Turkey River WMA

Watershed Management Authority

Outreach, Partnership & Engagement Plan

TRWMA Principles of Outreach

The Turkey River Watershed Management Authority (TRWMA) Board feels that the following principles are important in all education and outreach efforts.

- Respectful dialog should be used in all education and outreach efforts, as research confirms that the majority of the watershed residents care about the flooding and/or water quality issues
- Engagement should include both rural and urban landowners, as the issues are the responsibility of and impact all watershed residents
- Education and outreach will be most effective if rural and urban residents have been engaged in all aspects of the watershed project including research and planning, education and outreach, practice implementation, and policy development
- Individual and collective action should be proposed and undertaken voluntarily
- Collective action should be encouraged but watershed residents and groups represented within the watershed will be more effective if they develop and implement ideas that they themselves want to see implemented rather than dictating action to other residents and groups
- Dialog and discussion must recognize that not all watershed residents will agree on all issues or recommended actions and therefore encourage diverse opportunities for engagement, planning, and action.
- Education and outreach can inform policy change, which can be used to maximize local resources and effect change throughout the watershed, but should be supported by the majority of the constituents impacted by the policy.

This plan was developed with input from the TRWMA Education Committee, included persons of various backgrounds , such as farmers/producers, landowners, community members, biologists, county conservation personnel, SWCD Commissioners and staff, elected officials, and local educators. This diverse team worked to consider, combine, and recommend education and outreach ideas that had been developed by all the TRWMA committees, Board members, and partners.

The TRWMA Education Committee also proposed and considered new ideas before making final recommendations to the TRWMA Board.

The TRWMA Board also considered the results of a Turkey River Watershed Landowner Survey and other implementation factors when developing this plan.

TURKEY RIVER WATERSHED MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

Outreach

Partnership

Engagement

Summary of Strategies

- *Flood reduction technical assistance outreach and education in every TRW county*
- *Partnership with local, state, and federal, private and public entities*
- *TRW citizen engagement in research and promotion of flood reduction*
- *Outreach to qualified landowners in strategic landscape positions*
- *Community outreach and engagement*

Outreach

A minimum of five full-time Flood Mitigation Technicians should be systematically reaching out to, educating, engaging, and providing technical assistance to TRW landowners and stakeholders including: agricultural organizations, custom sprayers, youth/schools, community partners, and the press. These professionals will reach out to stakeholders in every county and provide technical assistance to urban and rural landowners that want to implement practices to reduce flooding. These professionals will meet regularly to encourage each other and share progress and information.

Outreach Tactics

One-on-one outreach to producers through phone calls and farm visits.

Turkey River Watershed newsletters via mailings and e-news.

Direct mailings to producers in key landscape position, as identified by the TRWMA Flood Reduction Plan.

Public Information Meetings

Informational sessions at Iowa State Extension Commercial Pesticide Applicator Training and Certification

Demonstration Projects and Field Days

Outreach to custom sprayer businesses and agricultural cooperatives.

Outreach Topics

How and why producers can and should maximize soil infiltration and yield using cover crops, no-till, and other soil building practices.

How to maximize waterway functionality by cropping perpendicular to waterways rather than parallel to waterways.

Using signage, kiosks, and other interpretation tools to highlight existing practices and encourage watershed neighbors to do their part.

Benefits and use of strip cropping and prairie strips.

How the custom sprayer/operator influences erosion, soil conservation, soil infiltration and field systems.

The public and private benefits of on-road structures.

Managing the water resource through relocation of tile outlets to ponds or wetlands.

Farming for the future – How Conservation Lease Planning can bring together landowners and tenants to understand and maximize conservation planning.

How to manage feedlot runoff – Using MinFARMs.

Installing raingardens, rainbarrels, and other practices on your property.

Thinking of water as a valuable resource - managing water resources to reduce the impact of drought and flooding.

Changing rainfall patterns – How to minimize the impacts of drought & heavy rainfall.

SMART Planning Practices How, Why, and Where communities should use them.

Keeping water where it falls, contouring, buffers, and other agronomic practices.

How to manage residue in a world where it is in high demand.

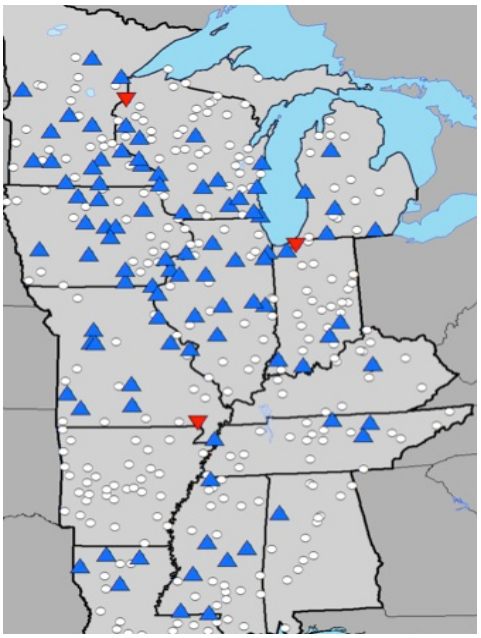
How to maximize placement of wetlands, ponds, and sediment retention basins.

Identifying opportunities to control stormwater runoff from on-farm roof structures.

Urban and Rural Watershed Partnerships - The economic, environmental, and social benefits.

Benefits and use of strip cropping and prairie strips.

Showcasing the advantages of buffer strips verses terraces with regard to water ponding and water infiltration into the soil.



Targeted Landowner Outreach

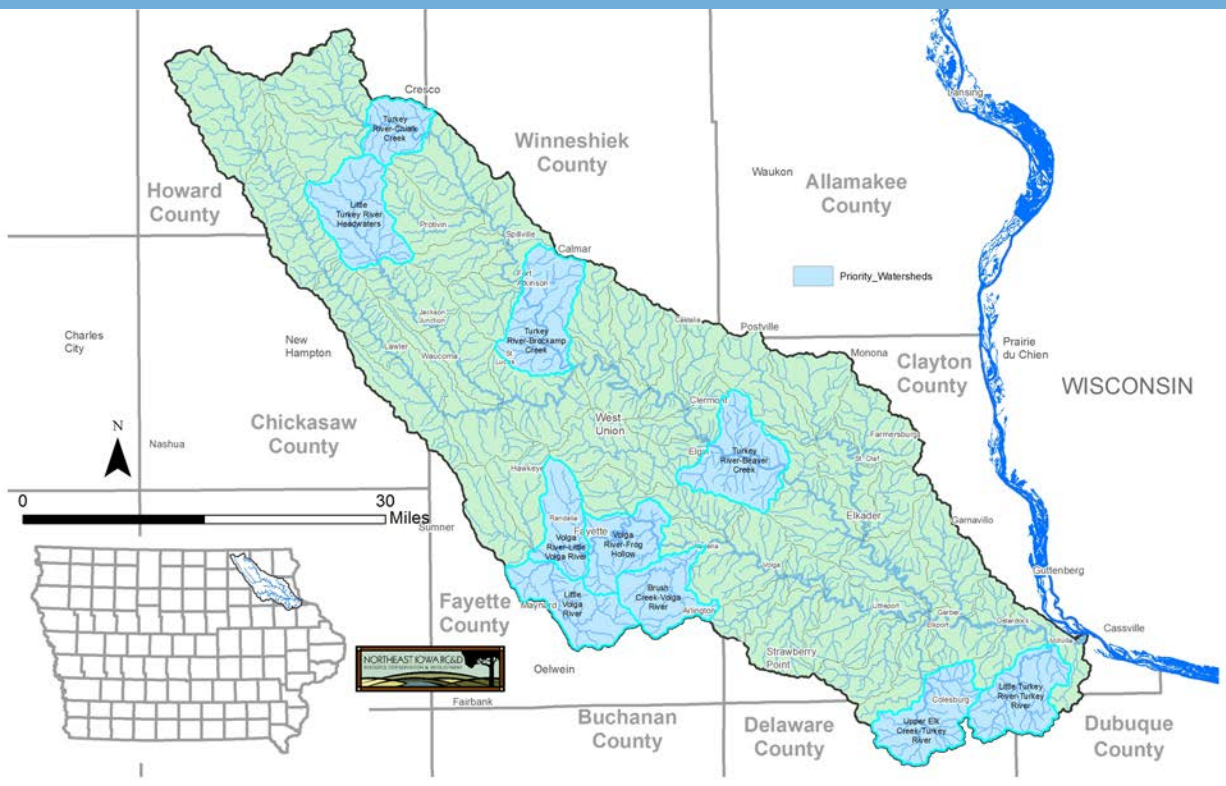
To maximize the limited number of personnel, outreach efforts should be targeted to specific urban and rural landowners that are in key landscape positions as identified through analysis. These may include, but are not limited to, the following.

- Landowners in targeted subwatersheds
- Landowners eligible for specific state or federal programs
- Landowners at locations for on-road retention structures
- Landowners within community drainages
- Landowners within riparian zones and floodplains

Priority subwatersheds have been identified in each TRWMA Soil and Water Conservation District. These subwatersheds were selected based on criteria provided to the TRWMA by the Iowa Flood Center. The criteria were selected for their potential to reduce flooding and improve water quality.

Priority TRWMA subwatersheds include the following.

- Volga River Watershed, Fayette County
- Little Turkey River Watershed, Howard/Chickasaw Counties
- Brownfield Creek Watershed, Delaware/Clayton Counties
- Brockamp Watershed, Winneshiek and Fayette Counties
- North Branch Turkey River, Watershed Howard County
- Beaver Creek Watershed, Clayton and Fayette Counties



Targeted Landowner Outreach Continued

Targeting and prioritization of outreach should be conducted based on additional analysis of the TRW as it relates to the eligibility and potential adoption of state and federal program practices on private lands as defined by those programs and considered for greatest potential benefit to the goals of the TRWMA. This method should be used to identify and educate landowners across the TRW about exiting programs.

Helping landowners and producers better understand what programs they are eligible for and how they can voluntary implement those practices with financial and technical assistance will help them reduce flooding and improve water quality.

Outreach to urban and rural landowners should include information about the following:

- Existing local, state, and federal programs and funding
- How to sign up for specific practices
- Short and long term financial and environmental benefits of the practices
- Short and long term management costs and commitments related to the practices

Outreach: Promotional Materials

TRW conservation promotional materials should be developed and distributed in a watershed-wide campaign that encourages installation of urban and rural practices that reduce flooding, decrease nutrient loss and mitigate the impacts of drought. Practices will include rural practices including ponds, wetlands, buffers, perennial grass/forbs, forest, sinkhole buffers, terraces and pasture, and urban practices, including rain gardens, bioswales, green roofs, rain barrels, and permeable pavers. Materials will be developed locally with citizen input and distributed throughout the TRW.

- At least seven different brochures using quotes and photographs from the TRW counties will be developed and distributed. Each of the brochures will have quotes and photographs from local citizens within the county in which they are distributed.
- At least 21 unique posters will be developed for distribution throughout the TRW. These posters will use quotes and photographs from TRW producers encouraging implementation of flood reduction practices, images from flooding in the TRW, testimonies from communities, community member and/or producers that have been impacted by flooding, and other persuasive information.
- At least four billboards featuring local citizens promoting conservation should be designed and placed in the TRW annually. These billboards will be placed in the spring and again during the fall months of the year. They will encourage time-sensitive decisions regarding conservation practices and projects at a time when producers are on the roads. They will be placed on the most highly traveled roads in the watershed according to Iowa DOT road counts.
- A minimum of 20 Turkey River Watershed entrance signs will be placed at prominent road entrances to the TRW to raise community pride, raise awareness about the TRW boundaries and the project.
- A minimum of 15 Project Signs will be placed at highly visible project sites in the TRW when participating landowners are willing. These signs should draw attention to the practices, demonstrate pride of ownership in practices that is helping reduce flooding in the TRW, and encourage other TRW residents to participate.
- Press releases will be distributed to local newspapers at least once each month. They will include information about projects that producers are participating in like the rain gauges and tile monitoring, about "champion producers", Installation of SMART practices in TRW communities, about public meetings, and other information that encourages installation of conservation practices.
- Radio spots on local radio stations should occur at least once each month. Radio spots will focus on what watershed citizens are doing, highlight special projects, encourage producers to work with their county NRCS/SWCD offices to reduce nutrient loss, improve drought resilience, and reduce flooding through adoption and installation of practices such as ponds, wetlands, buffers, perennial grass/forbs, forest, sinkhole buffers, terraces, and pasture. Champion producers and community members should be asked to participate in these radio spots.

Community Outreach and Engagement

There are twenty-three communities participating in the TRWMA. Over the past three years, community leaders from these towns have been learning about SMART Planning and practices. They have learned from communities within the TRW and from communities outside the TRW. Many have reviewed their community drainage maps, many have identified practices they would be willing to implement if cost share and technical assistance were available. Some TRWMA representatives have discussed options with their City Councils.

Although community stormwater infrastructure is aging and deteriorating in these communities, only four TRWMA communities have implemented practices to date.

To ensure that more communities take action the TRWMA recommends the following actions.

- TRWMA representatives should attend all TRWMA meetings and then report back to their City Councils. If they cannot attend, they should confirm their alternate *will* attend.
- Communities should work with the TRWMA Coordinator to hold community meetings and identify specific locations and options for SMART practices, programs, and policies in their communities.

Partnership

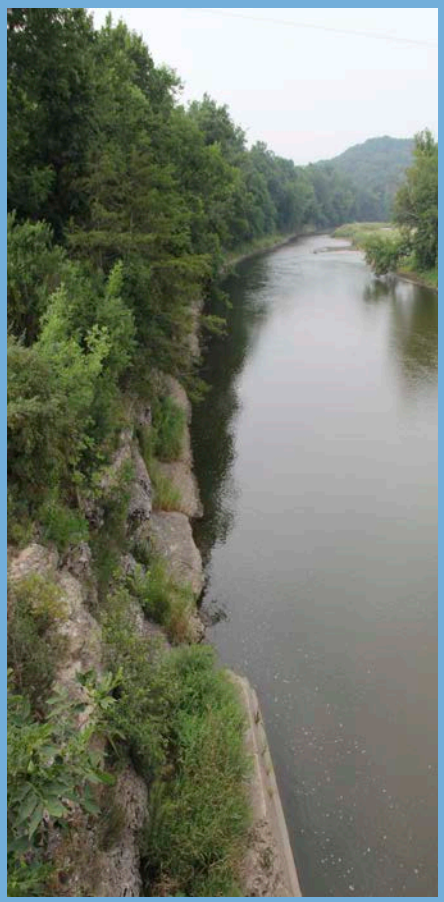
The TRWMA Board will partner with its member entities whenever possible. They will also partner with other local, state, and federal, private and public entities that have the same vision, goals, and priorities for flood reduction and water quality improvement. The goal of these partnerships is to encourage as many entities to work toward the vision of a resilient watershed as possible and in doing so expand the capacity of the TRWMA to succeed.

One of several example of partnership is the potential for on-road structures to be developed throughout the TRW. The TRW County Infrastructure Committee developed concepts and policies related to construction of on-road structures. The Iowa Flood Center modeled the concept to evaluate its potential impact on flooding and the Boards of Supervisors adopted policy to consider replacement of upland road culverts with on-road water control structures whenever landowners will voluntarily partner.

There are 1,638 points at which roads meet with drainages in the TRW but the County Engineers do not have the capacity to conduct the outreach to private landowners associated with these sites. Rather than give up on this idea, the TRWMA Board has been working with partners to identify and secure funding to contract Civil Engineer Technicians to engineer on-road water control structures and Flood Mitigation Technicians to educate and engage willing landowners.

The County Engineers will provide lists and prioritization of potential sites for on-road water control structures. The Flood Mitigation Technicians will work with the County Engineers to reach out to receptive landowners to educate and help them understand cost share opportunities so they are more likely to participate. The Civil Engineers will design the structures. The County Engineers and Flood Mitigation Technicians will work to see the projects through to completion.

This partnership opportunity and many others will continue to be explored by the TRWMA Board and private and public partners.



Engagement

- The www.turkeyriver.org website should be maintained and updated weekly. This website was developed to provide an opportunity for watershed-wide learning and engagement. It should continue to be maintained and updated on a weekly basis so that partners and landowners can exchange information and increase their understanding of all that is happening in the TRW.

- At least 30 landowners should be recruited to host rain gauge/soil moisture probes. These stations will transmit data in real time to Internet sites are available to all landowners. The information available from these units, when coupled with real-time, in-stream nitrate monitors and gauging stations (which are already placed throughout the watershed) will help producers understand why they should adopt nutrient management and drought reduction practices. This strategy will also engage landowners in research and monitoring, create a greater sense of project ownership for landowners. A recent one-year project implemented by NASA and the IFC in the TRW found that landowners engaged in this type of project monitoring were more likely to be vocal about the TRW Project than other landowners.

- A minimum of 24 producers should be recruited to conduct tile-line runoff nitrate monitoring at a minimum of 48 sites in the watershed. The producers involved with this research and monitoring will learn lessons about tile drainage and land use that will apply and convey to other TRW producers, further helping producers understand why they should implement nutrient management, drought reduction and/or flood prevention practices. The landowner outreach and analysis can be conducted by the Iowa Soybean Association (ISA) and other producer groups. Previous tile-line monitoring conducted by the ISA with landowners in other watersheds has found that participating landowners are more likely to be vocal about nutrient management than other producers.

- A minimum of 12 producers from throughout the watershed should be recruited to appear in TRW conservation promotional materials that encourage other TRW producers to install nutrient management and drought reduction conservation practices. Professional photographs and producers quotes have been proven to be effective and therefore should be used in the outreach materials. A recent project implemented by the RC&D in partnership with the Iowa DNR and the Northeast Area US Forest Service State and Private Lands, found that producers were more likely to respond to outreach by taking action to adopt conservation practices when the outreach included images and quotes from people they knew of or knew directly.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