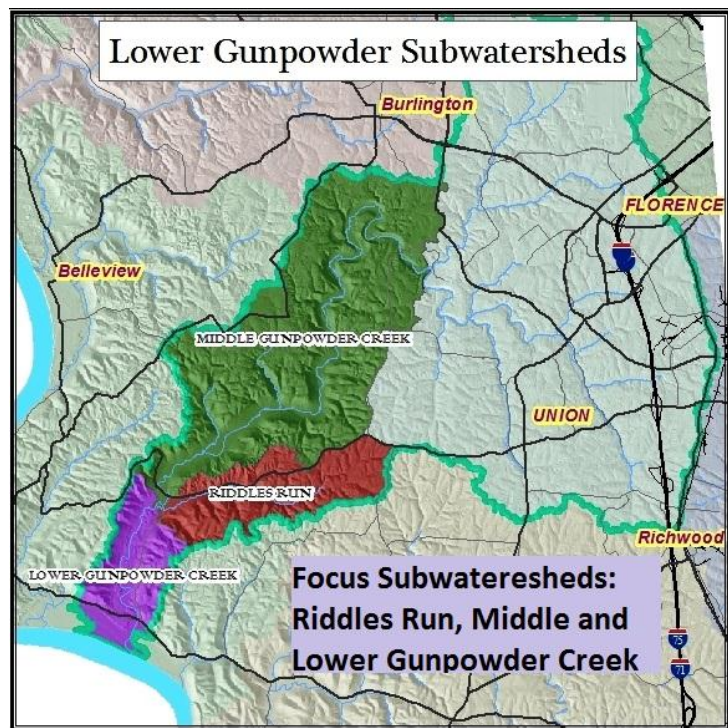


Gunpowder Creek Watershed selected as National Water Quality Initiative Pilot Project for Northern Kentucky

The Clean Water Act of 1972 proclaims that states assess and document the quality of their waterways every two years. Each waterway identified is required to be given a designation based on its main intended use (e.g. drinking water and recreation). Ultimately, this led to the development of watershed assessments and planning that are used to determine and manage the health of a stream, river, or lake based on its designated use.

The Boone County Conservation District (BCCD) and partner agencies are working to identify waterways that have been severely impacted by an excess of sediment, nutrients, and pathogens.

Gunpowder Creek has been deemed an impaired waterway by the Kentucky Division of Water, meaning it no longer meets its recreational designation. Because of this, BCCD and many other partners have helped establish the Gunpowder Creek Watershed Initiative (GCWI) over the past eight years. The stream's degradation has been linked to the rapid urban development of its headwaters as the county continues to grow at an expanding rate. Through the creation of the Gunpowder Creek Watershed Plan, excess sediment, nutrients, and pathogens have been identified from a number of point and non-point sources. Upstream, efforts to retrofit existing infrastructure are already



underway. However, the more rural, agriculturally dominated lower reaches are now the focus area for a new pilot project by the State of Kentucky, the National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI). The goal of the NWQI is to provide funding and technical assistance to individual landowners and agriculture producers. This voluntary act of the landowners and producers will reduce the amount of contaminants washing from their lands, improving Gunpowder Creek's water quality and reestablishing its recreational benefits.

Help is out there! The programs and practices available to you

The impairments in Gunpowder Creek pose a number of issues to landowners, and a myriad of problems for those downstream. Luckily, a number of programs are available to assist in assessing and mitigating these natural resource concerns:

- Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP)

EQIP provides methods that cover a diverse range of land uses and management techniques. EQIP is a voluntary program that provides financial and specialized assistance to agricultural producers to plan and implement conservation practices that improve soil, water, plant, animal, air, and related natural resources on agricultural land and nonindustrial private forestland.

- State Cost Share Program

The Kentucky Soil Erosion and Water Quality Cost Share Program and the Kentucky Soil Stewardship Program were created to help agricultural operations protect the soil and water resources of Kentucky and to implement their agriculture water quality plans. The program helps landowners address existing soil erosion, water quality, and other environmental problems associated with their farming or woodland operations, while also benefiting those downstream.

- Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) is another effort taking effect in the area that aims to restore degraded lands and waterways while promoting sustainable agricultural practices. RCPP encourages partners to join in the efforts with producers to increase the restoration and sustainable use of soil, water, wildlife, and related natural resources on regional or watershed scales. Through the program, BCCD and its partners help producers install and maintain conservation activities in selected project areas. Partners leverage RCPP funding in project areas and report on the benefits.

The importance of practices such as rotational grazing for livestock farmers, buffer strips or riparian plantings along stream corridors, or even just not mowing all the way down to the streambank in the backyard, have become clearer as our understanding of soil and water ecosystem health increases. These are just a few of the options available. Landowners and producers are encouraged to contact the Boone County Conservation District in Burlington for more information regarding options and eligibility. We are committed to working with you and our partner agencies to produce healthier and more sustainable lands and waterways.