



Illinois Department of Natural Resources

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 22, 2019

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IDNR Announces \$5.3 Million Grant to Watseka *Grant to be used for flood mitigation*

WATSEKA, Ill. – Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) Tuesday announced a \$5.3 million grant to the city of Watseka to aid in flood mitigation.

The project, which kicked off with a ceremony at Watseka’s municipal building, includes the planned acquisition and demolition of 65 structures located in a floodplain, along with the clearing of the properties.

“We’re pleased to be able to continue to offer this grant through the state,” said Colleen Callahan, director, IDNR. “Buyouts facilitated by IDNR have helped residents across the state affected by persistent flooding for more than 50 years. We’re looking forward to Watseka being the next success story.”

The acquisition and clearing of the properties in the floodplain will reduce the need for future federal and state disaster assistance to affected residents in Watseka. By removing the structures, the project will also reduce the need for public rescues and emergency services during flood conditions within the watershed.

“One of the most beneficial aspects of this program, which is often overlooked, is the receiving city’s ability to take properties which often flood and return them to open space, creating public areas for all residents to enjoy,” said Ron Davis, Office of Water Resources, IDNR. “These voluntary buyouts really end up benefitting everyone, from the property owners who are able to start over after repeated flooding to the community as a whole.”

The grant includes funds to buy properties from interested owners, cover appraisal and closing costs, and demolition of properties. A reimbursement grant, the city of Watseka will cover the cost of buying properties up front, then submit information to IDNR for reimbursement.

“It truly was a team effort, pulling this project together,” said Watseka Mayor John Allhands. “Of course, we’re thankful for IDNR’s role, but we also need to thank our local project managers, First Trust and Savings Bank here in Watseka for helping us securing financing up front, and our local elected

officials, including alderman and state and federal representatives, for their support in getting this project off the ground.”

The city, which plans to purchase properties in phases, says the project could take several years to complete.

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