

Proposed Goals and Associated Implementation Strategies

Headwaters of the South Skunk River Watershed

Based on Stakeholder Input at Workshops

Goal: Educate the public about water quality and conservation practices

- ⇒ Convey a sense of shared responsibility—rural and urban, we're all in this together
- ⇒ The public needs more information about how livestock operations are regulated and water quality monitoring to tell whether manure management plans are being followed
- ⇒ Inform public about upcoming legislation that affects water quality and conservation funding
- ⇒ Inform public about state laws pre-empting some of the solutions recommended at workshops: municipal fertilizer regulation, credible data laws, water quality trading
- ⇒ Address farmers' concerns about the feasibility of cover crops
- ⇒ Work with ISU Extension to share results of new conservation research
- ⇒ Provide context for water monitoring data by including rainfall data and comparing to statewide averages
- ⇒ Make water quality data more relevant to farmers by presenting nitrogen and phosphorus concentration as pounds/acre lost
- ⇒ Collect more information about the role of managed grazing near riparian areas—ranchers say good pasture along streams has erosion control benefits

Goal: Reduce nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment losses to the South Skunk River

- ⇒ Experienced farmers are most persuasive advocates for conservation practices
- ⇒ Provide one-on-one technical assistance to farmers and landowners in vulnerable areas
- ⇒ Make cover crops and extended rotations more viable by promoting diversified farm systems and creating markets for small grains and forages
- ⇒ Are there perverse incentives that push poor quality ground into production? Review CRP policies for existing pastures, property taxes, insurance policies
- ⇒ New pattern tiling projects are opportunities for bioreactors, saturated buffers, and drainage water management
- ⇒ Educate urban residents, golf courses, and lawn care companies about proper fertilizer rates
- ⇒ Develop list of "shovel-ready" projects to be prepared for when State Revolving Fund Sponsored Projects or other grant funds become available
- ⇒ ISU and other institutional owners of farmland should be held to a high standard of conservation
- ⇒ Along drainage ditches, focus on tile intakes rather than stream buffers

Goal: Enhance recreational use of the South Skunk Water Trail and Skunk River Greenbelt

- ⇒ Post warnings of health risks when E. coli levels are high
- ⇒ Reduce E. coli levels in South Skunk through better management of manure, septic systems, and pet waste
- ⇒ Educate paddlers about river etiquette and post signs to minimize conflicts with private landowners
- ⇒ Teach boating skills so more people can enjoy South Skunk River
- ⇒ Evaluate ways to increase baseflow in the river to increase the number of canoeable days
- ⇒ Focus on South Skunk River rather than tributaries for trail development—private ownership, cattle fencing, and meandering streams makes recreation along Keigley Branch unrealistic

Goal: Reduce flooding and channel erosion by reducing peak flows and runoff volume in the South Skunk River

- ⇒ Evaluate the effects of impervious surfaces, development in the floodplain, agricultural drainage, and climate change on flooding along the South Skunk River
- ⇒ City of Ames should continue its Smart Watersheds Program to reduce urban runoff
- ⇒ Constructed wetlands can address flooding and nutrient reduction
- ⇒ Flood control projects should avoid impacting upstream landowners

Goal: Protect biodiversity and improve habitat along the South Skunk River

- ⇒ Monitor fish and freshwater mussels
- ⇒ Remove low-head dams that block fish passage
- ⇒ Connect riparian landowners with students and volunteers to set up conservation service projects
- ⇒ Encourage riparian landowners to develop or update a forest management plan

Goal: Address contaminants other than nutrients, sediment, and E. coli

- ⇒ Monitor streams for pesticides and herbicides
- ⇒ Public education campaign to discourage flushing of pharmaceuticals
- ⇒ Inform landowners along creeks of DNR hotline so they can report illegal dumping of trash or chemicals
- ⇒ Reorganize “Skunk River Navy” to continue trash cleanups