion and improve soil health

No-Till/Strip Till: This means limiting soil disturbance to reduce erosion and excessive sediment in surface water and improve soil health

Bioreactors: A bioreactor is a buried trench of woodchips attached to a tile line on the edge of a field where microbes break down nitrates to improve water quality

Saturated Buffers: A saturated buffer is an underground perforated pipe attached to the end of a tile line. It runs parallel to a ditch or stream, allowing water to release more slowly so nitrates can be broken down

Wetlands Creation, Enhancement, or Restoration: A wetland is a shallow vegetated pool that helps filter nutrients, especially nitrates. Wetlands are usually restored in low-yield areas of a field

Prairie Strips and Related Practices: Prairie Strips are small areas of native prairie species strategically placed in row crop fields

**Additional incentives for bioreactors and saturated buffers are available to qualified growers in Linn, Benton, Tama, Grundy, Black Hawk, and Buchanan Counties.*

Technical Assistance

Every acre of farmland is different. Selecting the right conservation practice for each unique farm field requires knowledge, experience, and a thorough evaluation of the land. The CRSWP provides technical assistance to farmers to help them choose the right practice and apply for financial assistance through NRCS or other financial assistance programs.

