

CHAPTER 11

KEY CONCEPTS

1. Emphasis on Collaboration

This plan emphasizes collaboration and education among and between key audiences including policy-makers, developers, agricultural interests, the business community, and a “general public.” Additionally, this plan emphasizes demonstration, broad engagement in research and interpretation, and ongoing idea and information exchanges.

2. Key Messages

Key messages include paths to successful projects (financial resources and technical assistance), the importance of maintaining healthy top soil as the watershed develops, the impact of construction sites, the need for transparency and monitoring, the overall value of flood plain protection (in urban and rural areas) and the cost-benefit information of current BMPs.

3. Individual Responsibility

The general public needs information to connect to their personal responsibility and specific tactics they can take as homeowners and/or consumers of waters, soils and natural resources.

4. Education About WMAs

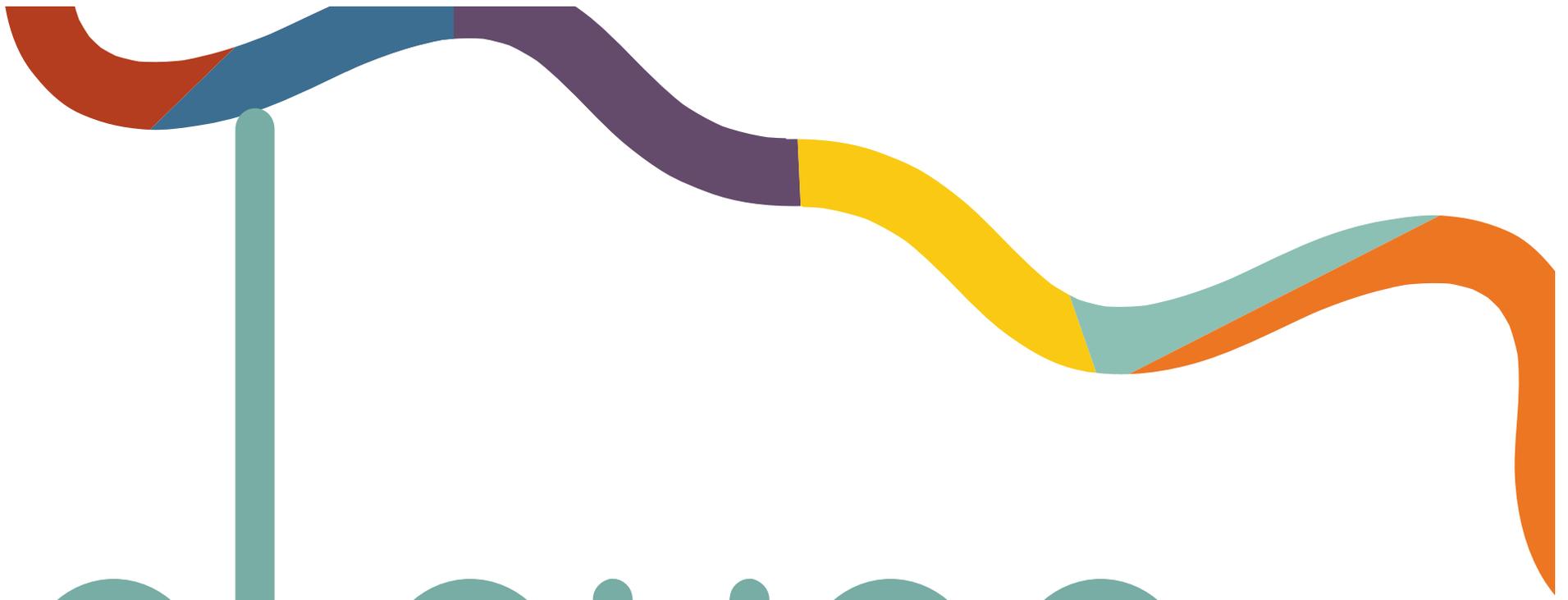
Ongoing education about Watershed Management Authorities and their role in sparking watershed results is also referenced here.

5. Ongoing Information Sharing

Specific ongoing mechanisms for communication should be established.

HOW DO THESE CONCEPTS INFLUENCE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAN?

The plan proposes wide-ranging tools for exchange of information, depending on the audience(s) involved. Considering the variation in audiences, learning styles and the need for information, employing many of these tools simultaneously and on an ongoing basis is recommended.



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Education and Collaboration Plan



Walnut Creek WMA Watershed Plan

The following education and collaboration plan looks at five audiences with farmers, business/developers, staff and policy-makers (primarily council members, county supervisors, and SWCD commissioners) as the priority audiences. The “general public” is a catch-all for Walnut Creek watershed residents and students. Due to recent flooding, increasing erosion and news accounts of water quality problems in Iowa, a subset of residents will likely be particularly responsive to learning more about their role in the Walnut Creek watershed.

At the time of this plan development, a collaboration is forming among the metro area Watershed Management Authorities which will likely translate into some level of staff support for the various WMAs forming in the region. The specifics have been in discussion and a confirmed/documented collaboration has just recently transpired. This portion of the plan assumes staff time of a “watershed coordinator” will be available to the Walnut Creek WMA in partnership with other WMAs to support education/collaboration tactics such as:

1. Work Sessions
2. Field Days
3. “Speed Dating” Sessions with Farmers, Elected Officials, Developers, etc.
4. Developing Support from/through Current Staff
5. Incentives to Try Practices on Their Own
6. Engagement of Local Television/Media
7. Panel of Experts
8. Increased Engagement around Science and Research
9. Connection through Social Media

More general communications methods, and more specific “plan launch tactics” are described below for the primary audiences.

Landowners/Agricultural Sector

This chapter has been labeled an “education and collaboration” plan for a reason. Too many planning efforts have assumed that one sector of this planning group needs to “educate” another. That can be a patronizing and inaccurate way of addressing

what needs to occur. Here, we propose that education is, in fact, an ongoing sharing of research, experience and ideas among all parties/stakeholders connected through the watershed.

Tactics and key messages include:

1. **Resources**—Extensive existing informational and teaching resources exist to ensure that practices are implemented correctly. There are also financial resources that can be used to address cost concerns. Those resources may also be on an upward trajectory. At the time of this report, new funding sources have been identified: grants through a multi-partner Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP) and a grant awarded to Polk SWCD for specific practices. *Continue to improve connections between resources and on-the-ground actions/practices.*
2. **Concerns with Land**—The strategies targeted in this watershed management plan are intended to keep soil and nutrients in the upper watershed. This supports sustainable land use practices and agricultural yield potentials in the near term and for the following generations. *Share strategies, practices and associated benefits, particularly focusing on landowners/operators, where shifts in practice achieve the greatest overall benefit-to-cost ratio with respect to water management.*
3. **Partnerships & Collaboration**—Partnerships with other producers or land owners allow cost sharing and efficiency for the implementation of certain practices. Additionally, *landowners in this watershed have asked for bus tours/information exchanges (urban/rural) and a seat at the research development and analysis table.*
4. **Range of Solutions**—There are a range of solutions available to mitigate certain concerns. While there may be room for some basic practices to be applied broadly (due to some level of guaranteed benefit), many practices are best established by each landowner/operator based on their particular situation and comfort level for implementation. *Information currently “buried” in the nutrient reduction strategy that pairs BMPs and their anticipated N/P reductions should be delivered to each landowner in the watershed. (See Tactics, next page).*
5. **Why Care?**—What is the *legacy we are leaving for the future generation of producers?* This message is best developed and understood as a collective understanding from all stakeholders in the watershed.

- 6. Opportunities for Partnership Using Existing Entities**—Agencies, non-profits and trade groups, such as the NRCS, Polk Soil and Water Conservation District or the Iowa Soybean Association, already have the infrastructure for *building partnerships with individuals or groups of producers*.

Plan Launch Tactics

Early tactics for information distribution and primary information sources:

- A follow-up meeting at the Heartland Co-op to share the preliminary results of the plan and the early strategies for increased monitoring to get direct input into that aspect of the plan (thus providing an early “seat at the table”). Execute this in partnership with ISA, Heartland Co-op, Polk/Dallas SWCD. Begin with sharing “emerging themes” from the landowner meeting. (Note: At the time of publication of this report, this has been accomplished.)
- Through ISA/Co-op or other means, directly distribute highlighted pages of the Nutrient Reduction Strategy that feature BMPs and associated N/P reductions. Secure permission and post on-line. Distribute directly, by mail or other method as recommended by commodity group partners.
- Secure slot on Farm Bureau county meeting agenda(s) to present plan results.
- In partnership with ISA, Dallas/Polk SWCDs and the Heartland Co-op, identify a communications “task force” to develop (minimally) an annual bus tour.
- Identify (minimally) 3-5 area conservation farmers/landowners with best practices in place, and encourage their participation as watershed-educators through presentations, field days, and dialogue in their commodity group organizations. Research the viability of contracting with landowner-educators to secure ongoing participation.
- Additionally research the practicality of partnership through Iowa Flood Center, ISU and other entities to bring researchers to the watershed for interactive presentations about research methods and encourage mutual exchange.
- Work in partnership with the Greater Des Moines Partnership’s Soil and Water Future Task Force ongoing dialogues to bring the Walnut Creek farm community to that table.
- Proactively connect to landowners-operators to share the benefits and achieve access to the new funding/granting opportunities as they arise.

Additional methods of ongoing communication include:

- Direct Mail
- Informational Meetings
- Focus Groups
- Outreach via Agricultural Retail—USDA, SWCD, etc.
- Field Days
- Surveys
- Website/Social Media
- Workshops
- Speaker Series
- On-Farm Learning Network

Developers and Business Community

Brief descriptions of the collaboration elements applicable to this group are presented below. In this instance, these elements present a mix of key messages and long-term strategies. These elements will assist in establishing greater consistency in the ordinances/guidelines throughout the WMA jurisdictions.

Tactics and key messages include:

- 1. Resources**—There are extensive informational and teaching resources to ensure that practices are implemented correctly. Additionally, *once consistency in implementation throughout the watershed is achieved, developers will enjoy an increased efficiency when navigating standards and requirements.*
- 2. Potential to Streamline the Review Process**—*Consistent standards* will assist with streamlining the review process.
- 3. Review of Current Policies**—*Reviewing current policies while getting the business community involved* will connect and inform this group, as well as give ownership and involvement to the overall process.
- 4. Public Health**—*Making a connection between the health of the waterways and overall public health* will help make a connection to the public, which builds advocacy. The developer and business community will have this information to take into consideration as they move forward with developments.
- 5. Why Regulations Exist**—*Provide information regarding the negative effects that would result if regulations did not exist.*

6. **Demonstration Opportunities**—If practices are implemented within the property, it allows the owner to *demonstrate their practice and get recognition throughout the community.*
7. **Previous Studies**—*Educate regarding the positive outcomes of previous studies performed with certain practices.*
8. **Partnership Opportunities and Outreach to Clients**—This will allow *partnerships between businesses for shared costs* and provide another avenue to connect with potential clients and customers.
9. **Triple Bottom Line**—The triple bottom line consists of three P's: profit, people and planet. Sharing ideas for effective watershed management practices aims to demonstrate that the *financial, social and environmental performance of the corporation can improve over a period of time.*

Plan Launch Tactics

Early tactics for information distribution and primary information sources:

- In partnership with other jurisdiction(s)/organizations, or as a stand-alone task force, convene Walnut Creek area developers for a special interactive presentation on the existing-conditions findings and results of the Walnut Creek Watershed Plan. As part of this presentation/summit or short-term education series:
 - Include data on development growth and degradation in water management over time. Emphasize the need for new developments to achieve new results in stormwater management for prevention of additional flood damages and water quality degradation.
 - Place emphasis on the implications of topsoil loss and the engineering and water management impacts of failure to replace that topsoil.
 - Provide education on strengths and challenges of developing and applying Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plans (SWPPPs) and provide case studies of successful SWPPP applications and where SWPPPs have commonly “gone wrong.” Acknowledge the ongoing concerns that have surfaced as part of this planning process related to potentially compliant, but perhaps ineffective, SWPPPs.
 - Present the vision of a healthy Walnut Creek watershed and the resulting growth in property values and desirability for residential and business/commercial interests.
 - Establish a dialogue about the necessity of low-impact development principles and associated ordinance/guidance options for implementation.

Present local and regional case study examples, allowing for a healthy, collaborative assessment of same.

- Jointly identify methods for government/community to support “new ways of doing business” on the part of the developers with the understanding that business-as-usual future development will fail the watershed and all those downstream.
- Encourage developer participation in bus tour and other landowner/farmer/policy maker interactions (see above).
- Establish ongoing and healthy means for dialogue/exchange on stormwater management and soil health issues within the region. Consider working with the Greater Des Moines Partnership’s Soil and Water Future Task Force to potentially place greater emphasis on urban strategies and thereby maintain strong business-developer and urban-rural connections for ongoing strengthening of this plan.
- Additional methods of ongoing communication parallel those listed above under landowner/agricultural sector.

Decision- and Policy-Makers—City and County Officials

This group consists of city council members, county board members, and other civic and/or agency officials with a particular emphasis on elected officials.

Brief descriptions of the education messages for delivery to this group are presented below.

1. **Cost Savings with Potential Return on Investment**—If policy changes, or even dollar investments on certain practices, are made now, the *cost of future losses, maintenance, and repairs can be mitigated.*
2. **Impacts on Other Community Systems**—Recognition and mitigation of flood and water quality issues can reduce the resource commitment required to *address impacts to utility systems, transportation systems and public health.*
3. **Community Collaboration Opportunities**—*Some practices provide opportunities for collaboration among different departments within a jurisdiction to ensure the most benefit for the community and its residents. There is also the possibility for talent collaboration with other jurisdictions on joint projects.*
4. **What is in the Water = Public Health**—If the concentrations of contaminants entering Walnut Creek are reduced, the *public health of users of the creek and greenway system will be improved.*

- 5. **Cost Sharing and Grants**—Projects that may span *multiple jurisdictions* or are located at the border of more than one jurisdiction, *provide opportunities for cost sharing* and to implement a practice that may not otherwise be executed.
- 6. **WMA Education**—Despite the advent of Watershed Management Authorities within the state and region, *WMAs are still a new way for agencies to work together*. Provide information for elected officials and other decision-makers on the true workings and potential of WMAs. Ultimately, help leaders recognize the substantial benefits that can result through WMA efforts.

Plan Launch Tactics

The planning team has connected with decision-makers throughout the planning process (via WMA meetings, executive meetings, stakeholder meetings, public events and direct presentations to councils, boards of supervisors and SWCDs). This over-arching strategy of ongoing communication needs to continue. Specifically, a presentation on this plan as a work-in-progress was developed and delivered to each participating WMA jurisdiction.

Moving forward, plan implementation will also rely on gaining approval of the final plan from each of those jurisdictions. The following steps are proposed:

- After final changes are incorporated into the plan’s final draft, craft a council/board resolution for plan approval and update an accompanying presentation and talking points as required. Urge WMA members to take the update/changes summary and resolution to their various jurisdictions for approval. The planning team will support these communications as much as possible.
- Publicize and post executive summary, final plan, and a checklist of early implementation steps including responsible parties and timelines as much as is practical.

Upon plan approval, the ongoing involvement of decision-makers requires ongoing communications similar to those listed above, but including:

- Quarterly updates via email newsletter with emphasis on:
 - Potential resources for plan implementation
 - Plan progress by partners, including measurable results
 - Project highlights and succinct success stories (from within and without the region)
- Quarterly updates at council/supervisor/SWCD meetings by WMA members
- Succinct, well-visualized annual “Reports to the WMA Communities” of plan progress and next steps

Government/Agency Staff—Day-to-day plan implementers

Primary messaging for this key audience focuses on understanding:

1. Cost-benefit of specific measures/practices
2. Impacts of traditional vs. low-impact development
3. Potential challenges and opportunities of various policies/ordinances
4. Technical requirements of successful projects and potential technical pitfalls
5. How to implement successful projects, including achieving positive impacts from guidelines and ordinances in play
6. How to measure success and achieve adaptive management
7. How to access/partner for resources

Plan Launch Tactics

- Convene a technical workshop (or workshops) for key implementers within agency staffs to address the priorities of the Walnut Creek Watershed Plan.
 - Partner with Fourmile Creek and Spring/Mud/Camp Creek Watershed plans, due to the overlap of key personnel involved.
 - Focus the workshop on identified outcomes, priority projects, enhanced technical understanding and purpose behind recommendations—why new methods of stormwater management are important.
 - Highlight stormwater management training including use of SWPPPs, the Iowa Stormwater Management Manual, low-impact design principles and strengths/challenges of proposed ordinances.
- Build awareness of other successful strategies/projects through case studies and partnerships.

Tools for this work parallel those identified in the Landowners/Agricultural Sector plus ongoing technical trainings and references/conferences related to updating available resources and securing grants.

The General Public

Among the general public, some residents have experienced direct effects of flood, silt or erosion damage. Others recognize they are at some risk for those impacts. A broader public has general interest in improved water quality and recreation and many value a broad range of education messages about water and natural resources reaching their school-age children. Some of the priority messages for the general public include:

1. Understanding flood mapping, flood insurance and associated risks and impacts
2. Creating a clearer understanding of source water, river/stream and drinking water standards and hazards
3. Knowing what clear, clean water in Iowa could/should look like
4. Effects of urbanization on soil erosion, water quality and flooding
5. Potential for low-impact development to shift impacts of urbanization
6. Agricultural impacts and potential for improvements through BMPs and other forms of stewardship
7. Recognizing homeowner responsibilities for water quality and flooding, along with homeowner actions (e.g., recognizing/appreciating green infrastructure; installing rain barrels, rain gardens, gray water systems). To this end, develop educational materials for residents that answer the question, "what can I do to help?"
8. The value of direct involvement of residents through volunteerism and citizen science
9. Ongoing education about the value of green spaces/greenways, habitat corridors, wetlands, fens and other natural features on overall quality of life, flood mitigation and water quality
10. Understanding of indicator species and basics of biological connections
11. Knowing the watershed in which they live, its associated partnerships and upstream/downstream implications
12. Celebrating/knowing the fun that can be had in clean water nearby

Plan Launch Tactics

- With homeowners in new flood zones and others needing to be aware of pending risks, the priority tactic here is getting information including maps, FAQs and public meeting notices to those affected homeowners. As of this writing, that work is in progress.
- Partner with the Walnut Creek Watershed Coalition for ongoing participation in this volunteer organization's many effective events that have included rain barrel making, public cleanups and celebrations. Consider supporting the work of this coalition to assist in expanding membership, the organization's physical reach within the watershed and ongoing education opportunities.
- Leverage the work of the Metropolitan Planning Organization's Water Trails Plan.
- Similarly, leverage the work of the Clive Greenbelt Master Planning efforts and associated expansion of education opportunities, facilities and associated programming.
- Support the water/watershed education work of the County Conservation naturalists, the Blank Park Zoo, the Science Center of Iowa and the many additional education arms (e.g., community naturalists, scouting groups, 4H and FFA) to enhance/expand watershed education within Polk and Dallas Counties.
- Employ education strategies of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, the Urban Conservationists, and/or the Iowa Stormwater Education Partnership (ISWEP).
- In partnership with the business community, launch improved realtor education and associated materials for distribution to potential home buyers.
- Through the schools, support the re-invigoration of the Project WET curriculum (an Iowa School curriculum, once more widely used than today, that offered broad-based, interactive learning about the science and uses of water).
- Develop public information, interpretation and signage components for bridges, benches, trails, trailheads and additional access points/gateways in/near Walnut Creek, North Walnut Creek and other streams/tributaries of the watershed.

Additional methods of ongoing communication parallel those listed above under the landowner/agricultural sector.