

## Water Quality Focus Group August 13, 2014

### Summary of Responses & Input

Target Audiences: A full list of attendees is included in this report. In general, the focus group participants represented city & county public works and planning staff; state level staff; agriculture interests; property owners; local college students; conservation interests; civic organizations; and development interests.

Focus group participants were asked to work in small groups and brainstorm strategies for one of the three draft goals presented. The small groups were encouraged to use the framework listed below as a way to group strategies. The small groups reported their ideas to the larger group and consensus formed around the strategies and ideas listed below.

#### Framework for goals and objectives:

- Education / Communication
- Policy
- Practices
- Measure / Monitor

One small group worked on providing direction for the goals overall utilizing the framework:

1. Education and communication should be targeted to specific audiences
2. Policies should favor incentives over regulation whenever possible
3. Practices should be targeted to the best areas to achieve improvements
4. Establish benchmarks for monitoring & measuring improvements – two examples:
  - a. Tracking landuse changes
  - b. Tracking agriculture chemicals and lawn care chemicals

**Draft Goal 1:** In line with the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy non-point source reduction goals, encourage and implement practices to reduce concentrations of nitrogen by 41% and phosphorus by 29% in the Indian Creek Watershed over the next 20 years.

- Agreed with a 20 year plan timeline, but felt strongly that specific goals or implementation strategies be divided into 5 year increments and progress be measured regularly
- At the State level, request \$6 million each year for cost share to implement conservation practices
- Tailor BMP / solutions to site specific land contours and soil types
- Encourage precision application of phosphorus
- Utilize bacteria inhibitor for fall application of nitrogen
- Promote view of soil as a whole system / encourage overall soil health & practices to improve
- Balanced approach

**Draft Goal 2:** Implement practices in both agriculture and urban areas to reduce sediment loading by 35% in the Indian Creek Watershed over the next 20 years.

- Agreed to set the baseline to current creek levels and to set goals to cut peak creek levels by some amount for a 2” and 5” rain event
- Encourage stream bank restoration projects
- Review rules for construction site erosion control practices and increase enforcement
- Encourage BMPs for construction sites
- Develop a regional stormwater detention catchment or basin; employ a treatment train approach
- More beavers
- Encourage installation of more buffer strips
- Promote the expertise of NRCS and SWCD staff for implementing BMPs
- Involve schools
- Support more monitoring work by Coe College and its students
- City outreach
- Implement BMPs related to the use of sand and salt on city streets
- Promote topsoil preservation in new development, even if the 4” rule is not continued by the state

**Draft Goal 3:** Remove Indian Creek and Dry Creeks from the Impaired Waters List by reducing *E.coli* levels to comply with state standard for swimming / wading and improving habitat over the next 20 years.

- Encourage proper maintenance of septic systems through both education and incentives / vouchers – highlight why maintenance is important
- Encourage proper management of pet / dog poop through:
  - Awareness & education campaign – what is the proper method & why
  - Posting signs and providing bags in public spaces
  - Increase fines for not picking up pet / dog poop
- Reduce geese droppings by deterring geese and discourage feeding
- Educate residents about the proper method(s) for draining private pools