



Real Common Sense Stormwater Practices to Protect Residents & Their Properties

Collaborating to build smart stormwater solutions that are cost-effective, proven, & deliver the best outcomes for Iowa taxpayers

The most successful implementation of stormwater management has always been at the local level. The partnership efforts between local government and developers are important to achieving the best results for Iowa residents and businesses. There are many excellent examples of great collaborative approaches taking place to get good practices across the state.

It is essential that cities & counties be able to create policies to accommodate further growth and development while protecting soils. Healthy soils can absorb rainfall and reduce runoff to help accommodate the intense rainfall events that are becoming more frequent.

Characteristics of Good Infrastructure & Policy

→ Protects Residents & Their Property

Negative effects of not doing it right include: drainageway and severe downcutting issues, backyards eroding into streams, unhealthy lawn soils that generate more runoff because they are compacted and devoid of organic matter. This makes it difficult to grow turf and trees as well.

→ Build it Right the First Time for Safety and Cost Effectiveness

Fixing it later is more expensive and shifts costs to all taxpayers. We are making promises to taxpayers to be kept for decades. Size infrastructure with current and future conditions in mind and be pragmatic with solutions to meet stormwater management needs that are cost effective. Build it to create multiple benefits including clean water for recreation, greenways, and parks. All to be enjoyed by residents.

→ Use Rigorously Tested Design Standards Based on Research Data & Engineering

The Iowa Stormwater Management Manual (ISWMM) and Iowa Statewide Urban Design Standards & Specification (SUDAS) provide guidance for engineers for standards that are rigorously tested and updated based on real life experiences. The process of updating the standards is open to all stakeholders. There currently are engineers on the committees that work on both private development and municipal projects. Both documents create consistency across that state. The alternative would be for each community to develop their own design guidance or for design engineers to rely on design guidance from outside the state that is not based on Iowa rainfall and geographic conditions. Both documents provide flexibility to accommodate local conditions.

→ Fairness-Who Pays?

Developers should pay some of the costs for stormwater similar to other infrastructure such as drinking water and sanitary wastewater. Costs should not be socialized and pushed completely on taxpayers. All stakeholders are benefitting and should therefore share costs.



Policy Recommendations for Municipal Stormwater Management in Iowa

Freedom to Manage Flood Control and Water Resources Locally

→ Topsoil:

- **Keep topsoil requirements at the local level.** Topsoil depths vary across the state of Iowa. It is needed on landscapes to sustain lawns, trees, and gardens and helps reduce the amount of stormwater runoff. Don't leave it up to developers to decide if and how much topsoil should be returned to the landscape. Some communities allow for potential downsizing of stormwater basins when healthy topsoil and certain depths are replaced on the landscape. **In a statewide survey, more than 75% of engineers acknowledged the benefits of decompacted topsoil.**

→ Post Construction Stormwater Management:

- **Don't have specific statewide stormwater design requirements for cities and counties.** Leave it up to local jurisdictions to decide what is best for their communities. **The proposed language, due to its vague nature, could result in discharges that would erode stream banks and channels and may not include any water quality and channel protection benefits. This shortsightedness could result in cities and counties spending millions of taxpayer dollars in future stream and property repairs.** Don't let developers dictate what is best for every city and county in Iowa.

- **Leave stormwater management design up to licensed engineers that use statewide design guidance. In a statewide survey, 92% of engineers use SUDAS and 69% use the ISWMM.**

Iowa has two sources of design guidelines for stormwater management practices.

- The Iowa [Statewide Urban Design Standards and Specifications](#) (SUDAS) includes design standards for public infrastructure, such as sidewalks, roadways, stormwater, sanitary, and drinking water pipes. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) developed the [Iowa Stormwater Management Manual](#) (ISWMM) which includes design standards for stormwater runoff practices.
- SUDAS and ISWMM provide design consistency across the state. Most cities in Iowa require the use of SUDAS and ISWMM to meet local design requirements. Engineers and design professionals use this guidance when designing public infrastructure and stormwater practices and new developments.
- **The design guidelines in SUDAS and ISWMM are updated periodically by technical committees. All stakeholders, including developers, engineers, city and county staff can be represented on the committees and provide input on the design guidance.** If stakeholders have specific issues with these guidelines they can contact SUDAS and IDNR to voice their concerns and provide suggestions.

→ Pass-Through:

- **Remove this language from SF455. In a statewide survey, 75% of engineers indicated that municipalities they work with don't require them to size their detention basins for upstream development runoff.** Specific details or examples of any such instances should be made to IDNR and IDALS as they own and manage updates to the ISWMM. If more information is provided, it could be reviewed and determined if any clarifications or amendments to ISWMM is required and any revised guidance could be passed onto local communities.