



News release

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ILL-TIMED CRITICISM OF VOLUNTARY FARMER-LED CONSERVATION PRACTICES, NUTRIENT REDUCTION STRATEGY COUNTERPRODUCTIVE

Activation of the Des Moines Water Works' nitrate removal facility May 10 following six years of dormancy occurred due to unusually dry conditions going back to 2011, an unprecedented drought in 2012 and record precipitation this April (the most for that month in more than 140 years of record keeping).

Criticism of the inadequacies of voluntary, farmer-led soil and water conservation practices and the performance of a state nutrient reduction strategy not yet funded or implemented that accompanied its activation were ill-timed. Absent of appropriate context and dialogue, they have the potential to be divisive at a time when working collaboratively on such complex and important issues has never been more important.

The Iowa Soybean Association (ISA), in partnership with Agriculture's Clean Water Alliance (ACWA) and the Iowa Corn Growers Association (ICGA), believe there's a better approach: one nurtured through open dialogue and strong partnerships.

Today, the ISA, ACWA and ICGA formally invited Des Moines Water Works General Manager Bill Stowe to participate in an open dialogue with farmers and ag stakeholders on water quality issues at the June 27 ACWA board meeting to be held in Ames. Stowe has accepted the invitation to attend.

“We are pleased that Bill has accepted this invitation and we look forward to welcoming him at our meeting,” says Harry Ahrenholtz, ACWA president. “It illustrates genuine interest in discussing this important issue with our partners, members and farmers.”

An invitation was also extended to the *Des Moines Register* editorial board to participate in a comprehensive discussion about water quality and watershed management issues.

Roger Wolf, ISA director of environmental programs and services and ACWA executive director, says public statements singling out farmers for not doing their part to positively impact water quality illustrates a lack of engagement and understanding. Also, arbitrarily dismissing the intent of the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy – a strategy that is not yet implemented – is ill-timed.

“To say the strategy lacks goals or measurable outcomes is false,” he says. “It advances a science and technology based framework to direct efforts to reduce nutrients in surface water from both point and nonpoint sources in a scientific, reasonable and cost effective manner. The strategy establishes a goal of at least a 45 percent reduction in total riverine nitrogen and phosphorous loading leaving the state.”

With specific respect to non-point sources, including agricultural land uses, combinations of technologies applied on farms and landscapes across Iowa will need to achieve a 41 percent load reduction in Nitrogen and 29 percent reduction in Phosphorous to meet the aspiring 45 percent reduction goal.

Farmers and water providers, Wolf says, have been proactive in addressing and protecting Iowa’s water quality by employing conservation methods that work in their fields and implementing more advanced purification systems. And while no system is perfect, farmers and stakeholders haven’t stopped striving for it.

“Everyone involved in the system – rural and urban – have benefited from longstanding relationships,” Wolf says. “We should resolve to continue the progress in improving environmental

performance to the benefit of all Iowans. In lieu of the recent activities and statements critical of agriculture's commitment to water quality, it's vital that we work in collaboration to seek and develop holistic solutions benefiting both urban and rural residents."

***The ACWA** is an association consisting 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. More than 10,000 water samples have been collected by more than 200 certified and automated samplers. ACWA also funded the first successful real-time nitrate analyzer in Iowa in the Raccoon River.*

***The Iowa Soybean Association** develops policies and programs that help farmers expand profit opportunities while promoting environmentally sensitive production using the soybean checkoff and other resources. The Association is made up of 10,000 farmer members and is governed by an elected volunteer board of 21 farmers.*

***Iowa Corn Growers Association** brings growers together to proactively manage issues that advance the Iowa corn industry. The ICGA's lobbying and legislative efforts are financed through membership dollars. They target everyday issues that directly affect the corn growers livelihood. The association and its elected board of directors from each crop reporting district, represent nearly 7,000 members and work to build relationships with business and industry. Through all these efforts, the ICGA is advancing the Iowa corn industry by providing corn growers with a voice in Iowa, Washington, D.C., and around the world.*

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