25 YEARS

OF AGRICULTURE'S CLEAN WATER ALLIANCE

THE POWER OF COLLABORATION AND SCIENCE

A LOOK BACK AT ROGER WOLF'S LEGACY AND THE BEGINNING OF ACWA'S WATER MONITORING

2024 ANNUAL REPORT



ROGER WOLF LEAVES A LEGACY

ACWA enters a new chapter as Roger Wolf retires and passes the baton to Jeff Lucas. How did dinner at a Chinese buffet lead to a 25-year legacy?

25 YEARS OF STEADFAST PROGRESS

From 1999 to 2024, we take a look back at the history of ACWA, including major milestones in water quality monitoring, state policy, multi-million dollar projects and real results.

ACWA'S FIRST BIOREACTOR IN 2008

The night before ACWA was to install the very first bioreactor in the state, they realized there were no woodchips. How a serendipitous moment at a stoplight saved the day.

WATER MONITORING RESULTS

Anthony Seeman shares results from 2024 water monitoring. Tile drainage sampling results can inform farmers in how their operations impact local water quality.

Welcome From Roger Wolf



This annual report of Agriculture's Clean Water Alliance commemorates the 25th anniversary since its founding. Since 1999, ACWA members have been working together to help farmers adopt management practices that reduce nutrients entering Iowa's water bodies, while keeping farmer profitability always in mind.

Within this report is a 25-year review of accomplishments as well as an overview of the impact ACWA has made in 2024 alone. As one of my final official duties before retirement, I encourage you to read through these pages and I hope you are as impressed as I am by the growth and the work that ACWA members have achieved over the last quarter-century. ACWA thanks past and current board members as well as the dozens of project partners and sponsors who have helped with these accomplishments. I thank you for the opportunity to serve this innovative and passionate group of agricultural retailers for 25 years.

- Roger Wolf, outgoing Executive Director



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Roger Wolf's LEGACY

The start of Agriculture's **Clean Water Alliance and** Roger Wolf's 25-year legacy was no accident, but the result of good timing and clear vision.



Like putting on glasses to see a picture more clearly, Roger Wolf has a knack for spotting a blurry opportunity and transforming it into a detailed vision. Over the past 25 years, he's developed numerous successful conservation programs, raised millions for water quality, and built lifelong relationships with dozens of partners.

The start of a legacy

Roger Wolf's first big leadership role before ACWA was overseeing the Raccoon River Watershed Project in the early 90's.

"I didn't have a clue what I was doing," he said, laughing about how he had to hire a lawyer to write his employment contract.

It wasn't a "fake it 'til you make it" situation, though. It was a case of believing in the project's potential.

It was in that role that Roger built a water monitoring program that continues today through ACWA. It would lead to some of the most robust water monitoring records in Iowa history, but it started on a messy whiteboard in 1999. Back then, it was a volunteer program.

"I had FFA chapters, I had school teachers, I had farmers," he said about their first meeting. "And at the end of the meeting, I remember we didn't have volunteers signed up. So I went to a whiteboard and wrote down sample locations. And I said, before you leave, I want you to pick a site you'll commit to collect."

This kind of strategic mindset with a fly-by-the-seat-ofyour-pants flexibility became Wolf's signature. Later, he would rescue a field day that needed woodchips by spotting a woodchipper at a stoplight. (See bioreactor story, pg 9)

In 2000, Iowa Soybean Association CEO Kirk Leeds asked Wolf to work at ISA over a meal at a Chinese buffet.

"The conversation was inspiring and ultimately led me to go to my board to convince them that Roger was exactly the kind of leader we would need if we truly wanted to have an impact on water quality in this state," Leeds said.

Among eggrolls, orange chicken, and fried rice, that conversation was the start of the next 25 years at ISA. We can guess what the fortune cookie said.

ACWA finds a leader

Meanwhile, ag retailers in the Raccoon River Watershed were forming the groundwork for ACWA. Since the late 80's, they had paid a fertilizer tax to support water quality projects, but a group of about 18 retailers wanted to do more.

Roger Koppen, then CEO for Farmers Cooperative, along with Jeff Stroburg, CEO of West Central Cooperative, were pivotal to getting ACWA off the ground.

When Stroberg approached Wolf to lead the group in the fall of 2000, Wolf was only six months into his new role at ISA. He remembers being hesitant. "I have this pretty good gig at Iowa Soybean..." he told Stroberg.

But after some thought, Wolf proposed incorporating the organization into Leeds' new venture, Amplify Association Management, a company housed within ISA that provides support for trade organizations.

With that proposal, Wolf found a way to leverage both ACWA and ISA's strengths for maximum impact long-term. That relationship continues today.

Data, commitment, action

Over the next quarter century, Wolf and ACWA pioneered progress that some might not have known was possible.

In 2001, ACWA members formalized a Code of Practice, prohibiting each other from applying fall anhydrous too early – a move that could limit profits and customer satisfaction, but greatly benefits water quality.

Members invested money in science-backed data and solutions, including purchasing the first automated water samplers in the state for the Raccoon River. In 2006, ACWA brought on Tony Seeman to manage ACWA's growing monitoring program. "It shows commitment, it shows leadership, it shows a dedication to really understanding the issue," Seeman said.

ACWA's reputation of "firsts" continued with the first denitrifying bioreactor in the state, and then the first ever conservation agronomist position in 2021 - two innovations that are now expanding nationally.

"I'm most proud of the staff, the partnerships and our track record, which speaks for itself. We're doers and implementers. We do it on behalf of farmers and for farmers. They are directly impacted in every aspect of what we've done," Wolf said.

Harry Ahrenholtz joined the ACWA board six months after

Wolf's arrival. Together they've seen the organization evolve to include more partners, add grants, and try new things.

"Roger has undying optimism. He's fearless and he's willing to take risks," Ahrenholtz, now Board Chairman, said.

Retired but not finished

Wolf — whose father and grandfather have a legacy in conservation, too - isn't finished yet. In retirement he will advise ACWA in a smaller capacity, while he chips away at personal projects in a continued pursuit of improved water quality, more habitat, and a more beautiful landscape he calls home. He may squeeze in some time for hunting, and date nights with his wife, Anne, too.

What vision is next? For Wolf, the answer falls where serendipity meets strategy... probably waiting at his next stoplight, written on a whiteboard somewhere, or sitting at a Chinese buffet.

> "As Roger departs ISA and ACWA he leaves behind a legacy of accomplishments that many of us someday hope to come close to matching." - Kirk Leeds, CEO, Iowa Soybean Association





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Top: Wolf gives an interview in 2014

Middle: EPA's Rod Snyder, Iowa Ag Secretary Mike Naig, EPA's Radhika Fox, Wolf, Dan Dix

Bottom: Wolf and wife, Anne, at a reception in his honor at ISA. Wolf's entire family and more than 100 people attended.

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.

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.

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.

2009

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

ACWA works with more than 130 lowa organizations to pass the lowa 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.



2012

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

2013



2007

ACWA

tops

investment

\$600,000 in

just 8 years

monitoring.

for water

A big year for science: McKnight Foundation awards \$80,000

2008

ACWA doubles its

water monitoring

the Des Moines

and membership to

River Watershed and

starts thinking about

statewide impact.

scope by expanding

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.

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.



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 the USDA.

2000

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



2006



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

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%.

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 guality 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.

2002

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

2005

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



2011

Greater Des Moines Environmental Impact Award given to ACWA.

2017

Bravard bioreactor is the first in the state to be "recharged," the process of replacing wood chips that act as natural filters for nitrate.



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, Calhoon, 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.

FORD

2020

ACWA is one of 16 partners to receive a Regional Conservation Partnership Program project worth \$26 million - ACWA's first. RCCP is a USDA program that pools public and private resources to help with conservation cost share, technical assistance, and outreach. ACWA's RCPP focuses on conservation adoption in the North Raccoon Watershed.

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 has a big vision

for the Conservation

Agronomist Network,

strategic steps.

employing Baton Global

to help evaluate the next

2023

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

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.

The Story of the First Bioreactor in Iowa

When the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy was launched in 2012, several practices were named to help reduce nutrient loading in Iowa water bodies. Edge-of-field practices listed in the strategy include bioreactors, saturated buffers and targeted wetlands. ACWA, and its Executive Director Roger Wolf, played a large part in getting bioreactors on this list.

In 2008, ACWA secured funding from the Sand County Foundation to install a woodchip denitrification bioreactor, which had not been done before in Iowa. Wolf entrusted ISA staff member Todd Sutphin and Iowa State University ag drainage expert Matt Helmers along with his then-graduate student Laura Christianson for its design, as well as Jerry Hatfield with the National Laboratory for Agriculture and the Environment. They employed Charlie Schafer, CEO of Agri-Drain, for the water control structures. At the time, Agri-Drain was in the process of designing control structures for targeted wetlands.

Wolf found Greene County farmer Mike Bravard, who was willing to have a bioreactor on his land. ACWA reserved wood chips from the town of Perry's recent storm damaged trees. The team had estimated that a bioreactor would hold about a semi-load of wood chips. ACWA planned a field day event for the installation and invited scientists, farmers, agency staff, and the media to showcase the new structure.

"The day before the field day, I left the site on Bravard's farm and decided to check on the wood chips on my way home," Wolf said. "I drove to the site in Perry and the wood chips were nearly gone. It's 5:00 p.m. and we won't have enough to fill the bioreactor tomorrow. Where am I going to get a semi-load of wood chips at this hour?"

After numerous unsuccessful phone calls in the search for woodchips, Wolf began the drive home – dejected. While at a stop light in Urbandale, he noticed in the distance a man clearing trees. He was using a large wood-chipper to



feed chips into a semitrailer.

"I drove into the area and got his attention over the running chainsaw and ear protection," he recalled. "I said, 'This is going to sound weird, but can I buy these woodchips? And can you deliver them to a farm in Greene County, about 80 miles away, by tomorrow morning?""



ACWA

Woodchips from Urbandale are delivered next to the load from Perry. The wood received from Perry was shredded rather than chipped, creating a different texture and color. Woodchip type efficacy was studied from this bioreactor after its 2018 recharge.



After a phone call for approval, Wolf wrote a personal check for the semi-load and crossed his fingers that he would see the trailer again. The next morning, the semi pulled into the field, backed up to the bioreactor trench and deposited the Urbandale woodchips. The field day was successful and the very first bioreactor was built.

This particular structure has been the focus for several researchers, including Helmers and Christianson, who is now a professor at the University of Minnesota and a nationally known bioreactor expert. In 2017, the bioreactor was in the spotlight again. After a decade of use, its performance was fading. ACWA held another field day to uncover the bioreactor and replace the old woodchips, recharging it for another decade or longer. ISA staff mailed numerous packages of requested woodchip samples to researchers across the country.

Since 2008, many bioreactors have been installed on
farmland across Iowa as well as the Midwest, because
ACWA and Wolf had the fortitude to take a chance and put one in use.

Water Monitoring Update

Anthony Seeman provides insight of the tile monitoring program

Water monitoring has been a foundational part of ACWA's activities since its inception. ACWA leaders had the vision to fund, support and expand a monitoring network, which has led to a rich dataset to help address lowa water quality issues. ACWA water monitoring data have proven valuable in many ways including informing the watershed improvement planning process, targeting areas for project implementation, demonstrating conservation practice performance, and informing policy discussions.

That has led to more dollars flowing into local projects benefiting farmers and water quality.

While it is informative to look at water quality in all the tributaries of a watershed, it isn't feasible to tie that water quality data to specific on-farm practices or a scattering of edge-of-field installations. To address this, ACWA began a tile water monitoring program in 2015.

When the Iowa Soybean Association opened its water lab in 2011, it enabled ACWA to move their water sample analyses in-house, providing the organization increased

capacity and flexibility. From there, the idea of looking at individual fields and drainage systems started with a few curious folks near existing stream collection sites. The conversations that were held over these drainage systems data led ACWA to fully engage and fund a coordinated program in the Raccoon and Des Moines Rivers, and then later statewide.

The drainage system sampling results can inform farmers of how their operations impact local water quality and demonstrates methods for improved efficiency. Over time, this database of water quality results, paired with specific management practices from the drained fields, will allow ag retailers to have a clearer view of the practices that minimize negative water quality impacts offsite while remaining profitable.

As the ACWA water monitoring program has grown and matured, it has been integrated with other efforts to increase the reach and value. Initially, agronomists

connected interested farmers with staff for site evaluation and sample collection. When the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) began implementing Water Quality Initiative (WQI) projects around the state, they supported the idea of tile monitoring as part of the process. ACWA was a natural partner in the North Raccoon Headwaters watershed with the local WQI coordinator enrolling participants and collecting water samples for analysis.

More recently, conservation agronomists working within ag retailers are using tile water monitoring as a connection point with customers and to inform conversations about different conservation practices available to address resource concerns. Figure 1 shows the number of monitoring sites and participants over time.

Importance of tile monitoring

Just like the stream data, few conclusions can be drawn



Figure 1. ACWA tile monitoring sites and farmer/landowner participants from 2015-2024. The tile monitoring program began in 2015 with 29 farmers and 56 sites. In 2024, ACWA collected water samples at more than 150 sites. Partnering with local projects and conservation agronomists has provided opportunities for continued expansion in geography and engagement within the existing budget.



Anthony Seeman is the Iowa Soybean Association Water Lab Service Manager and heads the water monitoring and analysis for ACWA.

for just one year or one site, but over time, scientists are gaining knowledge and patterns are emerging. General statements are elusive regarding the performance of conservation practices due to the wide variety of farming operations in place. But individually, the results can be a feedback mechanism on the performance of reduced tillage, fertilizer programs and 4R evaluation annually.

Engaged growers see the tile monitoring data as key information about the patterns of nitrogen loss, and conservation agronomists are able to offer solutions through products or services to address loss in a precise way that isn't possible when simply looking at yield and rate of applied nitrogen. The information can also help identify sites that may be good candidates for an

edge-of-field practice, specifically sites that offer significant opportunities for reduction from a cost benefit perspective. Tile monitoring can also help a conservation agronomist connect the participating farmer or landowner with available technical assistance and funding.

The last several years have been challenging due to many dry or droughtstricken areas. While knowing that a tile line isn't running is accurate data, it doesn't help to draw many conclusions. And at certain points, stream flow is so





elevated that a tile outlet may be submerged for several days.

These challenges aside, a few results stand out so far. Most participants are surprised to see that soybean fields are generally similar to the corn years in the rotation, owing to similar processes that really drive nutrient loss - rich soils, water moving through the soil profile before plants are actively uptaking nutrients, and tile drainage providing an easy pathway for downstream delivery.

Similarly, nearly every year, fields with cover crops have significantly lower nitrate concentrations than those without. The cover crops are able to hold the nitrogen in the upper parts of the soil profile during critical times, allowing it to be released later in the season when crops can use it.

Not surprisingly, after a drought, tile water samples are similar to stream samples, as concentrations and loads are elevated with residual nitrate from the previous year. Nitrate concentrations were the highest in 2024 since the program began. This demonstrates an opportunity for growers to be more efficient and try to capture the value represented by the nitrogen that was lost in those years.

Because ACWA members had the broad vision for the future of Iowa water quality, they took the early initiative to begin the water monitoring program. The organization has amassed a database containing 25 years of information on nutrients in Iowa's waters, helping to inform state and national agencies, as well as private organizations on effective agricultural conservation practices.

Figure 2. ACWA average tile nitrate concentration between 2015-2024. The red line indicates the drinking water standard for nitrates in the water, at 10 mg/l. While this standard doesn't apply to tile water, it is a reference for downstream uses.

25 YEARS

IN PHOTOS

Remote Meter, 2008

Todd Sutphin and Tony Seeman take a look under the hood of the new Hardin Creek sampler, a tributary of the Raccoon River.

Certified Sampler, 2008 2

ACWA Volunteer, Matt Carlson of Lake City, pulls a water sample from one of 44 sites in the Raccoon River.

Governor, 2016

3 Keegan Kult shows Gov. Terry Branstad ACWA's bioreactor at Mike and Kathy Bravard's farm in Greene County.

Field Day, 2019 4

- Harry Ahrenholtz and Roger Wolf listen to then, Iowa Ag Deputy Director Julie Kenney during a North Raccoon Farm to River Partnership field day.
- WOI Interview, 2015 5 **Claire Powell interviews Rick Kimberley about** water quality.
- Anthony Seeman, 2007 0 Pulling a sample from the Boone River. 488 samples were collected in 2007.













Field Day, 2008

Roger Wolf, 2008 9 In Hardin Creek

7











Celebrating the first bioreactor

• Roger Wolf, 2015

At a Des Moines Water Works hearing, speaking against a lawsuit targeting farmers. "I worry about the message litigation sends," Wolf said.

10

Remote meter, 2006 Water Works installing remote monitor at Van Meter bridge that will take 24/7 readings thanks to ACWA partnership.

Field Day, 2012

Arlo Van Diest installed Iowa's second bioreactor in 2009, monitored by ACWA.

Dave Coppess, 2008

Then ACWA President



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White Paper Released from 'Making Retail **Conservation Real' Event**

The "Conservation Agronomy in Agricultural Retail: Current State and Future Trends" white paper was released in the spring of 2024 and is the initial outcome from the February 2024 Making Retail Conservation Real national meeting co-sponsored by ACWA. The two-day, Des Moines event brought together more than 100 leaders in ag retail and conservation from across the country to advance conservation agronomy in the private sector.

Developed through a partnership between ACWA and Baton Global, the white paper contains insights that emerged from the meeting as well as outcomes from qualitative research through ag retailer interviews conducted by Baton Global. It also offers valuable perspectives on the conservation agronomy business model, which originally emerged from ACWA water quality initiative grants. The white paper includes strengths of the business model, challenges to implementation and a glimpse into possible avenues for successful growth for the farmer and landowner, the ag retailer, and ultimately, improved soil and water quality.

The white paper can be downloaded from the ACWA website: https://www.acwaiowa.com/resources/making-retail-conservation-real/.

Event Participation

During the year, ACWA continued to be involved in state, regional and national events.

- ACWA board members, their employees, conservation agronomists and friends enjoyed an Iowa Cubs baseball game in Des Moines, June 2024. For great networking conversations outside the board room, social events like these help increase fellowship and connections.
- Roger Wolf participated at the Tech Hub Live national conference held in Des Moines in July. The conference is aimed at ag professionals who are developing and



Chris Petersen, with Gold-Eagle Cooperative, had the honor of throwing the first pitch at the lowa Cubs game.



EVATION AGRONOMY

CULTURAL RETAIL:

deploying the latest ag technologies to advance agribusiness. At "tech talks" Wolf presented ACWA and Making Retail Conservation Real to approximately 700 attendees.

- ACWA met with farmers and other attendees of the 2024 Farm Progress Show, held near Boone, Iowa. At an exhibit booth, conservation agronomists talked about their positions while promoting ACWA to attendees from around the globe.
- In February 2025, Wolf was a presenter at Engaging Agricultural Retailers and Crop Advisors to Advance Conservation. The meeting was held at Corteva's Chesapeake Farms in eastern Maryland.



Roger Wolf participates in Tech Talks at the Tech Hub Live event in July.

Jeff Lucas Named ACWA Executive Director

Agriculture's Clean Water Alliance is pleased to welcome Jeff Lucas as its new Executive Director. The Fort Madison, Iowa, native and proud Iowa State University alumnus brings diverse career experiences from the high desert of Idaho to the vibrant music scene of Nashville.

"Water is a crucial part of everyday life for all Iowans," Lucas said. "I feel blessed to lead an organization with an established, influential voice for water quality."

Among his career highlights, Lucas was Chief Operations Officer for a leading livestock trailer manufacturer, Marketing Director for Youth and Shelter Services (YSS), and manager of a non-profit organization that raises cattle for contributions to food pantries.

In addition to serving ACWA, Lucas heads Iowa Agriculture Water Alliance (IAWA). As he embarks on this new journey, Lucas's passion for service and talent for collaboration fit perfectly with the dedicated professionals within both organizations, who share his enthusiasm for agriculture and community impact.

Lucas and his wife, Brooke, savor life with their toddler Emmy Lu. He also enjoys bass fishing, travel, and rodeo.

2024-25 Financial Report

FY2024: March 1, 2024-February 28, 2025

Expenses

Total	\$888,636
Operations	30,224
Management/Admin/Membership	214,214
Projects and Programs	\$644,198

The 2024-25 financials reflect the continued investment in increasing the regular and associate membership for ACWA, as reflected in the \$275,000 and \$200,000 for member dues.

There are two IDALS programs named in the financial report: the Farm to River Partnership, which is a Water Quality Initiative project; and the 28E Partnership, which helps pay for conservation agronomist expansion. This is reflected in the income of \$369,198 and a corresponding expense of the same amount is part of the Projects and Programs expenses. In addition, there is continued targeted watershed and water monitoring work in the Projects and Programs amount.

The in-kind contribution of \$720,874 from ACWA partners continues to advance water quality across Iowa. Thank you all for your investments.

- Steve McGinnis, Chief Financial Officer, Amplify Association Management





Revenue

Members	\$275,000
Associate Members	200,000
Farm to River and 28E Partnerships	369,198
Event Sponsorship	8,097
Interest	5,116
Total	\$857,411
Additional In-kind Grants & Contracts	
Total	\$720,874
	<i>720,074</i>

Conservation Agronomist Network Grows

In addition to the expanding network of Conservation Agronomists (CA) in Iowa, the position is becoming known across the Midwest and beyond.

ACWA associate members The Mosaic Company and Truterra are implementing measures to scale up agricultural conservation. Both companies employ conservation agronomists but through different means.

Mosaic helping farmers in Northwest Iowa

Mosaic is partnering with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) to provide technical support in the Iowa Great Lakes region. A grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Federation (NFWF) will allow them to hire a conservation agronomist. This person will work with farmers, agency staff, and key partners in the Spirit Lake and Five Island Lake areas to expand conservation adoption. The project officially kicked off in the fall 2024.

"To achieve successful implementation, we need more technical assistance to support farm families and their operations," said Adam Herges with Mosaic. "This program is another catalyst in the Iowa Great Lakes region to support Iowa farmers and their conservation journey, keeping soil in place and advancing Iowa's Nutrient Reduction Strategy."



consults with a farmer about a nutrient plan.

The project is also supported by funds from Mosaic and the Wright Foundation for Sustainability and Innovation.

Truterra building impact case study

Meanwhile, Truterra is working to connect the dots to the positive financial impacts for coops and ag retailers to expand the CA model. The company directly supports four CAs in Iowa and three of their Iowa retailers also employ a CA.

Brent Hall, Truterra Account Manager, said there are at least two key pieces. First, food companies are looking for ways to reduce their environmental impact. CAs can help by working with farmers within company supply chains to adopt conservation practices.

Perhaps the less obvious connection — decades of farmer loyalty — is the most important. When a farmer receives conservation cost-share dollars (found by a CA), they can spend that money locally. Plus, when they invest in the land, it pays everyone back.

"There are things, like terraces or prairie strips, that help the retailer indirectly," Hall said. "In the long run, the resiliency of the farm leads to a multi-generational opportunity for farming those acres."

New Educational Sessions for ACWA Members

As part of the FY2024 Work Plan, ACWA established a series of educational sessions with continuing education credit for their employees including sales and conservation agronomists. Four sessions were held in conjunction with ACWA board meetings. At each meeting, several guest speakers shared their knowledge on a different theme, which included:

- Agricultural Conservation Planning Framework (ACPF) and Agribusiness Edge-of-Field Program
- Scaling Conservation Implementation: Projects and Opportunities
- Sustainability and Ecosystem Services: A View of Current and Potential Future Demand Drivers
- Conservation Agronomy Training Curriculum Introduction.

The sessions were well-received and will continue in the next fiscal year.

Farm to River Partnership Project Renewed

The North Raccoon Farm to River Partnership, an Iowa Water Quality Initiative (WQI) project that began in 2018, has been renewed for three years. The project started in 2015 in the Elk Run watershed and has now grown to include more than half of Sac County and nearly all of Greene County. The WQI is managed by ACWA and funded through the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS).

ACWA established new goals with the renewal, which include 25 edge-of-field practices installed over the next three years, and 7,000 new acres of cover crops annually. These practices are ways farmers and landowners can help reduce nutrients and excess runoff entering lowa water bodies.

"With the geographic expansion of the project, we are targeting batch-and-build installation in Sac County and cover crop adoption in Greene County," said Joe Wuebker, conservation agronomist and project manager. "But these practices can be adopted in all of the partnership area and cost share is available."

Batch-and-build entails geographically grouping sites for installations of bioreactors and saturated buffers within the same time frame. The batch-and-build efforts began last fall, in partnership with the Sac County Board of Supervisors serving as the fiscal agent for the project. The board helps with permits and other important documents, hires contractors, and works between funders and contractors to ensure payments are made.

Code of Practice Reaffirmed

At the Fall 2024 board meeting, ACWA members reaffirmed their annual commitment to the Environments Code of Practice for Nitrogen Fertilization. The Code of Practice states they will delay fall anhydrous applications without a nitrification inhibitor until soil temperatures are 50 degrees Fahrenheit and trending lower. This reduces nitrate loading from farm fields into Iowa's rivers and streams.

The ag retailers have agreed to this membership requirement every year since 2001. ACWA's footprint touches 87 of Iowa's 99 counties, enabling the Code of Practice to have a greater impact on water quality than ever before.

Members self-report to ACWA to validate their

Wuebker, local NRCS staff, and lowa Cover Crop employees are all available to address farmer questions and issues that arise throughout the first years of cover crop adoption.



al e	conformance to the Code of Practice, which takes place usually in mid to late October, depending on the region. Colder soils hinder the conversion of ammonium nitrogen to nitrate, which reduces leaching, or denitrification, and keeps ammonium in the soil.
	ACWA members encourage the use of nitrogen stabilizers, slow-release fertilizers, incorporation or injection, soil nitrate testing, and other tools that minimize loss of nitrogen to water sources. ACWA also endorses 4R Plus, which focuses on nutrient stewardship by using fertilizer from the Right Source, at the Right Rate, the Right Time, and the Right Place. The Plus refers to the conservation farming practices that can be used for soil health and water quality improvement.

NEW ACWA MEMBERS



FCA/Vision Ag LLC

Keota keotafarmerscoop.com

FCA/Vision Ag LLC is the newest member of ACWA, joining in 2024. The member-owned cooperative has been in business since 1935, and serves farmers in nine southeast lowa communities across four counties. They offer expertise in crop protection, fertilizer, feed, fuel and grain. The company believes that by joining ACWA, it signifies their dedication to helping farmers achieve optimal agronomic performance while protecting vital natural resources.



Innovative Ag Services

Monticello | innovativeag.com

A new ACWA member in 2024, Innovative Ag Services (IAS) was incorporated in 2005, but its roots go back to 1969. The full-service cooperative supports sustainable agriculture production and serves farmers at more than 30 locations in the northeast guarter of Iowa as well as southwestern Wisconsin.

IAS offers sustainable agronomic services including soil sampling, technical and financial assistance with cover crops and reduced tillage, carbon program enrollment assistance, low carbon biofuel data management, and watershed initiative partnerships. Their customers are dedicated to improving soil health and protecting water quality. IAS supports them through a sustainability lead person and on-staff conservation agronomist who are knowledgeable about ag conservation practices.

NEW ASSOCIATE MEMBER



CoBank

Denver, CO | cobank.com

CoBank is one of the largest private providers of credit to the U.S. rural economy. The company joined ACWA as an associate member in 2025 as it saw the value of this organization's efforts to help farmers adopt conservation practices while remaining productive and profitable.

Headquartered in Denver, Colorado, CoBank is part

of the Farm Credit system, which was formed in 1916 through the U.S. Congress. CoBank was formed in 1989 through a merger of 11 Banks for Cooperatives. The company delivers loans, leases and other financial services to agribusiness, rural infrastructure, and Farm Credit to customers in all 50 states.

Through its financing products, CoBank supports its customers and the conservation practices they employ on the land. CoBank's engagements with alliances such as ACWA keeps the company informed of advancements in agricultural conservation practices, which is a valued aspect of their customers' business. CoBank can also serve as an additional outreach resource to their customers about agricultural conservation benefits.

AgState

Cherokee | agstate.org

AgState was formed in 2021, carrying forward a cooperative Heartland Co-op serves farmers in 70 locations across legacy that spans more than 100 years. With locations Iowa as well as Nebraska and Texas. Established in 1987 across 14 northwest lowa counties, many situated within through a merger of cooperatives in Panora, Dallas Center, key watersheds identified in the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Minburn and Granger, its origins are truly centered in Strategy, AgState remains committed to sustainability. As Iowa's heartland amid the Raccoon and Des Moines river a founding member of ACWA, the company takes pride watersheds, a main focus of ACWA. The company is a in supporting water quality initiatives and responsible founding member of ACWA and has helped it become the agricultural practices that benefit our environment, leader in water quality that it is today. communities and the future of agriculture.



Central Valley Ag York, Nebraska | cvacoop.com

Headquartered in Tennessee, Helena Agri-Enterprises, LLC Joining ACWA in 2023, Central Valley Ag (CVA) was formed has been part of ACWA since the beginning. Helena has in 2003 by three Nebraska cooperatives and serves farmers seven Iowa retail locations and a wholesale group in Ankeny in Nebraska, Kansas, and Iowa. CVA offers agricultural that serves retailers in Iowa and the surrounding states. products and services for cropping systems solutions Helena offers an array of crop inputs including fertilizer, including nutrient and soil management, carbon credits, seed, and chemicals as well as soil and tissue sampling, grain premiums for sustainability practices, and organic yield analysis, variable rate application recommendations, farming. CVA leaders believe that being an ACWA member custom applications, and more. A subsidiary, Helena helps them fulfill the co-op's vision of ensuring sustainable Industries, LLC, includes a facility in Des Moines that agriculture for future generations. manufactures their products.



Gold-Eagle Cooperative Eagle Grove | goldeaglecoop.com

Gold-Eagle Cooperative is a founding member of ACWA. One of Iowa's largest agriculture cooperatives, Landus is a It was formed in 1908 as Farmers Elevator Company of founding member of ACWA. It has been known as Landus Goldfield. In 1983, Farmers Elevator merged with Farmers since 2016, but the company's agricultural roots go back Cooperative Company of Eagle Grove to become Gold-Eagle more than 130 years. Landus offers products and services Cooperative. Since then, they have expanded to include for all aspects of farming: agronomy, grain, feed, animal 20 locations in central Iowa and southern Minnesota. The nutrition, and data. The company is in 23 counties, mostly company serves farmers in Wright, Humboldt, Kossuth, in the Des Moines and Raccoon River watersheds and and Hancock counties in the heart of the Boone River above the Cedar River watershed. Landus is also part of watershed, as well as Winnebago County, Iowa, and the Farm to River Partnership WQI. Faribault County, Minnesota.

ACWA MEMBERS



Heartland Co-op

Clive | heartlandcoop.com



Helena Agri-Enterprises, LLC West Des Moines | helenaagri.com



Landus Cooperative

Des Moines | landus.ag



ACWA Members continued



NEW Cooperative, Inc. Fort Dodge | newcoop.com

A founding member of ACWA, NEW Cooperative began in 1973 by farmers in Northeast Webster County, creating its acronym name. The new business was a merger between one cooperative with rail capabilities and one with additional grain for the outgoing trains. Since then, NEW Cooperative has grown to 60 locations in 19 counties in north, central, and western Iowa. The cooperative offers grain, feed, energy and agronomic services.



Nutrien Ag Solutions

Wall Lake | nutrienagsolutions.com

Nutrien Ag Solutions has been a part of ACWA since 1999. It was known as United Agri Products until 2017, but the company has been serving farmers across the Midwest since the 1960s. The full-service supply company offers a Sustainable Ag platform, tailoring solutions for the best fit in individual fields. Nutrien Ag Solutions is also part of the Farm to River Partnership, an Iowa Water Quality Initiative led by ACWA.



Pro Cooperative

Pocahontas | procooperative.com

A founding member of ACWA, Pro Cooperative has been a steadfast resource for farmers in north-central and northwestern Iowa since 1911. The company serves producers in 12 counties nestled in between and above the Des Moines and Boone River watersheds, which are focus areas of the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy.



Van Diest Supply Webster City | vdsc.com

Van Diest Supply Company was founded in 1956 by Bob Van Diest, serving farmers in central Iowa with fertilizer and other chemical needs. Today, the company includes facilities on 270 acres in Webster City and 19 distribution centers across the Midwest. The company formulates and distributes chemical products for agriculture, and products for management of turf, trees, mosquitoes, and invasive brush and aquatic plants. Van Diest Supply is a founding member of ACWA. With the company's roots in Hamilton County, Van Diest's local customers directly affect the Boone River and its tributaries.

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

CoBank Denver, CO | cobank.com

Corteva Agriscience Indianapolis, IN | corteva.com

Iowa Agriculture Water Alliance Ankeny, IA | iaagwater.org

Iowa Soybean Association Ankeny, IA | iasoybeans.com

Koch Fertilizer, LLC Wichita, KS | Kochind.com

The Mosaic Company Tampa, FL | mosaicco.com

Nationwide Des Moines, IA | nationwide.com

Syngenta Crop Protection Greensboro, NC | syngenta-us.com

Truterra, LLC sustainability business of Land O'Lakes Arden Hills, MN | truterraag.com

Verdesian Life Sciences Cary, NC | vlsci.com



ACWA IMPACT

ACWA FOOTPRINT

12 regular members **10** associate members **390** service locations **40K** farmer customers 17+ million row crop acres

87 Iowa counties

MAKINGCONSERVATION RETAIL REAL



North Raccoon Farm to River **Partnership Project**

Water Quality Initiative overseen by ACWA >700,000 acres in **4** counties



WATER MONITORING 14,372 water samples

processed through ACWA between 2020-2024

Benefits of water monitoring:

- Guides watershed planning
- Enables targeting practice placement & implementation
- Validates practice performance
- · Generates insights to better understand impacts of land use, management and weather over time

CODE OF PRACTICE

In Place for **25 Years**

CONSERVATION **AGRONOMIST NETWORK**

13 Conservation Agronomists in 2024



A future defined by momentum and commitment

A letter from the ACWA President

As the story of Roger Wolf, ISA, and ACWA goes, Roger and Kirk Leeds held their initial meeting at a Chinese buffet restaurant back in 2000. I'd like to think their fortune cookie said, "May you live in interesting times." That proverb has certainly been the reality as we have traversed these first 25 years together. Along the way there have been good times, but also challenges, stumbles, and some disappointments. In spite of all that, there have been notable successes leading to meaningful progress and growth. Interesting times they have been for sure.

ACWA has grown through several evolutions, from its humble beginning in 1999 in the Raccoon River watershed, to what it is today. As those first few formative years unfolded, ACWA established a strong beginning with extensive scientific data and a commitment to learn. That commitment continues to drive us today.

We would not be where we are today without the people who made it happen. Thank you to all past directors and staff, with a special mention to Kristen Dearden for her years of dedicated service to water quality.

Now we are entering a new era with a lot of history and

CONSERVATION **AGRONOMIST IOWA IMPACT** 2019-2024

280,000 acres of cover crops

29,850 acres of no-till, strip-till

244 edge-of-field practices

24,150 acres with improved nutrient management strategies

2.3 million Ibs nitrogen 130,000 lbs phosphorus loss reduction



momentum on our side. We have a new Executive Director. Jeff Lucas, who has a lot of new ideas. We have strong member support. We have evolved from a single watershed presence to a statewide organization. Our loyal founding members are still active current members. Our membership is growing strategically. We are proven innovators with a sound track record of achievement. We have much to be proud of and much yet to be accomplished. It's onward and upward from here.

- Dan Dix, NEW Cooperative CEO





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