



1255 SW Prairie Trail Pkwy
Ankeny, IA 50023
515-727-0648
www.acwa-rrwa.org

Agriculture retail group supports clean water for Iowa

By Carol Brown, ACWA communications specialist

Agriculture's Clean Water Alliance (ACWA) reaffirmed its commitment to improving water quality with the approval of the organization's 2018 work plan during the March board of directors meeting.

ACWA is comprised of 11 agricultural retailers and five associate members doing business in the Des Moines River and Raccoon River watersheds. After 19 years, the group continues to improve water quality for watershed residents and for rural and urban citizens downstream.

"We are expanding the geography and ACWA development methods to increase the impact of important human resources," said ACWA Chair Harry Ahrenholtz. "We are collaborating to localize knowledge, implementation of conservation farming practices, available technical resources and people."

The work plan emphasizes collaboration between ACWA members, agronomists, watershed coordinators and farmers to scale up the adoption of conservation practices. The agricultural retailers are enriching these conversations with farmers to include how to add conservation practices such as reduced tillage, cover crops, precision nitrogen application, bioreactors, saturated buffers and wetlands.

"ACWA's work plan brings a new emphasis to the importance of the producer's trusted adviser to their operations," said Dan Dix, ACWA president and general manager of NEW coop, Fort Dodge. "We can leverage those relationships to grow conversations around conservation, water quality and the increased use of all of the tools available to the farmer."

"ACWA will continue to grow the downstream urban relationships that have become so valuable," Dix continued. "We hope to see new partnerships form that lead to joint watershed projects as a result. Only together can both rural and urban communities reach the desired goal of improved water quality."

Water monitoring program continues

ACWA will continue to support water monitoring of farmer-owned tile outlets within the Raccoon and Des Moines river basins and tributaries. This program consists of 150 tile sites sampled eight times a year. ACWA also supports five other sub-watershed monitoring programs as well as tributary monitoring, which has been in place since 1999.

Three edge-of-field sites — a bioreactor and two saturated buffers — will continue to be evaluated for nutrient removal from tile water. The bioreactor is in Greene County and the oldest one in Iowa. It was reconditioned last fall, after nine years of denitrification work. New woodchips replaced the old to perform for another decade or more.

"These ACWA projects bring localized information to our members to continue moving toward better solutions in water quality. This is an ongoing effort for continuous improvement each year," said Gregg Schmitz, ACWA vice president and Crop Production Services representative. "Going into the spring, we will see numerous corn and soybean fields serving as nutrient collectors to help improve water quality for Iowa."

Officers re-elected

At the March board meeting, the ACWA slate of officers was re-elected for 2018: President Dan Dix, NEW Cooperative; Vice President Gregg Schmitz, Crop Production Services; Secretary/Treasurer Brent Low, Ag Partners. Chairman of ACWA is Harry Ahrenholtz and Roger Wolf is the executive director.

For more information about the ACWA, visit www.acwa-rrws.org.

The ACWA is an association consisting of ag retailers, associate members and other partners in the Des Moines River and Raccoon River basins. ACWA focuses on creating a better understanding of how water, weather, landscape and farm management interrelate. Its work on direct, targeted watershed projects create a baseline for current conditions and enable measured evaluation of new practices or implementation changes. Since 1999, ACWA has invested more than \$1.5 million for water quality monitoring in the Raccoon and Des Moines rivers and their largest tributaries.