

A Decade of Implementation: Lower Eel River Watershed (2016 – 2026)

The Lower Eel River Watershed (LERW) project officially concluded in January 2026, marking ten years of successful 319 cost-share implementation in Clay and surrounding counties. In 2025, due to high demand, additional funding was awarded by IDEM, **100% of which was successfully utilized**, amounting to **\$772,064.79 in total cost-share funding** dispersed since 2016! All told, **LERW 319 grant funding has amounted to \$1,211,229.53 since 2016**, with an **in-kind/match contribution** from non-federal partners and stakeholders of **\$912,282.33!**

Since 2016, a wide variety of conservation practices have been implemented throughout the watershed (see totals below). These best management practices have significantly improved water quality by reducing pollutant loads, even resulting in a recent IDEM ‘Success Story’ following the **delisting of impairments in Lafferty Ditch**. Many thanks for the support from dedicated LERW stakeholders and partners over the years, without which none of this would be possible.

While **LERW cost-share funding has concluded for now**, the commitment to water quality remains a priority. Over the next few years, IDEM will conduct performance monitoring of local streams to determine if other segments might be delisting following a decade of intensive implementation efforts. Following performance monitoring, the LERW Steering Committee can regroup to apply for a new 319 grant, where funds may be obtained to collect new baseline water quality and revisit the Lower Eel River Watershed Management Plan, which was originally created in 2008 and needs to be updated to align with modern standards and new technology.

Individuals interested in conservation practices or technical assistance should **contact the Clay County SWCD**. The SWCD can assist in providing information about other available funding programs and resources in the region.

➤ ***LERW Summary of Completed 319 Projects since 2016:***

- *Cover Crops (including seeders) = 18,974.97 acres*
- *Nutrient Management (Precision Ag. upgrades) = 25,239.69 acres*
- *Residue & Tillage Management (Conservation tillage equipment upgrades) = 5,638.61 acres*
- *Grassed Waterways = over 5,034 ft*
- *WASCOBs (Water & Sediment Control Basins) = 34 structures (over 3,000 ft gully erosion repaired)*
- *Field Border/Pollinator Habitat = 1.5 acres*
- *Grade Stabilization Structure = 2 structures (over 430 ft²)*
- *Prescribed Grazing Practices = 473.84 acres affected*
 - *HUAP = 1,728 ft*
 - *Pasture Seeding = 281.04 acres*
 - *Pipeline = 9,137 ft*
 - *Spring Developments = 1 collection system + 3 concrete tanks*
 - *Forage & Biomass = 6 acres*
 - *Hydrants = 11 installed*
 - *1 pasture seeding tool attachment*
 - *Livestock Corridor = 780 ft*
 - *Interior/Exterior Fence (associated with grazing management/exclusion) = 4,215 ft*

➤ ***LERW Summary of Pollutant Load Reductions since 2016:***

- *Nitrogen: 282,323.04 lbs/year*
- *Phosphorus: 48,215.4 lbs/year*
- *Sediment: 37,055.6 tons/year*

2025 Highlights/Activity:

- Lafferty Ditch IDEM Success Story and delisting
- Submitted LERW 319 application for Implementation IV funding (with 13 letters of support)
 - Extra funding and 1 year timeline extension awarded in lieu of full 3-year grant
- Hosted Hoosier Riverwatch training at the Clay Co. Fairgrounds
- Met with producers and engineering staff on-site for project review, planning, and technical assistance
- ‘Friend of the Watershed’ awards to Jim Luzar, Purdue Extension Educator and BE-N-Ag Farms
- Indiana Master Naturalist presentation in partnership with Purdue Extension
- Monthly project summary/updates to Clay Co. SWCD Board
- Provide 319 overview and update to Clay Co. Commissioners & County Council members
- Administrative management of necessary 319 grant documentation, budget, payments, reports
- Offer 319 consulting, training, and support to partners in neighboring counties/project areas
- Assist with Clay SWCD field days/workshops/events
- Regular updates: Twitter “X” @WCIWA, website www.watershed-alliance.org

