

# Wetland Mitigation Banks: Opportunity for Maximizing A Farm's Potential

Published on Oct 29, 2019 by Mollie Aronowitz, AFM



One of the ways Peoples Company stands out as an industry leader is our vast network of connections. Our agents, appraisers and land managers make it a priority to know professionals and working groups affiliated with nearly every aspect of the agriculture industry.

On the land management side, partnerships with environmental groups are an invaluable source of information and have shaped how we manage farms in a socially responsible manner with sustainability, conservation, and water quality issues being actively addressed. We do this by maximizing the most productive acres of each farm and then taking steps to protect the most sensitive acres of each farm.

With variability across the landscape, it takes a large toolbox of resources to maximize the potential on each farm. One tool not often used, and perhaps not as well known, is the use of wetland mitigation banking.

Wetlands play an important role on the working landscape, with ecological, societal and economic benefits:

- Habitat for migratory and resident birds, reptiles and amphibians, fish, insects, and plants.
- Provide holding capacity for floodwaters and trapping sediment/filtering pollutants for clean water.
- Provide recreation activities such as boating, fishing, hunting, birdwatching, and canoeing.

When a landowner drains, dredges, or fills a wetland on agriculture land, the functionality of those acres must be replaced either on the same site or by purchasing wetland credits. A wetland mitigation banking program provides a marketplace to purchase those credits with various options for mitigation.

When a wetland mitigation bank is created, the landowner keeps ownership/use of the acres while a conservation easement is placed on those acres for perpetual protection. It is the responsibility of the wetland mitigation bank to provide funds to restore the wetlands and also to provide long-term maintenance. The size and scope of the wetland restoration activities determine the quantity of credits available for sale. The price of these credits is negotiated between the buyer and seller.

To facilitate this process in Iowa, Iowa Agricultural Mitigation (IAM) was formed in 2010 as a 501(c)5 non-profit using a combination of state and federal grant dollars. IAM is governed by a board of directors with a variety of experience in the field of conservation.

In 2016, IAM was one of nine states awarded with grant dollars by Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) to continue the agriculture wetland mitigation program. The competitive grant process, a product of the 2014 Farm Bill, was nationally promoted and modeled after the initial Iowa program. IAM already had two successful wetland mitigation banks under their belt and the grant is used to continue and expand that success.

IAM provides agricultural wetland mitigation opportunities to landowners to ensure Wetland Conservation (Swampbuster) Compliance. If a producer is interested in converting farmed wetland to non-wetland uses, then mitigation credits may be purchased from IAM as an alternative to replacing wetland areas on the producers' property. A Certified Wetland Determination from NRCS is the first step in this process.

IAM has restored six wetlands and sold over 237 credits to date. If you are interested in learning more about IAM visit [www.iowamitigation.com](http://www.iowamitigation.com) or call IAM Executive Director Kim Perlstein at (515)298-4974.