

# 25 Years of Progress

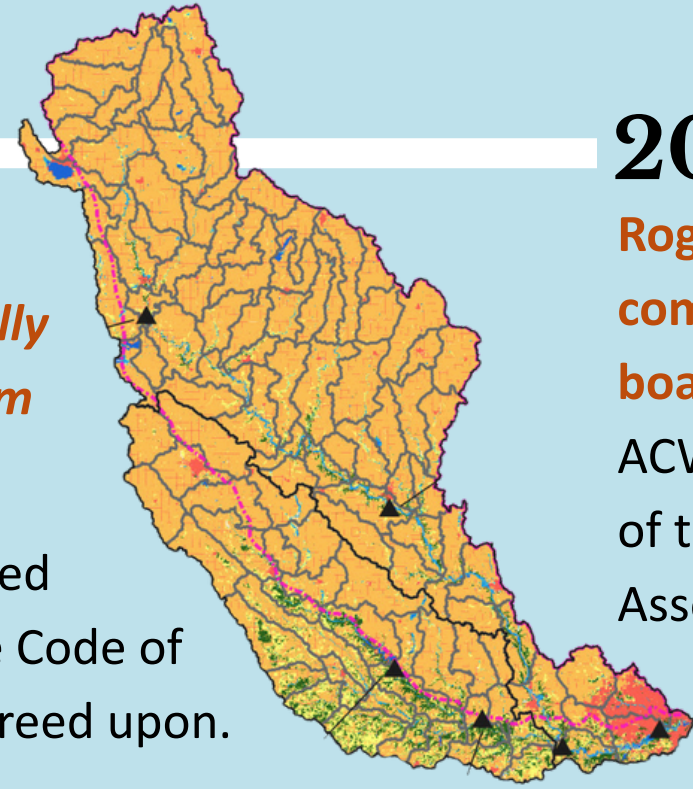
Formed shortly after the Mississippi River Watershed Nutrient Task Force, ACWA has seen the development of the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy, three Iowa ag secretaries, five U.S. presidents, and four Farm Bills. While politics, policies, and people changed over time, ACWA held steady with its steadfast advancement of water quality monitoring and projects. ACWA's accomplishments have been possible through the help of dozens of private and public partners. A special thank you goes to state and federal agencies including the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Iowa DNR, and USDA.

## 1999

ACWA is established.

**Original mission: To reduce the nutrient loss – specifically nitrate – from farm fields and to keep the nutrients from entering the Raccoon River and its tributaries.**

Volunteer water sampling in the Raccoon River Watershed begins in partnership with Des Moines Waterworks. The Code of Practice limiting fall nitrogen application is created & agreed upon.



## 2000

**Roger Wolf comes on board** and brings ACWA into the folds of the Iowa Soybean Association.



## 2002

Water monitoring data is put to use in **ACWA's first watershed plan**. It's in West Buttrick Creek in Greene & Webster Counties. In the 9 years following, 2/3 of producers in the watershed complete nutrient plans.



## 2008

**ACWA also takes on its first major implementation project: the largest tile line bioreactor in the US.**

ACWA and Sand County Foundation pay for the installation at Mike Bravard's farm in Greene County. This eventually leads to NRCS adopting an interim standard for bioreactors, making them eligible for cost share.



## 2008

**ACWA doubles its scope by expanding water monitoring** and membership to the Des Moines River Watershed and starts thinking about statewide impact.

## 2007

ACWA investment tops \$600,000 in just 8 years for water monitoring.



## 2006

Anthony Seeman joins ACWA to lead water monitoring. **ACWA installs the first real-time remote monitor** in the Raccoon River, near Van Meter, which would inspire other communities to install.

## 2005

Purchase and installation of four automated water monitoring samplers in the Raccoon River, which makes it the most heavily monitored watershed in Iowa.

## 2009

**ACWA reaches a milestone of 5,000 samples collected in the Raccoon River Watershed.**

ACWA works with more than 130 Iowa organizations to pass the Iowa Water and Land Legacy Coalition (IWILL). Nearly 2/3 of Iowans voted yes for the amendment, which was aimed to protect soil, restore wetlands, and protect against flood damage. As of 2025, it has not been implemented.



## 2010

**ACWA water monitoring data proves instrumental in securing \$14 million** for the Boone and Raccoon River Watersheds from the Mississippi River Basin Initiative Project (MRBI), an NRCS-led effort to improve the Dead Zone in the Gulf.



## 2011

Greater Des Moines Environmental Impact Award given to ACWA.



## 2013

**The Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy is released.**

## 2012

**A big year for science:** McKnight Foundation awards \$80,000 grant to help build scientific research in Lyons sub-watershed of the Boone. **Anthony Seeman publishes & presents research showing even modest nitrate reductions in tile can have profound impact.**



## 2011

ACWA wraps up the Brushy Creek Watershed project in Carroll County. Brushy Creek was known to have high nitrates, multiple fishkills, and high bacteria levels. After the \$1.5 million project was completed, the stream was safe for recreation and E. Coli was reduced by 50%.



## 2014

Harry Ahrenholtz and Roger Wolf find a national stage at the One Water Summit in Kansas City. The annual meeting of water quality professionals promotes the "One Water" ethos: we are all connected by the same water and have accountability to protect it. Having Iowa agriculture at the table is a milestone for national recognition.



## 2015

ACWA receives a 3-year grant for the Elk Run Watershed through the state's Water Quality Initiative (WQI). **With 16 partners, \$713,000 is invested for water quality in Sac, Calhoun, and Carroll Counties.** A watershed coordinator is hired to support farmers in implementing bioreactors, saturated buffers, cover crops, N Inhibitors, and drainage water management.



## 2020

**ACWA is awarded its first Regional Conservation Partnership Program project and it's worth nearly \$26 million.** RCCP is a USDA program that pools public and private resources to help with conservation cost share, assistance, & outreach. ACWA's RCCP focuses on adoption in the North Raccoon.



## 2018

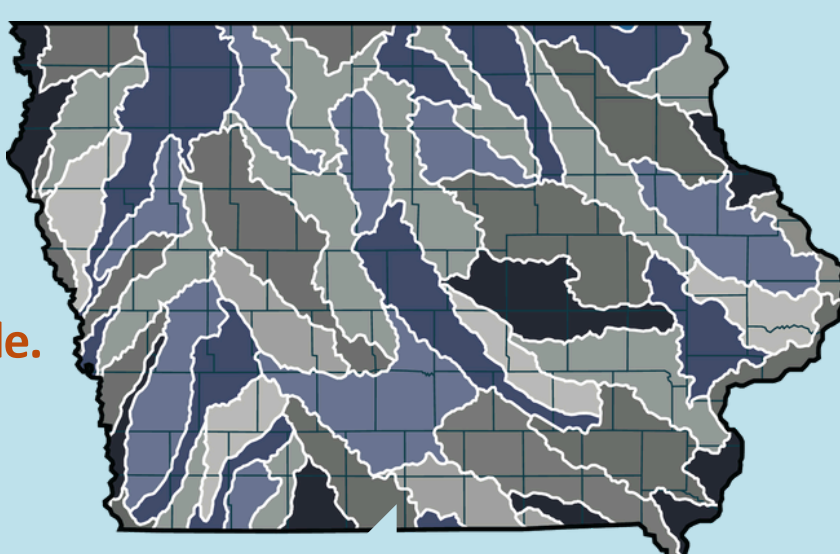
**The North Raccoon Farm to River Partnership (a WQI project) begins** with goals to implement 30 total bioreactors and saturated buffers, 11,500 acres of cover crops, and two wetlands in Sac, Calhoun, Carroll, and Greene Counties.



ACWA receives an additional NFWF grant to support the project. With the help of Farm Journal's Trust In Food division, partners focus on multi-media campaigns on the benefits of conservation.

## 2021

**Under ACWA's new strategic plan, the mission and membership expands statewide.**



## 2021

**ACWA formalizes its new Conservation Agronomist model.** Conservation agronomists work within ag retailers to help farmer customers balance profitability and sustainability.

## 2022

ACWA expands its vision for the Conservation Agronomist Network, employing Baton Global to help evaluate the next strategic steps.



## 2023

ACWA partners with IDALS to help fund continued expansion of conservation agronomists. Today, the program continues to grow steadily with ag retailer interest.

## 2025

**ACWA celebrates the end of a quarter century and the beginning of a new and exciting chapter**, with a new logo, the retirement of Roger Wolf and the hire of Jeff Lucas as the new Executive Director. ACWA also releases a new logo.



## 2024

**ACWA holds its first national gathering of leaders called "Making Retail Conservation Real"** which brings in more than 100 people nationwide from ag retail, conservation, and commodity groups. ACWA and the SWCS produce a white paper as a result, detailing the landscape for scaling up conservation within ag retail.

