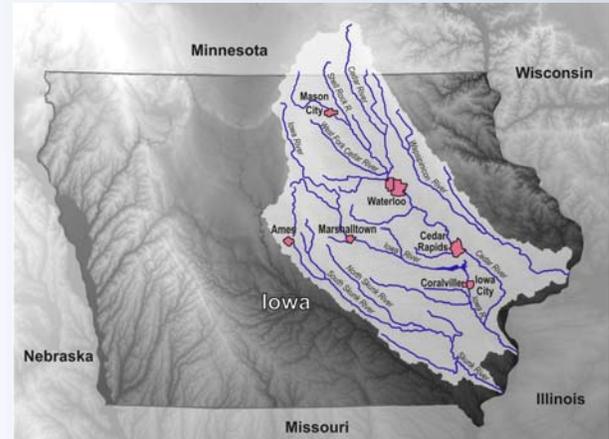


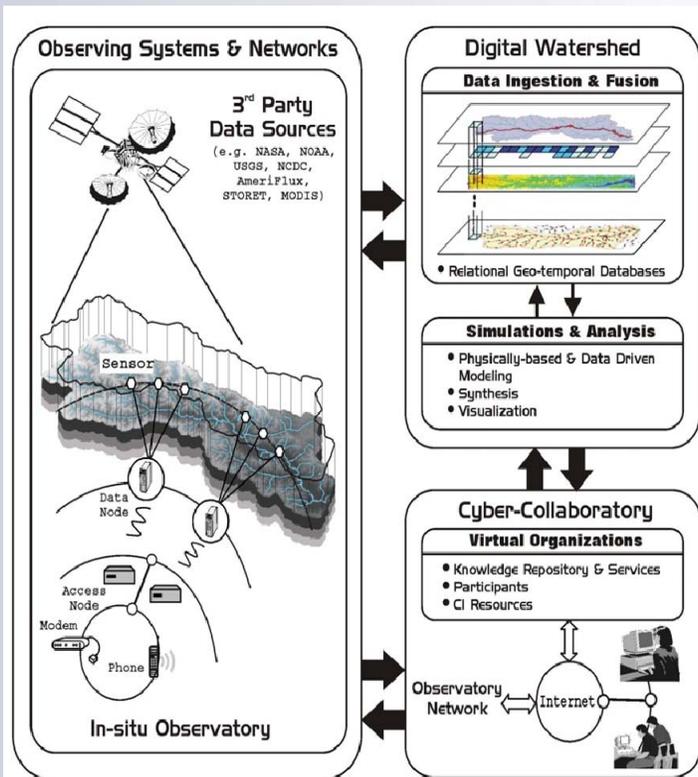
Iowa-Cedar Rivers UNESCO-HELP Basin

A new initiative in the Constellation of Worldwide HELP Network

In March 2009, the Iowa-Cedar Rivers Basin was designated as a new node in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) Hydrology for the Environment, Life and Policy (HELP) program. The Iowa HELP watershed project is now one of 64 such basins worldwide, of which five are in the U.S. HELP is a framework for water law and policy experts, water resource managers, and water scientists to work together on water-related problems in a genuine, inclusive, and equitable watershed-scale collaborative process.



The Iowa-Cedar Rivers Basin is the first UNESCO-HELP basin in Midwest, a region with ample significations for the nation's waters. In recent decades, rivers and streams in this basin have produced record floods while becoming primary contributors of nitrogen and phosphorus to the Upper Mississippi River Basin, causing hypoxia in the Gulf of Mexico. The focus of this UNESCO-HELP basin is to address the main "paradigm lock" still impeding implementation of Integrated Water Resources Management: the gap between the decision makers interested in land and water scenario analyses and the scientists interested in improving understanding of watershed processes.



The HELP initiative for the Iowa-Cedar River Basins (IACED HELP) is the embodiment of a holistic, ecosystem-based approach to natural resources conservation and sustainable planning. The enabling infrastructure and technologies used for this purpose will be assembled into a basin-wide Eco-Hydrologic Observatory (EHO). The EHO will be a catalyst for bringing together resources and expertise of various disconnected groups into a focused and coordinated framework. Using the latest data models and data assimilation technologies, EHO links hydrologic observations to climate, geology, ecology and economic information within one digital platform. The IACED HELP interagency effort will be able to answer questions about the effect of climate change and human interference on the quantity and quality of water in the watershed and their economic dimensions.

IOWA-CEDAR HELP BASIN ROLE and FUNCTIONS

- **Foster capacity building** for initiation of an organizational framework fostering interagency integrated water resources management (IWRM) in the Iowa Cedar (IACED) Rivers Basin;
- **Create an actionable partnership** for solving problems at the basin level;
- **Test/evaluate scientifically-sound “enabling technologies”** for IWRM implementation and identification of scientific gaps and research needs;
- **Test bed for user-driven research and knowledge dissemination** in support of the decision-making and policy formulation, and multi-level education and outreach for sustainable watersheds;
- **Advocate for promoting sound science and practice** developed locally by individual agencies acting in IACED (e.g. Iowa Flood Center, University of Iowa’ Sustainability Initiative, Upper Mississippi River Basin Observatory Academic Partnership); and
- **Catalyst for integration of single- or multiple-agency ongoing activities in IACED basin** [e.g., USACE- DNR- NRCS-led Interagency Watershed Study of the IACED Rivers Basin, USGS modeling efforts in IACED, USDA-ARS STEWARDS for South Fork Iowa River, CUAHSI’s Hydrologic Information System for IACED, Iowa Daily Erosion Project, USGS’s Water For America Initiative].

ACTIVITIES of the IOWA-CEDAR HELP BASIN

The newly formed HELP basin organized two preliminary meetings in 2009: the kick-off meeting (April) and the Information Technology briefing (July). On September 2009, the first plenum basin activity was organized with a Capacity Building Track and a Training Workshop. The capacity building track, included discussion of strategies to initiate the interagency partnership and a common action agenda. The training workshop provided participants with hands-on experience for setting water data services using advanced data warehousing technologies. The technical track was offered by the Consortium of Advancement of Hydrologic Science Inc-Hydrologic Information System (CUAHSI-HIS) national project team funded by the National Science Foundation. 73 participants from 18 federal, state, local agencies, NGO’s, and universities attended the plenum meeting.



Discussions in the plenum meeting were aimed at refining the HELP basin project role and scope and identifying the areas of critical need for improving current activity in the basin. The proposed initial focal topic for the IACED HELP basin is **Systemic Flood Damage Reduction**. A consensus was reached on the need to develop a **Watershed Data and Information System** both for the practical scope of integrating data from all partners into one common platform, and as an initial tangible step of a genuine interagency collaboration.

Contact for further communication and information: marian-muste@uiowa.edu