

CITY OF CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA UTILITIES WATERSHED PROGRAM

NEAA26 WATERSHED COLLABORATION



National Environmental
Achievement
AWARDS



The City of Cedar Rapids
protects drinking water quality
by partnering with farmers
in the Middle Cedar Watershed.

Accomplishments since 2021 include:

- More than **343,000 acres of cover crops** planted
(that is roughly 1/3 the size of Rhode Island!)
- Restoration of **9 wetlands and 2 river oxbows**
- Installation of **45 enhanced stream denitrification buffers**
- Construction of **36 denitrifying bioreactors**
- Attendance at over **75 community outreach**

Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Mike Naig (second from right), City of Cedar Rapids Mayor Tiffany O'Donnell (right), City Manager Jeff Pomeranz (second from left), and Iowa Soybean Association conservation agronomist Evan Brehm (left), on a farm tour hosted by Jim O'Connell (center), one of the City's partners in the Middle Cedar River Watershed project.



Cedar River Source Water Partnership:

Partnering with farmers to protect our drinking water

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 partnerships with farmers, the City continues 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 (RCPP), 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?

Cedar Rapids is committed to protecting drinking water quality. 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 nitrate in drinking water is harmful to humans, and can cause blue baby syndrome in infants as well as other health implications. While nitrate levels in the City's water supply have never violated the health standards of the Safe Drinking Water Act, 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.

What is Cedar Rapids doing to help?

The City is the lead partner on the CRSWP project, which provides financial incentives to farmers to help pay for conservation practices such as cover crops and wetland restoration on cropland. Funding is also available for education and technical assistance for farmers to make smart decisions about what will work best on their land.

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. Through our partnerships, we are empowering farmers to make a difference in water quality improvement.