The mission of the Catfish Creek Watershed Management Authority is to reduce the risks of flooding and its effects, improve water quality, and promote a healthier existence for all living things that call the Catfish Creek Watershed home.
What is the CATFISH CREEK WATERSHED?

The Catfish Creek Watershed is a beautiful and diverse 57 square-mile watershed that includes industrial centers, residential neighborhoods, rolling cropland, steep bluffs and rock outcrops, and dense forests. About half of the city of Dubuque lies in the watershed 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; however, they remain threatened by large amounts of soil and nutrients entering the water from both urban and agricultural runoff.

Background (The Upper Catfish Creek Watershed Project)

The Upper Catfish Creek Watershed Project started in 2007. The Dubuque Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) recognized the Upper Catfish Creek Watershed as a priority area. Upper Catfish Creek begins as a cold-water trout stream and plays a vital role for recreational opportunities within Dubuque County. The Dubuque SWCD became progressively more concerned as they noted the increasing trend of agricultural land converting to urban development areas in Dubuque County. The City of Dubuque and Dubuque County were eager and excited to partner with the Dubuque SWCD to create a Watershed Coordinator position and watershed council group that would begin working with both agricultural and urban landowners in the watershed.

Over the course of four years, sediment reduction has been reduced by more than 30% and over 8 million gallons of water has been infiltrated due to urban and rural conservation practices.
In 2008, City of Dubuque Engineering Department and Dubuque Soil and Water Conservation District staff began collaborating to form an educational outreach program throughout the community, an extension of the City’s National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit. Since 2008, low-impact development (LID) conferences, erosion control and stormwater contractor workshops, and student programs have been held annually, and have successfully brought together members of the public, engineers, planners, developers, and contractors to learn more about the importance of watershed planning and watershed practices. A comprehensive water-monitoring program was initiated throughout the watershed via a 28e agreement between the City of Dubuque and the Soil and Water Conservation District.

**URBAN CONSERVATION PROGRAM**

A 28e agreement was formed in 2010 to establish an urban conservation program and to begin the development of a watershed plan and promote conservation practices throughout the entire watershed. The City of Dubuque understood and realized the importance of working beyond city limit boundaries and started to work with partners across the watershed transitioning the Watershed Coordinator position to the broader position of Urban Conservationist.

**CATFISH CREEK WATERSHED AUTHORITY BOARD**

Formed in 2012, a 28e agreement was signed between several political jurisdictions including the cities of Dubuque, Asbury, Peosta, and Centralia; Dubuque County, and the Dubuque Soil and Water Conservation District.

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 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% of the estimated cost of each project, meaning the Catfish Creek Authority Board would pay for 75% of the estimated cost of the project and the landowner would be responsible for 25%.

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

www.catfishcreekwatershed.org

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