

Linn County Conservation and Cedar Rapids Community School District Partnership Brings Cleaner Water to Morgan Creek

CEDAR RAPIDS, IA - Linn County Conservation and Cedar Rapids Community School District (CRCSD) have joined forces to bring water quality improvements to the community. Through a partnership that brings conservation and education together, a new wetland at Linn County's Morgan Creek Park, located just east of Highway 100 west of Cedar Rapids, will demonstrate how natural systems can play an important role in protecting local waterways.

"This partnership is a great example of how our school district can be a good steward of the resources entrusted to us while also contributing to the greater Cedar Rapids community," said Jen Neumann, Board of Education President. "By putting this land to use in a way that improves water quality, creates wildlife habitat and provides a place for people to learn and enjoy nature, we're helping create something that will benefit our students, families and community for generations."

Wetlands are among nature's most effective tools for improving and protecting water quality. To address severe erosion caused by runoff from nearby row crop fields on school district-owned land, the completed wetland will stabilize the area near Morgan Creek while creating additional habitat for fish and other wildlife.

The new wetland could treat approximately 40 million gallons of stormwater each year, removing pollutants and nutrients before they reach Morgan Creek. CRCSD donated 7.7 acres of land that was not suitable for development or farming to Linn County Conservation for the new wetland, which is now part of Morgan Creek Park.

The wetland includes a forebay that captures sediment before it enters the wetland. An island in the low-flow channel provides suitable nesting habitat for waterfowl and turtles while offering additional protection from predators. A deep-water pool with rock and wooden pallet structures and spawning beds provides additional fish habitat. Wetland plugs and prairie seeding are also part of the project.

The project also provides new opportunities for the public to enjoy the area, including an accessible trail from the park that loops around the wetland and areas for fishing. Linn County Conservation is working with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources to stock the wetland pond in the future, potentially with largemouth bass, bluegill and channel catfish.

Grant funding for the \$750,000 project includes \$177,625 from the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship Water Quality Initiative and \$15,000 from Wings2Water. The City of Cedar Rapids contributed \$5,000 toward the project as the wells from which the

City draws its drinking water are located near where Morgan Creek drains into the Cedar River. Remaining funds come from Linn County Water and Land Legacy Bonds earmarked for water quality.

Pictured in attached photos left-to-right: Chad Schumacher, CRCSD Director of Operations; Ryan Schlader, Linn County Conservation Board Community Outreach Specialist; Dennis Goemaat, Linn County Conservation Board Director; and Daniel Gibbins, Linn County Conservation Board Deputy Director.

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