

# THE TRUE COST OF

# FLOODING

## \$1.1 billion

estimated total damages in 2024 from floods affecting Iowa.



The cost of rebuilding and repairs to homes and businesses plus the cost of buyouts makes flood recovery pricey.

Extreme weather events increasingly threaten Iowa's farms, communities, economy, and public health. In 2024 alone, Iowans faced over \$1 billion in damages from flooding, including catastrophic disaster declarations in northwest Iowa. Investing in natural infrastructure will protect Iowa lives and property, boost economic stability and development opportunities, and increase our ability to weather and recover from natural disasters.

## CONSIDERING THE NATURAL INFRASTRUCTURE APPROACH

- **\$6.8 - \$15.9 billion**  
Long-term value of flood mitigation from wetlands in Iowa
- **\$477 million**  
Annual value of flood mitigation from wetlands in Iowa
- **\$745 per acre**  
Value of avoided flood damage from an acre of wetland

### RESOURCES:

<https://www.iowafarmbureau.com/Article/Flood-damage-in-Iowa-could-top-2-billion>  
<https://apnews.com/article/cc5a796b2eab4784900e853f1ba8d854>  
[https://www.iowaeda.com/UserDocs/2019\\_cdbg-dr\\_action\\_plan\\_-\\_may\\_2024.pdf](https://www.iowaeda.com/UserDocs/2019_cdbg-dr_action_plan_-_may_2024.pdf)  
<https://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/local/2024/06/24/rock-valley-ia-flooding-cleanup-damage/74189571007>  
<https://www.fema.gov/locations/iowa>  
<https://publications.iowa.gov/43997/1/Iowa-Statewide-Levee-Districts-Study-Accessible.pdf>

## FLOOD MITIGATION

Traditional flood control and prevention structures include levees, floodwalls, and floodgates. But these structures are expensive. The upkeep and repair costs are incurred with every flood event.

## PROVIDING RELIEF TO OVERBURDENED LEVEES

Levees can fail to provide protection in major flood events. In 2024, water crested over the levees on the Rock River by 3-5 feet, flooding the town of Rock Valley, and also overtopped the levees on the Big Sioux River, flooding part of Sioux City.

Iowa's system of levees is being pushed to the brink physically and financially. A 2022 study by Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management found 48% of inspected levees were operationally deficient. Fewer than half of levee districts in the study were financially solvent. Low-maintenance management of water all through a watershed can relieve some of the pressure on these levees to protect life and property.

## ● 70 counties

Subject to disaster declarations related to flooding since 2019.

## ● 40 counties

Subject to more than one disaster declaration related to flooding since 2019.

Natural infrastructure approaches toward flood mitigation, such as watersheds, rivers, and floodplains can help reduce the severity of floods. These structures can help reduce flood risk while being less costly and more environmentally sound.