



News release

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AG CLEAN WATER ALLIANCE, DES MOINES WATER WORKS SHARE SAME GOAL, BUT DIFFER ON APPROACH TO WATER RESOURCE PROTECTION

Despite a shared desire to protect the quality of Iowa's water resources, representatives from Agriculture's Clean Water Alliance (ACWA) and the Des Moines Water Works (DMWW) differ on the path forward to achieve the most effective results.

The ACWA board of directors, meeting yesterday in Ames, invited DMWW General Manager Bill Stowe to share his perspective. Stowe, who earlier this spring publicly criticized farmers and the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy, repeated his call for a regulatory scheme to impact water quality.

ACWA members disagreed, emphasizing support for greater adoption and implementation of proven, farm-based efforts including those developed by the alliance. These practices, including the planting of cover crops, installation of bioreactors and utilization of conservation tillage, will be more fully adopted as part of the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy.

"A regulatory scheme won't bring us the results that we want and need," said ACWA President Harry Ahrenholtz. "Our members are in the business that drives efficient food production and Iowa's economy. Our members are also committed to achieving water quality that meets everyone's needs."

Ahrenholtz added that dramatic weather shifts – including a recent six-month transition from unprecedented drought to record-setting rainfall – combined with the organic richness of Iowa's soil complicate progress. However, they should not be used to impose new standards, particularly at a time when Iowa's Nutrient Reduction Strategy is ready for implementation.

Iowa Ag Secretary Bill Northey said he has confidence in Iowa's farmers, the conservation work that is being done and the new endeavors that will be put in action through the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy.

"Disagreements on the best path forward lie more in policy than in practices and the pace these practices can be implemented," said Northey. "I believe the voluntary approach is the best and most-effective way to improve Iowa's water quality."

"However, we can't stop at policy differences. It's time to demonstrate action."

The Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy is the first-of-its-kind framework for reducing nutrient loads discharged from the state's largest wastewater treatment facilities in combination with targeted practices to reduce loads from non-point sources, including agriculture. The plan establishes a goal of at least a 45-percent reduction each in total riverine nitrogen and phosphorous loadings.

The ACWA consists of 12 ag retailers and three associate members operating in the Des Moines and Raccoon River basins. Since 1999, ACWA members have invested more than \$1 million in funding for water quality monitoring in the Raccoon River and, since 2008, in the Des Moines River and their largest tributaries.

ACWA funded the first successful real-time, in-stream nitrate analyzer in Iowa in the Raccoon River near Van Meter. More than 10,000 water samples have been collected by nearly 200 certified and automated samplers during ACWA's history. This monitoring data has led to the development of targeted projects and numerous partnerships with local Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Natural Resources Conservation Service and The Nature Conservancy. Farmers are implementing on-farm water quality improvement practices including bioreactors, wetlands, buffer strips, cover crops, conservation tillage and nutrient management.