

Leadership and Partnerships

In 2018, ISA Environmental Programs and Services (EPS) were involved in more than 40 projects supporting conservation work across Iowa. These collaborative and multidisciplinary projects involve more than 80 partners and complement Iowa-based initiatives such as the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy. The efforts by the EPS team assist farmers by addressing priority resource concerns including nutrient loss and reduction, water and soil quality, habitat, sustainability and conservation drainage. Many of the projects are being implemented within watersheds where groups of farmers are leading with EPS support.

ISA staff and board members, farmer champions and industry partners are often called upon to serve in additional leadership roles and at various capacities at local or state levels, regionally, nationally and internationally. Examples of ISA involvement in leadership positions with organizations include:

- *U.S. Water Alliance Board of Directors*
- *North Central Region Water Network*
- *Leadership for Midwestern Watersheds*
- *Agriculture's Clean Water Alliance*
- *American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers*
- *Iowa State University affiliate faculty.*

ISA Farmer Research Conference

In 2018, Environmental Programs and Services was a component of the ISA Farmer Research Conference, with more than 500 people attending. The EPS team hosted a session in a roundtable format where participants experienced a modified watershed implementation scenario game. Attendees used role-playing to make decisions about practice placement for nutrient reduction on the landscape. Practice performance information including cost benefits were included with scenario runs where additional watershed planning information was introduced. Results from the roundtable discussions revealed some of the real-world challenges and possible solutions associated with watershed nutrient loss implementation strategies. In addition, ISA staff and farmers presented at numerous sessions, ranging from transforming drainage, water monitoring results and a policy panel.

Farmer Research Conference attendees participate in a session involving a watershed scenario game to implement practices that improve water quality. Participants found that there are challenges and working solutions to accomplish the goals of the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy.



Upstream-Downstream Feasibility Study

EPS staff initiated a project with Land O'Lakes and Quantified Ventures, an impact investing firm, to conduct a feasibility study examining upstream private investment opportunities which will ultimately result in downstream benefits and repayment. This effort involves the cities of Des Moines, Cedar Rapids and Clive and the upstream watersheds. Upon completion of the feasibility study, the cities and associated upstream watersheds will consider the economic case for moving to a transaction phase in 2019.

Leadership for Midwestern Watersheds

Since 2011, EPS staff have been part of the planning committee for Leadership for Midwestern Watersheds (LMW) annual conference forum. The annual LMW meeting series features a mix of formal presentations with facilitated discussions. The series explores topics key to successful watershed projects including: farmer engagement, finance, soil health, agricultural economics, monitoring and evaluation, and behavioral science. The 2018 meeting, held in Winona, Minnesota, focused on measuring progress towards environmental, social, and economic outcomes. To date, more than 250 professionals have attended the series. LMW continues to develop a “community of practice” for conservation practitioners who work to improve water quality and agricultural performance with landowners, farmers, agencies, communities and industry.

One Water Summit and Action Forum

The annual One Water Summit was held in Minneapolis in July, led by the U.S. Water Alliance. Several EPS staff, ISA board members and aligned partners participated in the Summit as part of the Iowa Delegation. With more than 900 people in attendance representing 30 states, it was a unique opportunity to share what Iowa is doing in support of integrated water management as well as learn from others. The 50-strong Iowa delegation was one of the largest at the Summit. A key outcome from the Summit was the expansion of agricultural engagement with the water sector.

The theme of One Water and integrated water management is becoming a movement across the country. Others are now embracing the Summit format including plans for additional state and regional workshops in the future. One example is the North Central Region One Water Action Forum held in Indianapolis in December 2018. ISA was a platinum sponsor of this event and helped with organization. Members of the EPS team provided significant support of presentations including a modified Watershed Scenario game, a conservation finance workshop, a watershed planning and implementation session, and serving on keynote and closing panels. More than 170 people from across the upper Midwest attended the Action Forum. Follow-up surveys indicated strong support and satisfaction, with nearly 70 percent stating they would like to attend a similar forum in the future.

EPS director Roger Wolf (second from left), served on a panel at the One Water Action Forum, held in Indianapolis in December. This panel kicked off the three-day event. Rebecca Power (left), with the North Central Region Water Network, moderated the session. Other panelists included: Mark Kesling, The Da Vinci Pursuit; Ron Graber, Kansas State Research and Extension; Trisha Moore, Kansas State University; and Dawn White, Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission.

