



NEWS RELEASE

Illinois Environmental Protection Agency

1021 North Grand Avenue East, P.O. Box 19276

Springfield, Illinois 62794-9276

Phone: 217/782-3397

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 10, 2020

Contact: Kim Biggs

217-558-1536

Kim.Biggs@illinois.gov

Illinois EPA Awards \$180,000 to Rock Island Soil and Water Conservation District for Implementation of the Copperas Creek Watershed-Based Plan

SPRINGFIELD — Illinois Environmental Protection Agency Director John J. Kim announced Rock Island Soil and Water Conservation District will receive just over \$180,000 in grant funding to provide technical and financial assistance to rural landowners to voluntarily implement the locally developed Copperas Creek Watershed Plan.

“This project will help landowners implement best management practices in the Copperas Creek Watershed, a tributary of the Mississippi River, to reduce nonpoint source pollution, soil erosion, and nutrient and sediment loading, in order to improve overall water quality,” Director Kim said. “This watershed is identified by Illinois EPA as a priority watershed for nonpoint source implementation activities this year.”

Rock Island County Soil and Water Conservation District, a unit of local government working on natural resource concerns in the county, applied for a Section 319(h) grant from the Illinois EPA. The total project cost is \$301,160, with Illinois EPA providing 60 percent or \$180,044 in grant funds and local landowners and partners (Rock Island County Soil and Water Conservation District) providing 40 percent, or \$121,116 in match. This is the second round of funding provided to the District for implementation of the watershed plan.

“We see this watershed work as part of a greater cause of reducing nutrient and sediment runoff into the Mississippi River and ultimately the Gulf of Mexico,” according to Rock Island SWCD Administrator Dawn Temple. “The biggest impacts can be made by starting small and local watersheds are a prime source to tap into to help facilitate implementing practices that reduce those loads into the larger bodies of water. There are a lot of conservation options out there for landowners and these funds help provide assistance to get those practices on the ground.”

Resource Conservationist Rich Stewart with the Rock Island SWCD states, “Interest is high among landowners in Copperas Creek for installing conservation practices. No-till farming and grassed waterways are common practices used by farmers. Many farmers have filterstrips installed along the creek and its tributaries. This grant will supplement the good conservation work in that area.”

Copperas Creek Section 319 Grant/2

This grant continues the voluntary implementation of the Copperas Creek Watershed-Based Plan, which addresses stormwater and nonpoint source (NPS) pollution issues in the watershed that drains into Copperas Creek in Rock Island County. NPS pollution occurs when runoff from rain and snowmelt carries pollutants into waterways such as rivers, streams, lakes, wetlands, and even groundwater.

The Section 319(h) Grant Program is a competitive financial assistance grant program established to help control NPS pollution. Federal funds are designated to the Illinois EPA under Section 319 of the Clean Water Act. The funds are then used to support state NPS management programs.

The Copperas Creek Watershed is comprised of 47,000 acres in Rock Island and Mercer Counties. A majority of the watershed is cultivated crop agriculture, with a smaller portion dedicated to pasture and forest area. The watershed has no urban areas. The project will assist local landowners to voluntarily implement best management practices (BMPs) in the watershed to reduce nonpoint source pollution, soil erosion, and nutrient and sediment loadings in order to improve water quality.

The BMPs eligible for cost-share include:

- Dry Dam
- Grade Stabilization Structure
- Grassed Waterway
- Streambank Stabilization
- Water and Sediment Control Basin
- Denitrifying Bioreactor
- Saturated Buffer
- 2 - Stage Ditch

In addition to BMPs, the Copperas Creek Watershed Plan includes a public education program with the implementation of a nutrient management forum, signage, a BMP tour, newsletters, and a forestry management workshop. The overall outcome of the project is expected to reduce pollutant loadings of approximately 360 tons of sediment, 413 pounds of phosphorus, and 795 pounds of nitrogen annually.

For additional information on Illinois' Nonpoint Source Management Program and the 319(h) Grant Program, please visit <https://www2.illinois.gov/epa/topics/water-quality/watershed-management/nonpoint-sources/Pages/default.aspx>.

For information and updates from the Rock Island Soil and Water Conservation District, please visit <https://www.rockislandswcd.org/>.

There will be an upcoming informational meeting for all stakeholders held at Illinois City Hall, 12206 238th St. W., Illinois City, IL on March 12th at 1:00 pm to highlight practices and how to sign up.

###