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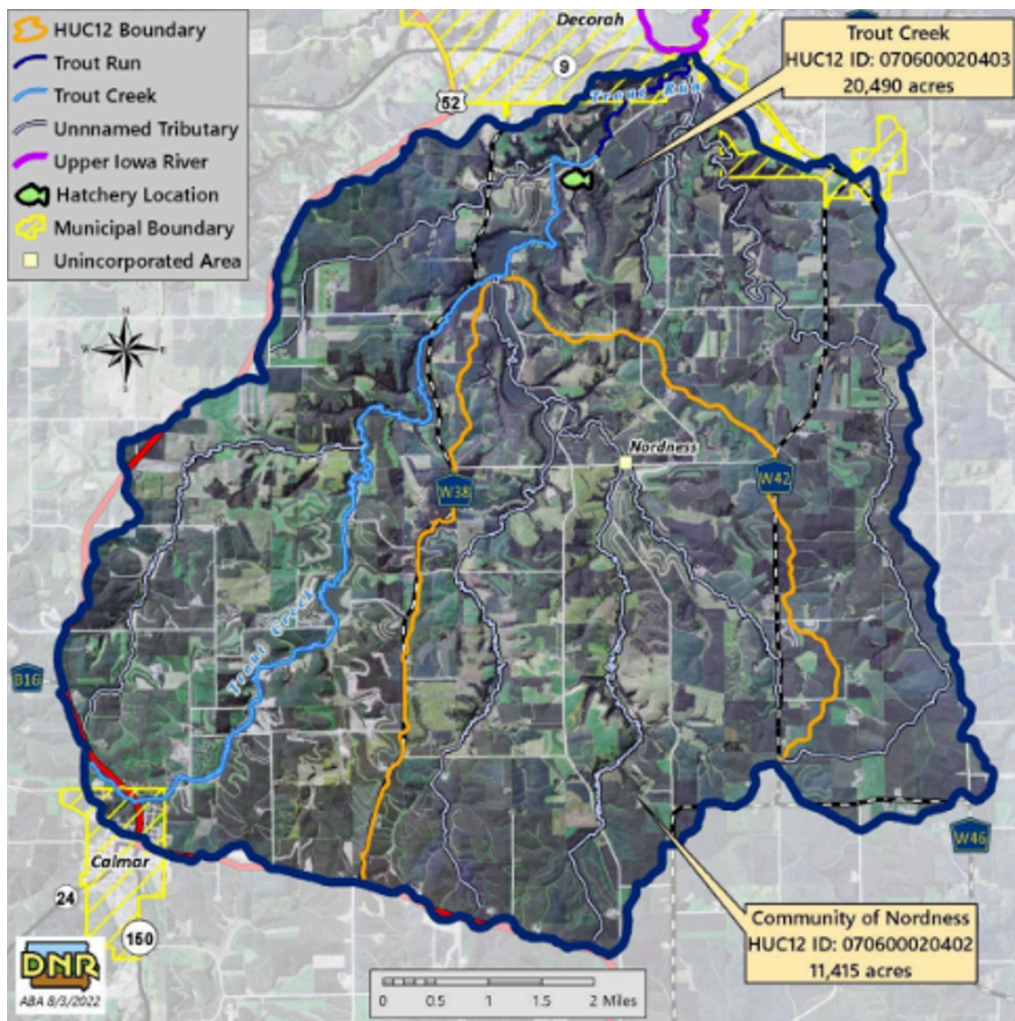
- [After years of cloudy conditions, the Trout Run project is aiming for a brighter future for an essential water source in northeast Iowa.](#)
- [Air quality permits under review](#)

After years of cloudy conditions, the Trout Run project is aiming for a brighter future for an essential water source in northeast Iowa.

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DECORAH – A new phase of watershed project work has begun in Decorah with the approval of the Trout Run Watershed Plan. The Trout Run and Siewers Spring project, funded by EPA Section 319 grants, is a collaboration between the DNR 319 Program and DNR Fisheries. The project aims to provide increased technical assistance and cost-share for soil health and water quality practices for farmers and landowners in the watershed.



A map of the Trout Run Watershed Project area

In April, The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approved the watershed plan for Trout Run and Siewers Spring, which is the source of water for the Iowa DNR's Chuck Gipp Decorah Fish Hatchery. The main objective of the plan is to reduce the amount of sediment in the water at Siewers Spring by building soil health in the Trout Run watershed.

Trout Run had a previous watershed project in the 1990s and early 2000s, led by Ron Fairchild, former Winneshiek Soil and Water Conservation District project coordinator. The project implemented numerous water quality practices to address Trout Run's bacteria impairment. However, despite these efforts, water quality problems still persist today.



Siewers Spring is the main source of water for the Chuck Gipp Fish Hatchery in Decorah

The sediment flowing into the spring creates cloudy water conditions at the fish hatchery. This prevents the trout being raised at the hatchery from seeing their feed after larger rainfall events in the watershed. Over the past 16 years, there have been an average of 42 days per year when the trout could not be fed at the hatchery due to cloudy water.

The Decorah Fish Hatchery raises over 150,000 trout annually, which are then used to stock public trout streams throughout Iowa, including Trout Run, one of the most popular trout streams. This particular stream receives almost 26,000 angler visits each year, with anglers spending close to \$1.2 million annually on their fishing trips.

“Improving water quality at the Chuck Gipp Decorah Fish Hatchery through the Trout Run Watershed Project is essential for the survival, health, and growth of the trout raised here,” explains Mike Siepker, DNR Northeast Iowa Fisheries Supervisor. “These trout are stocked in many of our northeast Iowa trout streams and community fisheries throughout the state.”

Megan Giorgenti, Trout Run Watershed Coordinator, completed the Trout Run Watershed Protection Plan following several years of watershed assessments, targeted water monitoring, discussions with farmers and landowners in the watershed, and gaining local support from farmers, the community and local agencies.

The project will offer cost-share for practices that build soil health and reduce sediment delivery to Trout Run and Siewers Spring. Practices that build soil health include cover crops and no-till. Other water quality practices such as filter strips, grassed waterways, conservation cover, sediment basins, and stream bank stabilization are offered through this project.



Cover crops and no-till soil health practices being implemented in the Trout Run Watershed

The project is being administered jointly by Iowa DNR, Winneshiek Soil and Water Conservation District, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship.

Trout Run farmers and landowners interested in learning more about cost-share or technical assistance for building soil health and improving water quality in the Trout Run Watershed may refer to the watershed plan: <https://www.iowadnr.gov/Environmental-Protection/Water-Quality/Watershed-Improvement/Watershed-Planning/Management-Plans>

For more information, contact Watershed Project Coordinator Megan Giorgenti at 563-929-6979 or megan.giorgenti@dnr.iowa.gov

Trout Run farmers may also contact the Winneshiek Soil and Water Conservation District at 563-382-4352, Extension 3.



Trout Run Project DNR partners (L-R): Steve Hopkins, former DNR 319 coordinator; Megan Giorgenti, Trout Run watershed coordinator; Chuck Gipp, former DNR director; Brian Malaise, Chuck Gipp Decorah Fish Hatchery Manager. Not pictured: Mike Steuck, former Iowa DNR Fisheries supervisor