

Urban * Ag Academy
Gateway Hotel and Conference Center
Ames, Iowa
July 18, 2015

Public Policy Issues around Water Quality

Panel Presentation

Summary Narrative: Roger Wolf, Director of Environmental Programs and Services, Iowa Soybean Association

Thank you for including me on this panel and event.

Consider that the global population of 7 billion is twice that of 40 years ago, and is predicted to reach 9 billion people by 2050.

Consider that most of this growth will occur in cities, straining existing water systems and creating demand for new infrastructure or the need to upgrade deteriorating systems.

In 2010, urban areas account for over 80% of the US population and this is on less than 3% of our landscape. Meanwhile; agriculture – including forestry, range and grasslands and cropland - provides all of us with food, feed, fiber and fuel on 75% of the land base.

(Note that those of us in Agriculture understand that people are the voters.)

Also, consider that a changing climate and with it uncertainty, add to the issues that water managers must consider, and that water demands must be addressed in the context of other competing values and challenges.

Urban and rural agriculture communities need smarter ways to meet water needs, increase resiliency, enhance livability, and ability to conserve natural resources we all depend on.

Forward thinkers and leaders across the U.S. are suggesting where opportunities for innovation and smart water management will occur.

Who is ISA: 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 governed by an elected volunteer board of 21 farmers. Approximately 45,000 Iowa Farmers plant about 10 million acres of soybeans annually producing over 500 million bushels. We are working to improve the competitiveness of Iowa Soybean Farmers. Our mission is to expand opportunities and deliver results. This requires action and performance.

At ISA, we recognize that conventional practice or incremental changes are not going to meet the needs of growing populations or allow us to be competitive on the global stage.

We believe that collaboration and partnerships lead to better outcomes. Outcomes that are different than what would have been achieved if we did this work alone. We believe our ideas are compatible with others. We believe managing the soil, water and nutrients differently we will be more productive, leading to a more sustainable agriculture, and that managing habitat provides multi-objective services and that downstream and off site impacts are in fact managed.

We believe we need strong soils and clean water, productive and profitable farmers.

We believe in using science data and information enabling better/smarter decision making.

ISA Environmental Programs and Services Strategy overview: (See progress report handout.)

The Iowa Soybean Association's Environmental Programs and Services is action oriented science and data driven program and geared to help farmers with decision making. Our primary objective is to improve natural resource practices and environmental quality. And our primary tactics including engaging more farmers and more collaborators in more locations on issues and opportunities that deliver value to them. Since 2001 – ISA has invested over \$19 million on advancing Agriculture's Environmental Performance. About one third of these funds are from the Iowa Soybean Checkoff and are leveraged with state, federal and private grants, In 2014, ISA was involved in 32 active project initiatives supporting work across Iowa. These initiatives support farmers directly and address priority resource concerns including nutrient loss and reduction, water and soil quality, habitat and overall sustainability.

Much of this work is targeted to local watershed areas. ISA has staff specialist that help groups of farmers in organized watersheds develop comprehensive plans. These plans are developed with the local farming community, set downstream outcome goals and then create implementation strategies and new opportunities for collaborators and partners to assist. For example in the Rock Creek watershed located in the Upper Cedar watershed in Mitchell County,

staff and collaborators, including Pheasant Forever biologist, assist farmers with develop conservation plans which address soil, water, nutrient management and habitat.

A key strategy with this work is integrating planning and advance strategies conducive to improving farmer profitability while addressing negative environmental impacts. Water resource concerns in these Iowa watersheds include; nutrient loading, soil erosion, stream and gully erosion, stream habitat degradation, and flooding.

Specific practices management practices to address these impacts include: Conservation tillage including strip till and no-till systems, cover cropping, crop rotations; Nutrient management (e.g. timing, form, placement and rate optimization); Edge of field and targeting buffer treatments (e.g. bio-reactors, riparian buffers and constructed wetlands) intercepting surface and subsurface flow in critical areas.

Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy Policies ISA supports and is an advocate for include:

Sustainable Funding, Income Tax Credits, Credit Offsets and Collaboration

We support the stated principles of Iowa's Nutrient Reduction Strategy along with information dissemination to the public regarding farmers' efforts to achieve continuous improvement. ISA has demonstrated a track record of credible and engaged leadership working with collaborators to achieve the goals of the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy. We appreciate Iowa legislative support and alignment that exists with agencies and the Governor.

We support developing more sustainable funding for Iowa's Natural Resources, provided farmers have input into the funding source and project priorities. Specifically, ISA supports raising the state sales tax 3/8 cent that would raise more \$100 million annually to go into resource conservation.

We support the use of income tax credits for incentivizing farmer's use of Nutrient reduction practices.

We support collaboration with cities and industries to partner with agriculture producers to develop and implement accredited nutrient reduction practices that may offset some of the cost for implementing technology at permitted facilities. Farmers and sponsors financing the implementation of qualified practices should be able to retain performance credits to be used in future projects.