

WATERSHED MANAGEMENT AUTHORITIES

In 2010, Iowa lawmakers passed legislation authorizing the creation of Watershed Management Authorities. A Watershed Management Authority (WMA) is a mechanism for cities, counties, Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) and stakeholders to cooperatively engage in watershed planning and management.

What is a Watershed Management Authority?

The WMA is formed by an intergovernmental (Chapter 28E) agreement by two or more eligible political subdivisions within a specific eight-digit hydrologic unit code watershed. A board of directors governs the WMA, which may undertake the following activities:

- Assess and reduce flood risk
- Assess and improve water quality
- Monitor federal flood risk planning and activities
- Educate residents of the watershed regarding flood risks and water quality
- Allocate moneys made available to the Authority for purposes of water quality and flood mitigation

BENEFITS

REQUIREMENTS

Requirements of a WMA:

(per Iowa Code Chapter 466B Subchapter II)

- Must be located within an 8-digit HUC watershed
- All eligible political subdivisions (cities, Counties, SWCDs) must be notified and provided the opportunity to participate within 30 days prior to WMA organization
- A Chapter 28E agreement that includes a map of the watershed must be filed with the Secretary of State
- The WMA must be governed by a Board of Directors and adopt by-laws
- WMAs may not acquire land through eminent domain and do not have taxing authority

Benefits of forming a WMA:

There are multiple benefits to cooperating with other jurisdictions within a watershed:

- Conduct planning on a watershed scale, which has greater benefits for water quality improvement and flood damage reduction
- Foster multi-jurisdictional partnership and cooperation
- Leveraging resources such as funding, technical expertise
- Facilitate stakeholder involvement in watershed management

INFORMATION

More information about forming a WMA is available on the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) website:

<http://www.iowadnr.gov/Environment/WaterQuality/WatershedManagementAuthorities.aspx>

The website includes:

- A complete listing of the existing WMAs in Iowa
- Example 28E agreements and by-laws
- More information on setting up a WMA
- Contacts for technical assistance

