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NEWS RELEASE

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New Financial Incentives for Catfish Creek Watershed Landowners

DUBUQUE, Iowa – The Catfish Creek Watershed Management Authority and the City of Dubuque have partnered to create a new cost-share program that makes financial incentives to implement conservation practices available to all Catfish Creek Watershed landowners.

The Catfish Creek Watershed Authority Management Board has recently finalized a watershed management plan for the entire 46,000-acre watershed and is now developing plans to implement conservation practices throughout the watershed.

The purpose of the Catfish Creek Watershed Management Authority Board is to address flooding and water quality degradation on a watershed level. This can involve crossing jurisdictional boundaries and working with a variety of stakeholders to solve problems within the watershed. Watershed authority boards exist throughout Iowa and were created through the state legislation. While authority boards have no taxing or regulating authority, watershed management plans are a tool these boards can use to implement practices through available grant funding.

In August of 2014 the City of Dubuque applied for \$2.4 million in funding for improvements in the Catfish Creek Watershed through the State of Iowa Water Resource Restoration Sponsored Project program as part of the City's State Revolving Fund (SRF) loan for the Upper Bee Branch Creek Restoration Project. In December of 2014, the Environmental Protection Commission established \$1.4 million in funding for improvements within the Catfish Creek Watershed.

The Catfish Creek Watershed Authority intends to use the available SRF sponsorship dollars to begin strategically implementing improvements in the watershed as outlined in the Catfish Creek Watershed Management Plan. Building on the public/private relationships forged as part of the formation of the Catfish Creek Watershed Authority and the development of the watershed plan, the Catfish Creek Watershed Authority has started to develop cost-share programs for both urban and rural property owners. The urban best management practices that would be eligible for cost-share would include bio-retention, rain gardens, vegetated swales, soil quality restoration, and wetland enhancements/establishments. Rural practices would also include agricultural practices that would address flooding and the discharge of sediment and nutrients. The cost-share rate would be 75 percent of the estimated cost of each project, meaning the Catfish Creek Authority Board would pay for 75 percent of the estimated cost of the project and the landowner would be responsible for 25 percent.

The Catfish Creek Watershed Authority has partnered with the Dubuque Soil and Water Conservation District and the Natural Resource Conservation Service to assist with the technical aspects of these best management practices. All landowners in the Catfish Creek watershed are eligible to apply for one or more of the listed best management practices.

The Catfish Creek Watershed is a 57 square-mile watershed that includes industrial centers, residential neighborhoods, rolling cropland, steep bluffs and rock outcrops, and dense forests. The watershed encompasses about half of the city of Dubuque as well as parts of Asbury, Peosta, and Centralia. Much of the watershed remains rural. The five forks of Catfish Creek support a diverse set of plants and animals and are a draw for hunters, fishers, and those seeking to enjoy some of Dubuque County's most scenic areas, but they remain threatened by large amounts of soil and nutrients entering the water from both urban and agricultural run-off.

For more information on the Catfish Creek Watershed and the new incentive program, visit www.catfishcreekwatershed.org or call the City of Dubuque Stormwater Hotline at (563) 690-6200.

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