

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



# Rathbun Lake

## WHY IS THIS WATERSHED SPECIAL?

Rathbun Lake, located on the Chariton River in south central Iowa, is the primary source of water for the region. The 11,000-acre lake supplies six million gallons of drinking water daily to more than 70,000 people and also offers valuable recreational opportunities; close to one million people visit the lake annually. Other important uses of the lake include: flood control protection, fish and wildlife habitat, storage for supplementing navigational flows, and water supply for Iowa's Department of Natural Resources' Rathbun Fish Hatchery. Agricultural production is the most important economic use of land in the Rathbun Lake watershed.

## ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

The Targeted Watersheds Grant will focus on the following environmental problems:

- Pollutants from farming operations – primarily sediment and nutrients (phosphorus) – contribute to algal blooms, habitat losses, and murky water.
- Other pollutants, including pesticides and the herbicide atrazine, impact drinking water.
- Severely eroding stream banks and failing septic systems also contribute to water quality problems.

## RESTORATION ACTIVITIES

The Rathbun Land and Water Alliance, a local partnership between soil and water conservation districts, county governments, and the Rathbun Regional Water Association, completed a comprehensive assessment of the Rathbun Lake watershed that identifies and prioritizes potential sources of water quality impairment in the lake. The Alliance will use EPA Targeted Watersheds Grant funds to:

- Use Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to target priority land for best management practices (BMPs).
- Demonstrate livestock and forage production as a profitable land use that is protective of water quality.
- Restore more than 8,000 acres of wetland and riparian habitat in the Chariton River corridor.
- Construct wastewater treatment facilities with communities in the Rathbun Lake watershed.
- Conduct a comprehensive water quality monitoring program in the watershed and lake to assess the effectiveness of BMPs.
- Recognize the efforts of farmers who have demonstrated the highest level of stewardship in taking actions to protect Rathbun Lake.
- Perform outreach activities to educate the public and farmers about efforts to protect water quality in Rathbun Lake.

"Efforts to reduce the amounts of sediment, nutrients, and other contaminants that enter Rathbun Lake, such as the Targeted Watershed Project, can have a direct and positive impact on the lake's use as a source of drinking water."

– Jeremy Buckingham  
Rathbun Regional  
Water Association



Project staff provide one-on-one assistance to help farmers plan best management practices.





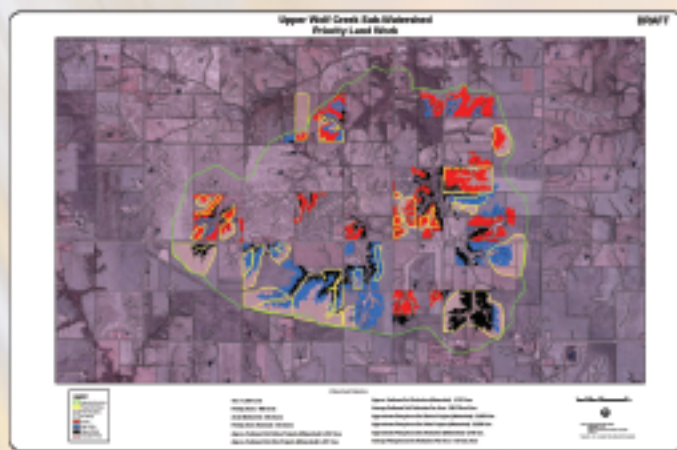
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## A STRONG PARTNERSHIP FOR CHANGE

The Rathbun Lake Targeted Watershed Project involves a unique partnership of federal and state agencies, private organizations, and local landowners. The project is the first of its kind in Iowa, combining the financial and technical resources of more than a dozen agencies through coordinated efforts at the local level. Principal project partners include:

- US Army Corps of Engineers
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship
- Iowa Department of Natural Resources
- Local Soil and Water Conservation Districts
- Iowa Farm Bureau
- Iowa State University
- Rathbun Regional Water Association



The Alliance uses GIS to target priority land, track the application of Best Management Practices, and evaluate the benefits in protecting water quality.



The Alliance conducts water quality monitoring of tributaries.  
(Photo credit: USDA-NRCS)



Local farmers tour a forage production demonstration.

## EPA'S TARGETED WATERSHEDS GRANT PROGRAM

EPA's Targeted Watersheds Grant Program is a new, competitive grant program designed to encourage collaborative, community-driven approaches to meet clean water goals.

For more information about the selected watersheds, please visit:  
<http://www.epa.gov/owow/watershed/initiative/>



EPA 840-F-04-002p

