

WE'VE GOT YOU COVERED



Benton Tama Nutrient
— REDUCTION PROJECT —
FARMING FOR QUALITY

Benton-Tama Nutrient Reduction Project Newsletter

Spring 2020

Times They Are A-Changin'

Come gather 'round people, wherever you roam... and admit that the waters around you have grown....

We hope this issue of the Benton-Tama Nutrient Reduction Project newsletter finds you well. 2020 has brought tremendous change and growth to the project and the recent COVID19 threats have changed the way we are doing business. We are excited about the future of this project and are committed to providing the excellent service that you are accustomed to while still practicing social distancing —read on to find out more!

Meet Rose Danaher

In February, the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship hired Rose Danaher to work as a Project Coordinator in the Middle Cedar Watershed. As part of her duties, she is managing the Benton-Tama Nutrient Reduction Project.

Rose lives just south of Norway with a couple of bird dogs and a small herd of cows. Prior to working in the Vinton office, she spent nearly a decade managing the Price Creek Watershed Project in Iowa County.



Rose is excited to build on the excellent work that has been done with the project and looking forward to working with the farmers of Benton and Tama counties. Due to COVID19 she is working remotely through April 3rd (potentially longer). She is available via phone and email, and happy to make field visits upon request. You can reach her on her cell phone at (515) 776-2764 or via email at rose.danaher@iowaagriculture.gov.

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Benton-Tama Cost Share Sign Up via EMAIL:

Forms are available online:

www.bentontamanutrientreduction.org/sign-up.html

Send to: rose.danaher@iowaagriculture.gov

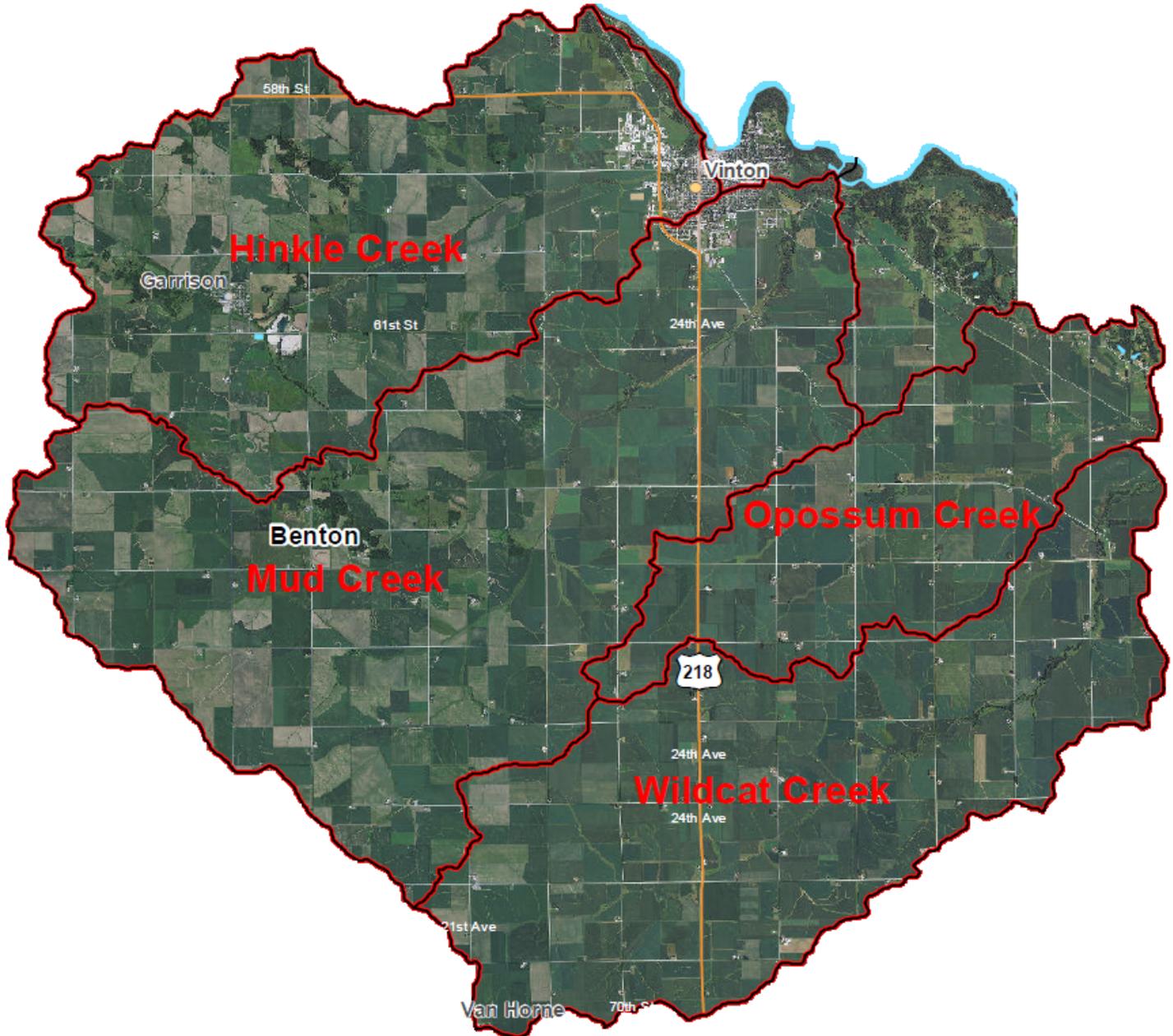
- Practice Request Form
- W-9
- Map with fields marked

If you have eligibility questions or need assistance with field maps, please call Rose at (515) 776-2764.

Newly Eligible Watersheds

Hinkle Creek - Mud Creek - Opossum Creek - Wildcat Creek

In December, the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship awarded the Benton County SWCD \$420,593.50 to be used to extend the Benton-Tama Nutrient Reduction Project until the end of 2022. The grant will provide cost share on nutrient management, reduced tillage, cover crops, and prairie strips. It will also cover the cost of surface water and tile monitoring throughout the watersheds. The new agreement **expands the existing project area to include 4 new HUC 12 watersheds: Hinkle Creek, Mud Creek, Opossum Creek and Wildcat Creek.** This is the first time these watersheds have been eligible for the Benton-Tama cost share incentives and we are excited to bring additional farms on board with the project. Check the map below and if you farm within the new watersheds give us a call to learn more about the incentives available to you! Whether you're a cover crop pro or a first timer, we can offer guidance and financial assistance to help you be successful. **The 4 new watersheds are pictured below. For a complete project map, visit www.bentontamanutrientreduction.org.**



**Practices and cost-share rates for Phase II of the
Benton-Tama Nutrient Reduction Demonstration Project.
Effective: January 1, 2020 – December 31, 2022**

Practice	Cost Share per Acre/System	Total amount stipulations
Nutrient Practices		Each participant can have a \$7500 total payout. - \$4000 for cover crops, 160 acre limit - \$3500 for Nutrient/Tillage/Prairie Strip practices - Prairie Strips, limit 10 acres/participant Structural practices are counted separately.
Nitrification Inhibitors: Adding Nitropyrin to fall N application	\$6/acre	
Tillage Practices		
Tillage: Conservation tillage with residue levels >40%	\$6/ac	
Tillage: No till/strip till	\$10/acre	
Prairie Strips		
Prairie Strips: Apply diverse prairie strips within fields	\$150/acre	
Structural Practices		
Structural: Bioreactor	**	
Structural: Saturated buffer/vegetated subsurface drain outlet	**	
Cover Crops		
Cover Crops: Any winter hardy, non-winter hardy, or species mix	\$25/acre	

**Edge of field practices utilizing cost share through RCPP and IDALS.

LIVING ON THE EDGE



Edge of Field practices can remove up to 98% of nitrates from tile water.

We are offering 100% cost share on these practices.



Saturated buffers are nitrate capturing buffers along the edge of a stream or ditch. Tile outlets are modified by adding a lateral distribution line which allows normal tile flow to saturate the soils in a grass buffer. As water moves through the buffer, denitrification occurs and deep rooted native plants capture additional nitrates. An overflow tile is included to prevent the system from being overwhelmed. These can reduce nitrates by 41-98%.

Bioreactors are chambers filled with woodchips along a tile drainage system. Tile water flows through the woodchip chamber where denitrification occurs. Bioreactors reduce nitrates by 15-60%!

Wetlands are shallow areas holding water at or near the soil surface for part of the year. Re routing tile outlets into wetlands can reduce nitrates by 30-90%. Wetlands generally qualify for a per-acre payment in addition to the 100% cost-share.

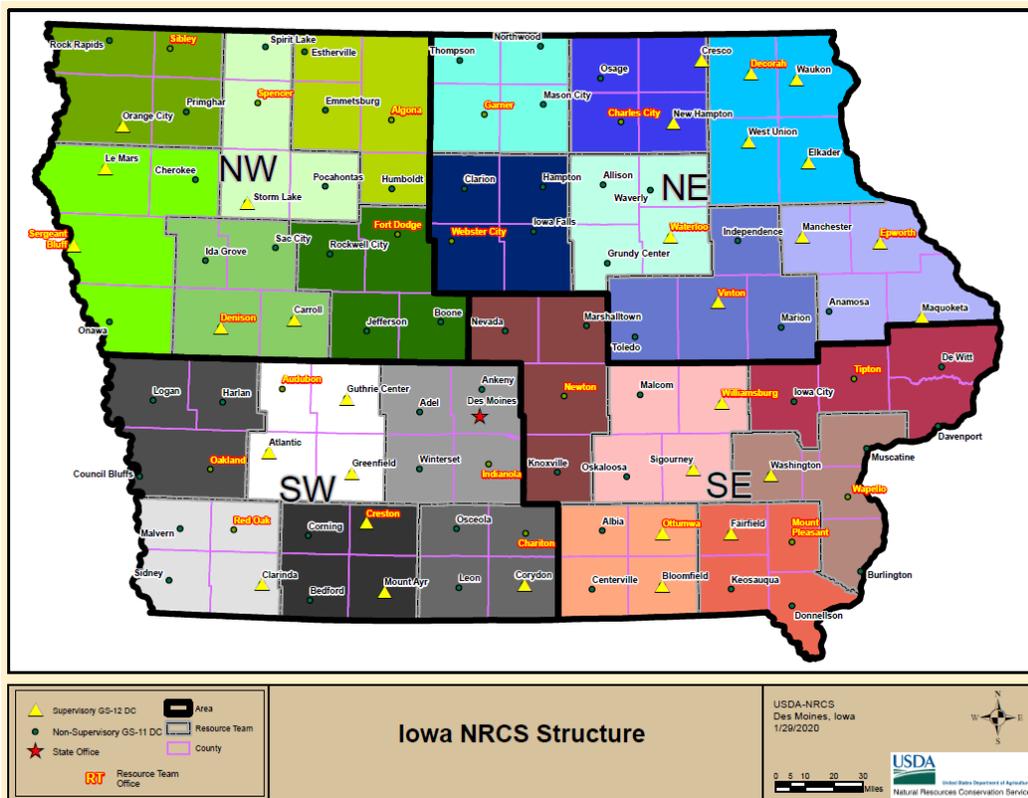
NRCS Update

From Kurt Simon, State Conservationist,
USDA-NRCS, Iowa

In December, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue signed off on the Iowa NRCS staff reorganization plan allowing us to move forward with it this year. After meeting with our staff and partners about the reorganization last year, members of our leadership team and I spent three weeks in January covering the entire state of Iowa taking questions and presenting final details about the staff structure.

The reorganization was a multi-year planning process. I sent members of our leadership team to several other states, including Oregon,

Oklahoma and Indiana, to study their organizational structures. Eventually, we decided on a plan that we feel best suits Iowa NRCS and our customers. Some key points about the new structure:



All 100 Iowa NRCS Field Offices will have a District Conservationist (DC). Two-thirds of Iowa offices were part of a Shared Management Unit, so only 34 offices had their own District Conservationist. Thirty DCs will have supervisory duties and 70 will be non-supervisory positions.

Twenty-five Resource Teams will cover four-county resource areas. A Resource Team Lead will supervise a staff of resource conservationists, soil conservationists, soil conservation technicians, civil engineering technicians, Farm Bill Specialists, and others who will work in four-county areas. The number of employees on each team will depend on the amount of workload in each four-county area. Resource Team staff will eventually be housed in a selected USDA Service Center within their four-county area.

Partner staff will continue in their coverage areas. Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS), Pheasants Forever (PF), Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), and other conservation partners stationed in our offices will continue to cover the same areas.

Why reorganize Field Offices?

A primary reason for a structure change is to have one District Conservationist in every NRCS Field Office. When I arrived in Iowa in 2015, one of the common themes from our conservation partners and Commissioners was a lack of daily NRCS visibility in our offices, due to Shared Management Units affecting two-thirds of our offices. We want the DCs to be the “face” of our local offices.

Another reason for the change is to have more flexibility to manage workload. Just in the past two years we have dealt with drought in Southeast Iowa and flooding in many parts of the state. To have the ability to “triage” people within our teams to locations to shift workload for emergencies will be very helpful.

NRCS Update Continued

Lastly, our reorganization helps us more closely align with Federal guidelines of the 10:1 employee to supervisor ratio.

When will we see changes?

Actual physical changes to our teams will take time. The resource teams will begin working together in March, but due to office space limitations many team members will be unable to move to the resource team locations. We are looking to lease additional space in USDA Service Centers, or we will need to move to a building that can accommodate additional people. Either way, Resource Team offices will be located in the same building as our Field Office and Farm Service Agency staff. It may take more than a year in some cases to get our resource team offices fully stationed in a single location.

Additional Hiring Opportunities

The staff restructuring is not due to staff reductions. In fact, we will be adding staff this year to help fill our open DC positions and many spots on the resource teams. The organizational changes are also providing many promotional opportunities for current staff and/or a chance to move to a preferred location.

We are currently hiring more than 100 soil conservationists (1 for every office), along with soil conservation technicians, resource team leads, and civil engineering technicians. Many vacancies will be announced once the reorganization begins in March. NRCS job vacancies are available on USAJobs.gov.

We will provide reorganization resources and updates on our website at www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov. If you have questions about the reorganization, please contact Jaia Fischer at 515-284-4525 or jaia.fischer@usda.gov.

COVID19 Response

Due to the current COVID19 threats, our office is open **by appointment only** until April 3rd. We are awaiting additional guidance and expect that this could be extended. In the meantime, the Vinton crew is still working to serve you. If you would like to schedule a meeting, you must be able to answer no to the following questions:

- a. Have you, someone living in your household, someone with you have been in close or frequent contact with, or someone you are caring for been diagnosed with COVID-19 (Coronavirus) or had any contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19?*
- b. In the last 14 days, have you or someone living in your household, or someone with you have been in close or frequent contact with, or someone you are caring for returned from, or made a travel connection through a [CDC Level 3 or Level 2](#) country or [State Department Level 3 or Level 4](#) country?*
- c. Do you currently have, or have you had within the last 24 hours, any cold or flu symptoms with a fever greater than 100.4 or acute respiratory distress (e.g., shortness of breath and coughing)?*

Despite the challenges with COVID19, we are eager to continue serving our customers during this time. We have many programs and staff who can offer financial assistance or guidance as you work to meet your production and conservation goals. Our cost-share program signups are ongoing and we can take applications via email or snail mail. Give us a call today!

Office: (319)472-2161

Tina Cibula, District Conservationist: (319)444-0574

Benton-Tama Project

1705 W D Street
Vinton, IA 52349

Upcoming Dates:

Due to COVID19 concerns please confirm meeting dates and locations by calling (319) 472-2161.

- ◆ *Now—Sign up for Cost Share*
- ◆ *April 9—Tama County SWCD*
- ◆ *April 16— Middle Cedar WMA Meeting*
- ◆ *April 22—Benton County SWCD meeting*
- ◆ *May 29— Conservation Stewardship Signup Deadline*
- ◆ *June 5— Environmental Quality Incentives Program Signup Deadline*

Contact Us

Benton SWCD
1705 W D Street
Vinton, IA 52349

Phone: (515) 776-2764

Email: rose.danaher@iowaagriculture.gov

Visit us online:

<http://www.bentontamanutrientreduction.org/>

Like us on Facebook: @BentonTamaWQI

Follow us on Twitter: @BentonTamaWQI

Benton Soil and Water Conservation District is an equal opportunity employer and provider.

Benton SWCD — Black Hawk SWCD — Tama SWCD



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