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Ag suppliers reaffirm Fall Nitrogen Code of Practice

October 9, 2009 (Ankeny, IA) — The organization of farm retailers in the Raccoon and Des Moines River watersheds called *Agriculture's Clean Water Alliance* (ACWA) today renewed their Fall Nitrogen Code of Practice with one change from last year.

The ACWA Fall Nitrogen Code of Practice is a formal agreement among the retailers that they will not distribute anhydrous ammonia for fall application until soil temperatures reach 50 degrees F at a depth of four inches (or 60 degrees F after Oct. 15 with use of a nitrification inhibitor) with a forecast of cooling soil temperatures.

The only change made from previous years is the specification to wait until after Oct. 15. By making the stipulation, the members agreed to keep the temperatures by which they operate consistent with what manufacturers recommend, while at the same time decreasing the odds of a soil temperature increase that might happen with earlier application.

On Oct. 8, 2009, soil temperatures across the state ranged from the high 40s to the mid-50s. County-by-county soil temperature maps are available from Iowa State University at <http://extension.agron.iastate.edu/NPKnowledge/>.

The commitment of ACWA to the Fall Nitrogen Code of Practice has received good reviews from the public, regulators, farmers and dealers alike. ACWA members have held to their commitment in the past, even in the face of unfavorable market conditions, projected equipment shortages in spring, and many other unknowns shared by dealers and their farming customers. The Agribusiness Association of Iowa (AAI) also adopted the Code of Practice, and ag retailers throughout the state are being encouraged to follow it.

Dave Coppess from Heartland Co-op is president of ACWA. Coppess says that the Code of Practice is one way the industry is working hard to be environmentally proactive. "To be a viable enterprise in the long-term, we are going to have to demonstrate that we operate to the highest environmental performance standards possible. With ACWA, we're on our way to reaching that goal."

ACWA invests in and supports water quality monitoring and nutrient management on farms. In the past year ACWA and Sand County Foundation supported installation of 5 tile line bioreactors. The

purpose of the bioreactor demonstration is to assess bioreactors' effectiveness as a means of reducing nitrates from tile systems.

Coppess says that ACWA and its partners — organizations like the Des Moines Water Works (DMWW) and the National Laboratory for Agriculture and the Environment (NLAE) are making significant findings in their monitoring program. "We're seeing that, the more we study water quality issues in Iowa, the more we understand that water quality is the result of a very complex system. Examining fall fertilization guidelines is just part of an ongoing evolution in agronomy practices in Iowa. And the more we learn, the more we find that good agronomic performance can be linked to good environmental practices."

ACWA membership consists of leading ag retailers in the Raccoon River and Des Moines River watersheds. The group's mission is to establish reasonable and practice guidelines for fall nitrogen fertilization so to reduce nitrate loss from farm fields entering the Des Moines and Raccoon River and connecting tributaries.

Iowa State University observations show soil temperatures below 50 F on varying dates during the past few years:

- 2008 — Nov. 7
- 2007 — Nov. 1
- 2006 — Nov. 29
- 2005 — Nov. 14
- 2004 — Nov. 21
- 2003 — Oct. 28 (with periods of warming until Nov. 21)
- 2002 — Oct. 22
- 2001 — Nov. 21
- 2000 — Nov. 3

To contact an ACWA member locally, call:

Albert City — Ag Partners, LLC — Troy Upah | 712-843-2291
Cherokee — First Coop Association — Jim Carlson | 712-225-5400
Dedham — Dedham Cooperative Association — Roger Shaw | 712-683-5515
Farnhamville — Farmers Cooperative — Roger Koppen | 515-817-2100
Fort Dodge — New Coop, Inc. — Brent Bunte | 515-955-2040
Gilmore City — Pro Coop — Jim Day | 515-373-6532
Ralston — West Central — Harry Ahrenholtz | 712-667-3200
Webster City — Van Diest Supply — John Van Diest | 800-779-2424
West Des Moines — Heartland Co-op — Dave Coppess | 515-225-1334
Goldfield — Gold-Eagle Cooperative — Stu Pannkuk | 515-825-3732
Wall Lake — UAP — Duane Petersen | 712-664-2444
West Des Moines — Helena Chemical Company — John McKinney | 515-309-3461
Roland — Heart of Iowa Coop — Jim Penney | 515-388-4341