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Rural Development - Iowa

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Silos & Smokestacks brochure
[2 copies]



Leather reigns held taut
in calloused hands, the
immigrant plowman turns
his weathered face and great
muscled roans into the sun.
Together, one furrow at a
time, they turn tall grass
prairie into rich fields of
golden grain. And the
plowman's legacy lives on to
feed a growing nation and
the world.

(File)
RD -
Iowa

AMERICORPS PROJECTS IN IOWA

Natural Resources and Conservation Service (NRCS)

Number of AmeriCorps Members: 26

The 26 AmeriCorps/USDA Members in Iowa located throughout the state are part of Rural Development Teams sponsored by NRCS.

Participants are conducting research to increase the number of farmers in the Emergency Wetlands Reserve Program, preparing maps and written materials to assist County Conservation Boards in Fremont, Mills, Pottawattamie, Harrison, Monona, and Woodbury counties in locating areas for potential in recreation, tourism, economic development, and wildlife areas.

Participants are also revise a brochure for Western Iowa and are working to develop bicycle loops for area cycling clubs; scheduling pasture walks and seminars with local farmers to promote and develop rotational grazing systems; updating tourism guides, writing scripts for tours, restoring a farmer's market, and taking an inventory of resources in the African-American community to create an agricultural heritage area in Northeast Iowa.

AMERICORPS PROJECT IN INDIANA

Natural Resources and Conservation Service (NRCS)

Number of AmeriCorps Members: 5

NRCS is currently recruiting AmeriCorps/USDA Members for a Rural Development Team at sites in Marion, Hendricks, and Hamilton counties.

The Members will work with schools and local civic organizations in these counties to provide natural resource education through direct instruction as well as through organizing and gathering resources to identify and complete activities that promote natural resource conservation.

(Filer)

November 10, 1994

To: Shirley Sagawa
Catherine Milton
Diana Algra
Peter Heinaru
Susan Stroud

Iowa
RD

From: Meg Maguire

Subject: AmeriCorps participation in **Silos and Smoke Stacks**, through
the AmeriCorps Rural Development Program in Iowa

This memo is in response to Eli's note to Shirley questioning the involvement of AmeriCorps Members in Iowa's heritage project, Silos and Smoke Stacks.

BACKGROUND on USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM:

When Paul Johnson, Director of SCS, learned last June that we did not intend to fund the Rural Development portion of USDA's AmeriCorps proposal, he asked Joel Berg to appeal our decision. Johnson and his wife are both former Peace Corps volunteers and he is a strong supporter of national service.

Johnson proposed to work directly with FHMA/RDA and to pick up the tab. (The Corporation pays only \$630/participant for over 500 participants in this program.) We were impressed with his determination and felt that a rural development program of this magnitude would compliment AmeriCorps' presence in urban neighborhoods.

The USDA AmeriCorps Rural Development Program includes a wide range of activities such as crop management programs for cranberry growers in Maine; skills development and technical information assistance to 40 rural fire departments, and watershed protection in Vermont (Eli visited the Winooski River Watershed demonstration project); soil conservation in New York; solid waste and recycling assistance to 14 units of county government in the Hull-York Lakeland Area of Tennessee; etc. I will be glad to provide the full list of projects if you wish.

PROBLEMS IN RURAL AMERICA/STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS THEM:

Rural America suffers from many problems including loss of family farms, declining town centers, and uncontrolled land use leading to grave

environmental problems. Jobs are disappearing, and young people see no reason to invest their future in declining rural areas.

One of the most successful economic development strategies in rural and small-town America has become heritage tourism. In many states such as Vermont, tourism is the #1 industry, bringing a variety of jobs, helping to maintain a way of life, and underscoring the need for conservation of land and natural resources -- all towards the end of preserving values which are deeply imbedded in our nation's history.

In Iowa, SCS has 5 AmeriCorps Members supporting activities in one of the most innovative heritage areas in the nation, **Silos and Smoke Stacks**. The beauty of this concept is that communities throughout the state are working together to develop a strategy to interpret the agricultural economy and history of the State of Iowa, focusing on the region's continuing importance as a bread basket of the world.

The program in Iowa is based on predecessor program such as New York State's long-standing Urban Cultural Parks Program, or Pennsylvania's Steel Heritage Program. In both of these examples the state has assembled scattered history and diverse sites into a coherent plan for community improvements, tourism development, interpretation, and environmental and cultural inventories; and has marketed these travel/learning opportunities very successfully. Heritage tourism is working.

I have followed the progress of Silos and Smokestacks for several years through my work with the National Heritage Areas Coalition which provides policy support and technical assistance for over 100 heritage areas around the country. I have been impressed by Tom Gallaher, Jr., Executive Director of Silos and Smokestacks, who is dynamic, organized, and politically savvy.

AMERICORPS INVOLVEMENT:

AmeriCorps programs on cultural preservation and interpretation in Iowa are analogous to AmeriCorps programs on environmental education which we enthusiastically promote. In Iowa, we are very fortunate to be involved in a dynamic, planned context where the efforts of AmeriCorps will help to stimulate new jobs for rural America.

We will watch this project closely to ensure that it meets all the objectives set forth and to study its potential application to AmeriCorps in the future.

USDA BRIEFING:

I have discussed Eli's concerns directly with Paul Johnson and suggested that he initiate a meeting with Eli to brief him about various aspects of the Rural

Development Program. We might want to couple this with additional reports on the Anti-Hunger Program and the Public Lands and Environment Program.



(File)

RD - Iowa

October 21, 1994

To: Miles Wilson, CNCS
From: Joel Berg, USDA JB
Subject: **USDA Projects in Iowa**

USDA has 26 AmeriCorps Members in Iowa, many of whom have already started their service. They are Members of the USDA "Rural Development Team," in which almost all the Members have college degrees or graduate degrees and work in individual placements similar to a professional corps. Their stipend is \$12,000 per year.

These Iowa projects are sponsored by the USDA Soil Conservation Service, which is run by Chief Paul Johnson, whom Eli met last year at USDA. Johnson is an Iowa native, a former Democratic state legislator in Iowa, a former Peace Corps volunteer, and most importantly, a fervent AmeriCorps supporter. The *Des Moines Register* has recently covered his involvement in AmeriCorps.

As outlined in the attached objectives, the Iowa Members will be serving in projects related to flood recovery, environmental protection, and economic development. The economic development projects are further described in the attached letter from the Silos & Smokestacks, which was sent to both Senator Harkin and Senator Grassley.

While the Members will work individually on a daily basis, they will usually meet together physically at least once a week in groups of no less than five at their "cluster site."

The four cluster sites in Iowa are:

- Storm Lake
- Waterloo
- Oakland
- Indianola
- Williamsburg

From these central sites, members will provide service in all the shaded counties in the attached map.

Iowa Co.

EWRP 36 - 4000 ha

accepted

EWRP New 8 - 750

IOWA RIVER CORRIDOR

WRP 14 - 1200

BACKGROUND

The Iowa river begins near the Minnesota state line, flows southeast and merges with the Cedar River at Columbus Junction, Iowa. It enters the Mississippi River south of Lock/Dam 17. Above Iowa City, Coralville Dam impounds a 3230 square mile watershed, to form a 5430 acre lake.

The proposed Iowa River Corridor would extend from highway 151 at Amana to just below Highway 30 and the Mesquakie settlement in Tama County. The Corridor would extend 45 miles and contain 49500 acres of floodplain. Two prominent features, the Otter Creek State Wildlife Management Area (2200 acres in Tama County) and the Amana Colonies (11,000 acres of timber, wetland and cropland in the corridor.

The current land use in the IRC floodplain is summarized as:

CROPLAND	27355 acres	55%
WOODLAND	15500 acres	31%
HAY/PASTURE	1600 acres	3%
PUBLIC LAND	3370 acres	7%
OTHER LAND	719 acres	2%
WRP EASEMENTS	956 acres	2%

BACKGROUND SITUATION

The floodplain of the Iowa River has been altered for the last 100 years to enhance agricultural production. Drainage systems, levees and clearing have converted 36% of the native wetland and floodplain into cropland. Hydrology records show the river floods frequently, or approximately once every two years. The recent weather cycle and more intensive land use has produced even more frequent flooding within the IRC.

Record 1993 flooding severely damaged and breached levees, caused unprecedented scour erosion and left debilitating deposits of debris, silt and salt in the aftermath. Crop losses exceeded 6.9 million dollars and put producers under economic stress as they faced significant reclamation expenses.

The Soil Conservation Service responded to this disaster by implementing the Emergency Wetland Reserve Program (EWRP). The interest in this program has been overwhelming, as 42 intentions on 4490 acres have been filed. The Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) signup held March 1994 produced 54 applications on 5050 acres.

6/94 EWRP 47

(9/94) update

Prelim Approval

WRP - 30 4000 ac

Accept. EWRP - 52 6000

Interest in Wetland easements is not new to landusers in the IRC. The 1991 WRP signup produced over 100 application on 5000 acres. Six easements on 956 acres were accepted into the WRP. Due to continued economic hardship there continues to be a high level of interest easements. 1993-94 easement applications total 96 on 9540 acres. This represents 35% of the cropland in the IRC.

OPPORTUNITY

It is evident that a combination of landuser interest, currently funded easement programs and public agency support are merging at approximately the same time. This timing offers a unique opportunity to protect 45 miles of river valley.

The Iowa River Corridor concept offers an opportunity to gain the benefits of sound floodplain management. These benefits include:

- restore native floodplain habitat and functions
- improvement of water quality (local effect, Coralville Lake and Iowa City water supply)
- improve habitat of migratory and resident wildlife.
- increase flood storage
- provide alternative floodplain management to private owners

The idea of creating a buffer corridor has received wide support from private and public sources including: private landusers, Pheasants Forever, Ducks Unlimited, County Conservation Boards, Department of Natural Resources, Soil Conservation Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service and local Conservation Districts representing the three corridor counties.

SITUATION

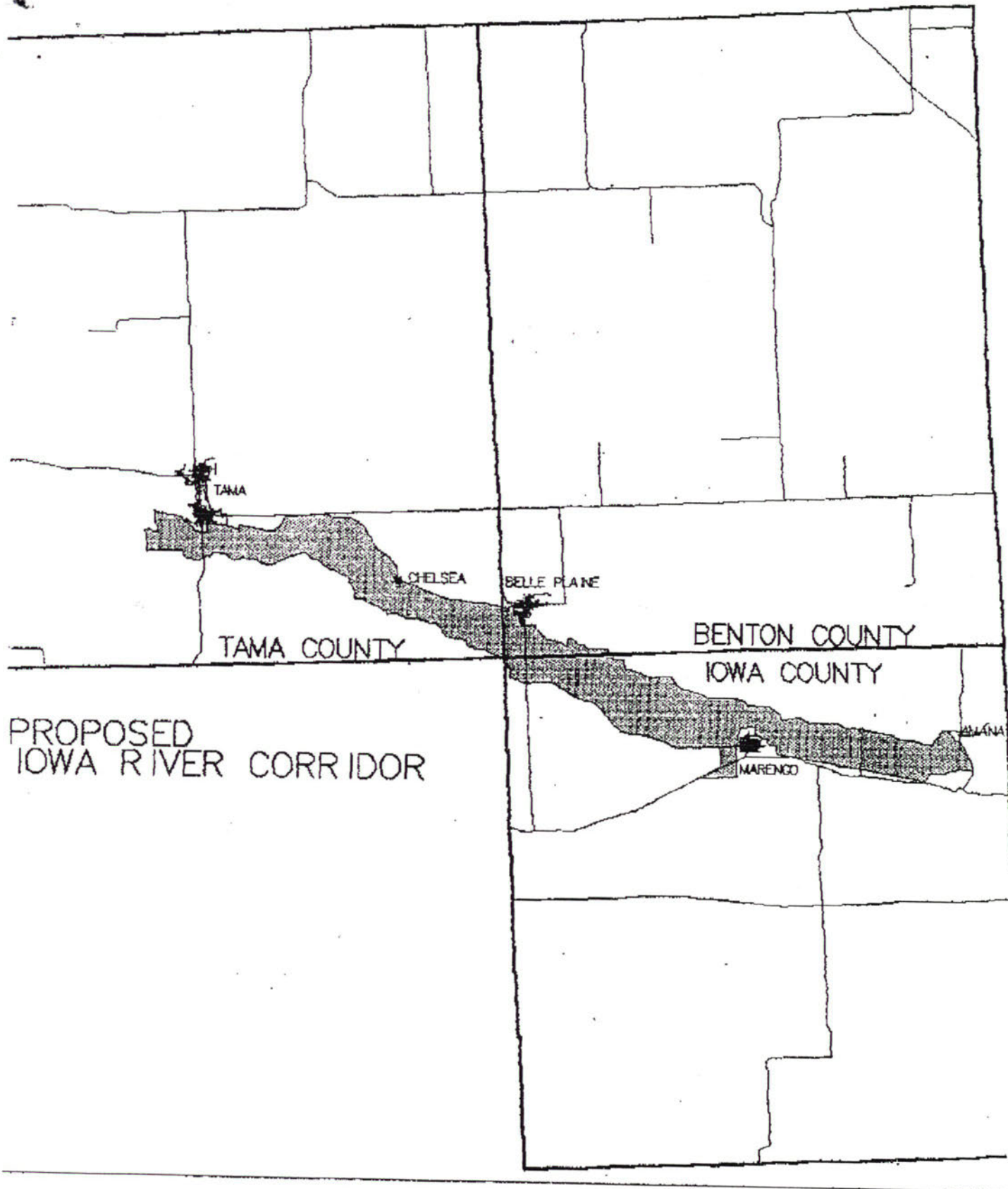
Despite private and public support and the existing wetland easement programs, easement proposals are limited under the current framework. The EWRP and WRP require that 75% of the crop acres be wetland. This requirement often creates a dysfunctional management unit that makes an easement unpractical difficult to manage or construct. Utilizing easements that secure alluvial floodplain as well as wetland will greatly improve the design process and acceptability. This should enhance participation without sacrificing the vision and objectives of the corridor.

VISION STATEMENT

The Iowa River Corridor (IRC) is a mosaic of private and public land ownership held together by the common thread of flood tolerant uses.

Amphibious OBJECTIVES

1. Provide landowners a broad menu of assistance options that represent sound floodplain management.
2. Manage public lands to provide for the natural diversity and functions of the Iowa River system.
3. Utilize the natural resources of the floodplain to improve water quality.
4. Provide an interpretive opportunity to illustrate floodplain system management.
5. Illustrate economic outcomes of alternative floodplain land uses.
6. Utilize private and public partnerships to accomplish IRC vision.



PROPOSED
IOWA RIVER CORRIDOR

CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL SERVICE
WILLIAMSBURG CLUSTER SITE

COMMUNITY SERVICE OBJECTIVES WORKSHEET

COMPONENTS OF OBJECTIVE STATEMENTS: To address high priority environmental issues including wetland restoration, special water quality projects, and wildlife habitat restoration.

1. WORK TO BE DONE, AND PARTICIPANTS SERVICE ACTIVITIES:

- Restore wetlands, by helping implement Emergency Wetland Reserve Program (EWRP) and Wetland Reserve Program (WRP). (Nine County region)
- Develop and implement an Inventory existing Wetland Easements and other potential sites, utilizing a GIS layer.
- Assist Iowa River Corridor (IRC) Coordinator in implementation of the objectives of the IRC vision statement. (Iowa, Tama and Benton Counties)
- Develop and implement an Inventory of special water quality/wetland restoration projects. (Nine County region)
- Develop and implement a Public ~~Information~~ program on wetlands, alternative floodplain management and water quality.

outreach

2. RESULT OF THE WORK/ACTIVITIES:

- 75 wetlands restored
- 1 - 9 county Wetland Restoration Inventory
- Wetland/floodplain public information program
- 1 - 9 county Inventory of special water quality/wetland restoration projects
- Iowa River Corridor Plan
- GIS program data and report for Iowa River Corridor

3. MEASUREMENT OF PRODUCT QUALITY AND/OR SERVICE IMPACT:

- Wetland restoration to SCS/FWS/DNR standards and specifications.
- Effective presentation of interpretive and illustrated news items, features items, slide sets, videos, field days, outdoor classrooms, radio programs, TV coverage, newsletters and brochures.
- Complete inventories and Plans with accurate information, professionally compiled.

4. STANDARDS OF SUCCESS:

- Number and acres of restored wetland.
- Number of public information events and correspondence
- Completed Inventories
- Iowa River Corridor Plan and progress

5. NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS BENEFITTED BY PARTICIPANT ACTIVITY

- Floodplain landowner and operators in 9 county region,
approximately 400 landowners.
- Iowa River communities.
- Urban and Rural non-farm sector
- Iowa City Public Water Supply