

Watershed Coordinator Report – January 2026

Sara Carmichael

Highlights since January 2025

- In the 6th year of the Edge of Field program working with City of Ames (COA) and Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS).^{1,2,3,6}
 - o Year 1: Ten practices were installed, treating 22 tile outlets covering over 1000 acres of drainage.
 - o Year 2: Seventeen practices were installed, treating 20 outlets and over 600 acres.
 - o Year 3 and 4: Entering construction phase which will finish by end of 2026. Treating 18 outlets for year 3 and 11 outlets for year 4. Treating almost 1000 acres of drainage.
 - o Year 5: Entering engineering phase with Eocene. Surveyed 56 outlets.
 - o Year 6: Conducting outreach to Hamilton County residents within the Keigley and LDC watersheds.
 - o Re-visited year 1 installs to take pictures and make sure practices were still working.
- Water Quality Monitoring^{1,3,4,6}
 - o Hosted the annual water monitoring training on February 26 for 23 volunteers. Information on 2024 data, trends in data, and legislative priorities were the presentations. Dan Haug with Prairie Rivers of Iowa and Cynthia Farmer with Center for Rural Affairs were the presenters.
 - o Edited the 4th annual water quality monitoring report from Prairie Rivers of Iowa. It can be found on our website [here](#).
 - o Helped organize and facilitate a stream cleanup with Prairie Rivers, S. Skunk Paddlers, and City of Ames on May 3.
 - o Provided training for a new volunteer on January 22 and 3 new volunteers on May 14.
 - o Completed macroinvertebrate testing with volunteers on June 2 and June 12.
 - o Continued collecting monthly samples to be tested for E. coli at Iowa State University. There are three sites in TELC, one at Workiva, and three in the neighborhood west of TELC. All results are shared with interested parties.
 - o Continuing efforts to update and finalize Quality Assurance Assessment Plan for the water monitoring plan with Prairie Rivers of Iowa.
- Participating as alternative in all three WMAs within Story County: Fourmile Creek, Ioway Creek, and Headwaters of the South Skunk.^{2,3}
 - o Attended the WMA Day at the Capitol with Center for Rural Affairs on March 20.
 - o Ioway Creek WMA and Headwaters WMA have had multiple joint meetings.
 - o Co-hosted cover crop field day with Iowa Learning Farms for Headwaters WMA members and local farmers. Had over 60 people attended.
- Water Quality Projects^{1,2}
 - o Prairie Valley Wetland is complete. It is a 20-acre pumped wetland with over 50 acres of prairie.
 - o Wicks Wildlife Area oxbow work was completed November. Spoil removal and seeding still need to occur. It includes 1.5 acres of restoration treating approximately 40 acres of drainage.

- Carroll Prairie oxbow restoration and blind inlet installation should happen before planting season. It includes about 0.35 acres of restoration and 20 acres of drainage.
- Training/Conferences/Presentations ^{3,4,5}
 - Attended the Watershed Academy May 6-7 at Neal Smith Nature Preserve.
 - Co-hosted Cover Crop field day with Polk County at Hickory Grove Park on June 5. Had over 40 people attended.
 - Attended Story County Water Monitoring Team meetings on March 4, April 3, August 7, October 2, and December 4.
 - Attended ISWEP meetings on April 19, June 26, and October 15.
 - Attended monthly Story County Soil and Water Conservation District meetings.
 - Presented at DNR summer camp on July 21.
 - Attended the Iowa Water Conference September 8-10.
 - Presented to OLLI participants about the Prairie Valley Wetland on September 17
 - Tabled at an outreach event for HACH Chemical Company: Walk for Water on October 4.
 - Helped facilitate the 2025 Gathering of Iowa WMAs with Center for Rural Affairs on November 12 in Cedar Rapids.
 - Was interviewed about water quality efforts and issues by Mike Meetz for KHOI broadcast.

In Progress Projects/Public Outreach

- Hickory Grove Beach has a multi-phase project which includes E. coli mitigation efforts and amenities. Mitigation will be in phase one and should start after summer 2026 season. Phase 2 will include amenities upgrade and can be completed in 2027.^{1,2}
 - Both phases will have an accessibility component that Molly Wuebker with Uncurbed is overseeing.
 - Funding for mitigation efforts will come from Iowa DNR and SCC bond.
- loway Creek WMA is submitting for an Iowa DNR \$50K grant to update their plan. Grant will provide resources to hire a contractor to update plan and identify priority areas.⁶

Endnotes: Strategic Plan 2023-2026 Correlations

1. *Goal 1, Outcome 1: SCC operations encourage people to connect with nature.*
2. *Goal 1, Outcome 2: Increase the use of effective conservation practices to lessen the impact of climate change and improve environmental health. Practices will be equitable and intentionally minimize unintended and disproportionate impacts.*
3. *Goal 1, Outcome 4: Education and outreach efforts focus on climate change and environmental health topics.*
4. *Goal 2, Outcome 1: Continue to enhance the workplace environment.*
5. *Goal 2, Outcome 2: Increase staff retention.*
6. *Goal 3, Outcome 1: Increase the number of funding partnerships.*