A Note from the Project Coordinator

With all of the increased hype around soil health and water quality, there seems to be an influx in organized opportunities to protect our local watersheds.

While everyone’s schedules are always filled with activities related to our various priorities, I would encourage you to make it a priority to challenge yourself to do something new to protect your watershed.

This could be taking part in a pre-organized trash clean-up, or it could be you organizing an event yourself to help raise awareness of watersheds in your community. No matter how “small” your task may be, you are making a difference in your community and for communities down stream of you.

Are you doing something awesome for your watershed? Reach out to us and tell us about it! We would love to feature you on our blog!

Have a great rest of your summer!

Kayla Hasper,
Watershed Coordinator

Small Landowner Land Management Project to Begin in Squaw Creek

By Kayla Hasper

To expand upon our long-term efforts in the Squaw Creek Watershed, we are beginning a project geared towards small landowners this fall. This project is funded by a Conservation Collaboration Grant from the Iowa NRCS and will be working specifically in the area just northwest of Ames.

In order to serve those landowners in the Squaw Creek Watershed that might have less access to resources or the ability to implement much-needed conservation practices in this critical area of the watershed, our Watersheds & Waterways team at Prairie Rivers of Iowa sought out this opportunity to expand our current successful implementation program. We will be working directly with landowners of 10-100 acres on the 5-mile fringes of Ames to connect them with resources to better understand soil health and water quality. We will also utilize our cost-share dollars from the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, as well as cost-share programs from the local NRCS and Soil and Water Conservation Districts, to implement conservation practices with these landowners.

This is a two-year project that will begin September 1, 2017 and go through September 30, 2019. Activities in this project will include a kick-off event, demonstration days, workshops, small-group meetings, and one-on-one service visits. More information will come on those events and services.

Project Manager Mike Brandrup has many years of experience with direct landowner outreach, specifically in the forest management area, from his career with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. In the past few years, his work on the Watersheds & Waterways team has equipped him with great resources on soil health and water quality, and he is excited to share that with the public during this project.

“I am excited for the opportunity to better serve landowners that might have gotten overlooked in the past. I think this urban fringe landowners project will be very rewarding for everyone involved - and for soil health and water quality in the Squaw Creek Watershed,” Brandrup notes.

Interested in participating in this project? Contact Mike Brandrup at 515.232.0048 or at mbrandrup@prrcd.org.

Map Your Watershed!

By Dan Haug

August is traditionally National Water Quality Month. To help promote ongoing efforts to improve soil health and water quality in the Squaw Creek Watershed and the larger South Skunk River Watershed, please consider uploading a photo to our new crowd-sourced map.

Do you have a photo of cover crops on your farm or a rain garden in your backyard? If not, maybe you have a photo of a stream in your area that is worth protecting. Photos of flood control, stream restoration, and trash cleanup efforts are also welcome additions to the map.

Please visit http://arcg.is/2vgfNld and log-in as a guest or using your Google or Facebook account. Upload a photo and write a brief description. If the photo was taken with a smartphone and has embedded GPS coordinates, a red circle will automatically appear on the map. Otherwise, you can type in an address or zoom in and click on the map to set the location. Your photo will appear on the crowd-sourced map once it is approved by the moderator.

As this crowd-sourced map takes shape, we hope it helps you to visualize your watershed and inspires you to build on these efforts to improve soil health, water quality, and more. Please contact dhaug@prrcd.org if you have questions.
Local farmer receives 2017 Iowa Farm Environmental Leader Award

by Aimee Burch

Larry Haren, a farmer in Hamilton County, received a 2017 Iowa Farm Environmental Leader Award in a ceremony at the Iowa State Fair Wednesday, Aug. 16.

The Iowa Farm Environmental Leader Award is a joint effort of the Office of the Governor, the Office of the Lt. Governor, the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. It recognizes Iowa farmers as local leaders who are taking steps to improve or protect the environment and natural resources in their farming operations. Those recognized have adopted best management practices and incorporated environmental stewardship throughout their farms and work to encourage other farmers to follow in their footsteps by building upon success.

Haren's farm has been in operation for more than 10 years and covers over 400 acres. He installed a pond to drain his neighbors’ tile, which alone reduced nitrates by 50 percent. He then installed a denitrifying bioreactor to reduce the nitrate levels even further. Other practices implemented include conservation tillage, cover crops, conservation buffers, and numerous areas for wildlife habitat and protection.

In addition to the conservation work on his own farm, Larry has served on the Hamilton County Conservation Board and as a commissioner for the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District. He is a Pheasants Forever chapter member and has graciously hosted field days at his farm, most recently in June 2017 in collaboration with Prairie Rivers of Iowa and Iowa Learning Farms.

Haren cites soil conservation and the building of soil health for long-term sustainability as reasons for incorporating these practices. Haren said the information and research being conducted on soil chemistry and biology across the Midwest is a great resource for informing farmers about the long-term farming practices that can be implemented to improve soil health.

Haren was nominated for the Iowa Farm Environmental Leader Award by Prairie Rivers of Iowa. Kayla Hasper, Watershed Coordinator at Prairie Rivers of Iowa stated, "Prairie Rivers of Iowa is pleased to honor and promote great stewardship happening in our local watersheds. Larry is a great model of sustainable farming in our community and I am proud that he was recognized with this award."

For more information about the awards, please visit http://www.iowaagriculture.gov/Environmental-Leader.asp.

Prairie Rivers of Iowa Summer Event Stats!

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Funded by:

Youtube Channel:
youtube.com/PrairieRiversofIowa

Videos featuring our watersheds program can be found here!

New Contact Info!

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