

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

**SUBJECT: HEADWATERS OF THE SOUTH SKUNK RIVER WATERSHED
MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT**

BACKGROUND:

As a founding member of the Squaw Creek Watershed Management Authority (WMA), the City of Ames, Story County, and other nearby jurisdictions were pioneers within Iowa in establishing such an intergovernmental group dealing with geographical watersheds, rather than only with jurisdictional boundaries. The Squaw Creek WMA has already had several successes in promoting wise land stewardship within this watershed. Funding for this group has been through grant funds from the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, administered by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

Given the success of this initial WMA in promoting inter-jurisdictional cooperation, increasing public education, and improving watershed management practices the Story County Board of Supervisors created a second WMA within the Skunk River watershed called the **Keigley Branch WMA**. **The Ames City Council approved a 28E intergovernmental agreement for this WMA on July 11, 2017.**

This WMA has been working to create a watershed management plan as part of a \$71,316 federal grant from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. This grant supports education and outreach staff at Prairie Rivers of Iowa and the technical experts at Emmons & Olivier Resources Inc. in gathering and analyzing data about the watershed, facilitating public meetings, conducting an outreach campaign, and putting together the management plan document.

Story County's Board of Supervisors has shared a vision of creating WMA's that cover the entire county and extend into abutting counties. These WMA's will provide the best available option for intergovernmental and public-private cooperation to improve water quality and reduce river flooding. In early 2017, the Story County Board of Supervisors hired a consulting firm to develop county-wide watershed assessments. Now complete, this looks at watersheds at the smaller level (technically the Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC) 10 and 12 watershed levels) and develops a comprehensive assessment that identifies watershed specific goals and implementation strategies addressing education, outreach and water quality improvement goals.

In continuing this momentum, staff met with the WMA to talk about the bigger picture of the Keigley Branch watershed activities, in general. Considering this information and in recognition of a WMA name that residents and land owners can relate to, it was discussed that the larger area encompassing the S. Skunk River would be a potentially more successful approach. **Thus, a new 28E intergovernmental agreement is proposed for the Headwaters of the South Skunk River WMA. As part of this approval, the current agreement for the Keigley Branch WMA would need to be rescinded.** A map of the proposed WMA area is attached.

Chapter 466 of the Code of Iowa provides that WMA's can be created by interested counties, cities and Soil and Water Conservation Districts. The groups that will be

eligible to participate in the Headwaters of the South Skunk River WMA are between Story County, Boone County, Hamilton County, Hardin County, City of Ames, City of Story City, City of Roland, City of Randall, City of Jewell, City of Ellsworth, City of Kamrar, City of Blairsburg, City of Williams, Story County Soil and Water Conservation District, Boone County Soil and Water Conservation District, Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District, and Hardin County Soil and Water Conservation District.

The purpose of this Agreement is to provide the way the parties shall cooperate with one another to successfully encourage, plan for, and implement watershed activities within the Headwaters of the South Skunk River Watershed including but not limited to the following activities authorized pursuant to Code of Iowa Section 466B.23:

- 3.1.1 Assess the flood risks in the watershed.
- 3.1.2 Assess the water quality in the watershed.
- 3.1.3 Assess options for reducing flood risk and improving water quality in the watershed.
- 3.1.4 Monitor federal flood risk planning and activities.
- 3.1.5 Educate residents of the watershed area regarding water quality and flood risks.
- 3.1.6 Seek and allocate moneys made available to the Authority for purposes of water quality and flood mitigation.
- 3.1.7 Make and enter into contracts and agreements and execute all instruments necessary or incidental to the performance of the duties of the Authority. The Authority shall not acquire property by eminent domain.

In general, the watershed activities of the Keigley Branch WMA and the Headwaters of the South Skunk River WMA will remain the same. The difference of the WMAs lies in the geographic boundary to encompass the larger land area.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. a. Approve Termination of the 28E Agreement for Keigley Branch Watershed Management Authority

b. Approve the attached 28E Agreement creating the **Headwaters of the South Skunk River Watershed Management Authority**.
2. Do not rescind the previous 28E agreement and do not approve the new agreement.

MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Riverine flooding and water quality are important issues affecting the City of Ames. Watershed Management Authorities are promising intergovernmental tools to link urban and rural interests together leading to long-term improvements in water quality and reductions in flooding. Creation of the Headwaters of the South Skunk River WMA will help the City play a role in achieving those goals within the South Skunk River watershed upstream of and within our community.

Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council adopt Alternative No. 1, as described above.

