

JANUARY 2020 | Rathbun Regional Water Association

# QUENCH

news by the glassful

DRINK LOCAL:  
*Get it from the Tap*

USGS WaterAlert | May Your Glass Be Full | Iowa Wineries

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## on the cover

Tap water is the safest, healthiest and most sustainable beverage choice. When you imbibe your community's tap water, you show that you value the source, the utility, and the professionals that bring it to you. Drink local!

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**The IRWA Mission:** To provide the highest leadership in the support of Iowa's water and wastewater industries through the provision of technical assistance, training and education, legislative, regulatory and public affairs, and financing activities.

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# RRWA Wins Best Tasting Water Award

*...Two Years in a Row!*

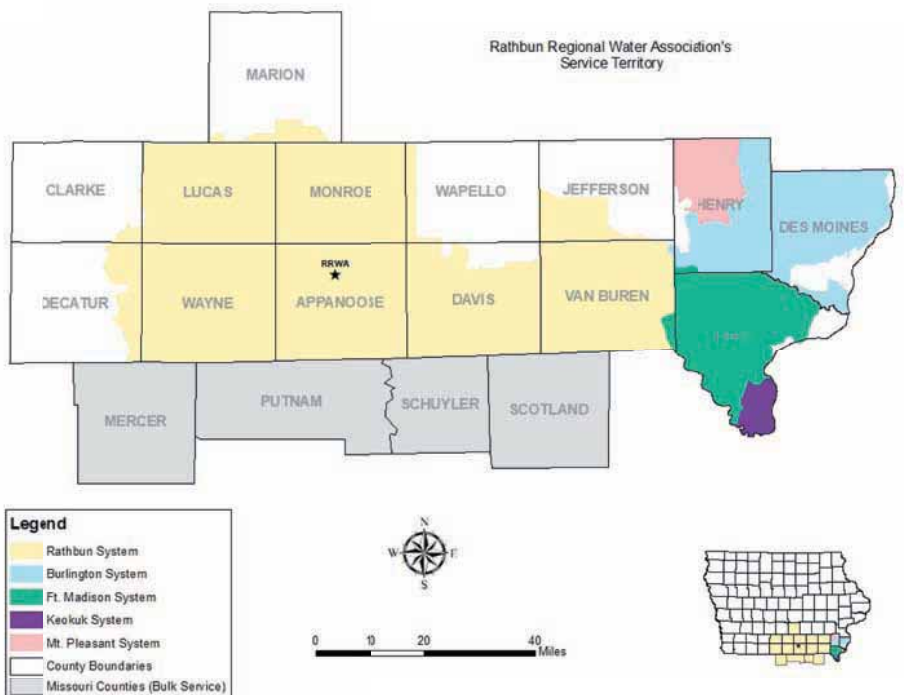


Officials at the Iowa Rural Water Association's (RRWA) annual conferences in 2018 and 2019 recognized Rathbun Regional Water Association (RRWA) for producing the best tasting water in Iowa. Each year, water utilities from around the state submit samples to compete for selection as the tastiest drinking water in Iowa. The winner of RRWA's statewide competition then participates with other water utilities from across the country in the Great American Water Taste Test sponsored by the National Rural Water Association (NRWA) to determine the best tasting water in the nation. NRWA's national contest is part of the Rural Water Rally, the rural water industry's annual legislative event, held in Washington, D.C. RRWA was judged as the fourth best tasting water in the country out of 42 state winners at last year's national competition. RRWA will have the opportunity to represent Iowa again at NRWA's next Great American Water Taste Test in early 2020.

RRWA's ability to consistently produce the highest quality drinking water for our customers is the result of planning, expertise, and hard work. RRWA's board of directors have taken the actions and made the investments required to ensure a reliable and affordable supply of quality drinking water in the areas of southern Iowa and northern Missouri served by the Association. In the last decade alone, RRWA expanded the Association's production

capacity with a second water treatment plant; constructed new storage towers, pump stations, and water mains throughout the distribution system; and formed partnerships to protect the only source of water for our treatment plants, Rathbun Lake. RRWA's Chief Executive Officer and Chief Operating Officer, John Glenn, points out that "the board of directors' clear vision, thoughtful direction, strong support, and customer focus have been essential to the Association's success." RRWA's knowledgeable and committed staff

is the other key to delivering quality drinking water that meets the needs of residents and businesses across the Association's service territory. According to RRWA's Plant Superintendent, Jer Buckingham, "the credit for serving our customers with the best tasting water in Iowa and one of the best in the nation goes to the 24/7, 365 dedication of all RRWA employees." RRWA has more than 60 employees, the majority of whom have earned State of Iowa certification in the treatment and/or distribution of drinking water.



# RRWA Staff Puts Ingenuity to Work for Customers

Rathbun Regional Water Association (RRWA) has close to 40 booster pump stations throughout its distribution system. For many years, RRWA purchased prefabricated pump stations whenever a new station was needed or to replace an older station. In 2015, the rising price of prefabricated stations prompted a team of RRWA employees, led by Special Projects Coordinator Dave Aeschliman, to explore the feasibility of undertaking the in-house design and construction of the Association's own booster pump stations.

The RRWA team started by identifying key features to incorporate into a pump station that would be designed and built locally. A main feature was to simplify the flow of water into and out of the station. This approach required the team to reduce the number of components in the station to the fewest necessary. Serviceability and minimal maintenance were also important considerations. To address these, readily available, durable, and reliable materials and equipment were selected for the station. In addition, ease of assembly and construction were critical criteria which called for employing as much standardization as possible in all aspects of the station.

The current pump station developed by the RRWA team has standard dimensions of 12' 2" wide by 15' 2" long. The booster building is made with an aluminum tube frame extruded at a local company. Metal exterior panels, vinyl interior liner panels, and a combination of foam board and mineral wool insulation complete the structure. The entire

building can be fabricated inside the RRWA shop in about 10 days. A splice system that runs lengthways down the middle of the building allows it to be transported in two halves measuring under 6' 6" wide and weighing 900 pounds. Setting and anchoring the two halves of the station takes about two hours. RRWA staff created a set of concrete forms specifically for the station foundation. A crew of three can complete the foundation in four days using these forms. RRWA staff designs the station's stainless steel piping, pipe supports, and pump bases which are also fabricated locally. Installation of the piping and pumps takes three workers about one day. Members of the RRWA team also design, build, and install the control, communication, and electrical systems for the station. Connection of the station to the distribution system is completed by RRWA's construction crew.

To date, RRWA has completed the design and construction of eight booster pump stations. RRWA has found that the cost and quality of these in-house built stations compares favorably with the purchased prefabricated stations. Additionally, the operation and maintenance of these pump stations has met or exceeded the RRWA team's expectations. Moving forward, RRWA anticipates building as many as three pump stations annually. RRWA Chief Executive Officer and Chief Operating Officer John Glenn praises the ingenuity of staff saying "the in-house design and construction of pump stations is helping the Association keep rates as affordable as possible while providing high quality drinking water to our customers."



## RRWA Moves Forward with Smart Water Meters and Auto-Pay

*RRWA Customers Will Benefit From Additional Services...Sign-Up Now!*

Rathbun Regional Water Association (RRWA) customers will now be able to enjoy the many benefits of smart meters and automatic bill payment. This technology will enable RRWA to obtain customers' smart meter readings remotely. RRWA can use these meter readings to calculate customers' water bills, and then automatically and securely deduct the amount owed from their bank accounts. Similarly, customers who prefer to use RRWA's

E-Pay system will have their smart meter readings displayed automatically so that they can quickly calculate and pay their water bills. Additionally, RRWA customers who continue to pay by check will be able to easily obtain their smart meter readings online. RRWA started to make smart meters and Auto-Pay available to customers in late 2019. There is no fee for smart meters. Customers interested in smart meters and automatic bill payment should contact RRWA.



# SE Iowa Towns Connect to RRWA

Construction began in 2014 on a project to connect the City of Bloomfield to RRWA for the City to utilize as their water source. The project involved approximately 25 miles of 14" pipe, two booster pumping stations and one 500,000 gallon elevated storage tank. With the cooperation of local land owners and good weather the City of Bloomfield was using RRWA full time by the end of the year 2015.

In 2016 RRWA built a new transmission line from Bloomfield to Keosauqua, which was approximately 29 miles of 10" pipe. This line increased the capacity in the area and made it possible for RRWA to run 4 miles of 8" pipe in Van Buren County to service the City of Birmingham, as well as approximately 100 additional rural customers. RRWA was also busy in 2016, running a mile of 6" pipe to connect the City of Hillsboro and the City of Salem and acquire another 30 rural customers during this project.

RRWA was in contact with officials of the City of Chariton in 2017 regarding a connection with RRWA to serve the City of Chariton's water needs. The City was experiencing problems with its treatment plant and, due to drought conditions, its raw water source as well. Between January 1, 2014 and January 13, 2017 IDNR issued approximately 46 Notices of Violation for violation of applicable drinking water regulations. In April of 2017, Chariton was ordered by IDNR to provide a written plan on how they would come into compliance. After discussions with RRWA, the Chariton Water Board decided a

connection to RRWA was the way to go. To construct this connection RRWA installed 12 miles of 14" pipe and 7 miles of 12" pipe, two booster stations and one 500,000-gallon elevated storage tank. The City was connected and utilizing RRWA as its sole water source in September 2018.

The City of Donnellson in Lee County approached IRWA regarding a connection for Donnellson's water needs as they also had significant water quality issues. Donnellson resident's drinking water had high fluoride and radium levels according to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. Connecting to IRWA will bring the City up to date with Iowa DNR health and sanitary standards, meaning the City will avoid costly fines. IRWA constructed 3 miles of 8" waterline and the City was using water from IRWA in September of 2019.

With the connections to these towns during the last 5 years, IRWA is now serving approximately 8,000 additional people in southern and southeastern Iowa. In addition to the bulk users that were added to the customer base, since 2015, IRWA has added 1,500 additional individual users. With the support of the existing customers and land owners in our service territory IRWA has been able to make many infrastructure upgrades and improvements and still supply our customers with high quality water at an affordable rate, that is one of the lowest in the state. Hats off to our existing and new customers for helping IRWA accomplish its mission.



Connecting Donnellson Meter

## Benefits of Smart Meters

- Customers can monitor their water use on a secure website
- Customers can be notified of water leaks in their systems
- Customers with smart meters can sign-up for automatic bill payment

## Benefits of Automatic Bill Payment

- Customers will no longer have to worry about paying their water bills on time
- Customers will no longer have to read their remotes and calculate their water bills
- Customers will no longer have to write checks and mail their payments
- Customers will be notified by email of the amount of their usage and water bill before payment

Sign-up for a smart meter and automatic bill payment by calling RRWA at 1-800-233-8849, emailing [rrwainc@rrwa.net](mailto:rrwainc@rrwa.net), or visiting our website at [www.rrwa.net](http://www.rrwa.net).





**R**athbun  
**R**egional  
**W**ater  
**A**ssociation, Inc.

**January 2020**

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**NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING**

**January 2020**

Dear Member:

Please take notice that the annual meeting of the general membership of the Rathbun Regional Water Association, Inc. will be held at the RRWA Administrative Office and Treatment Plant located at 16166 Hwy J29, Centerville, Iowa. The meeting will be held on February 27, 2020 and called to order at 7:00 p.m.

The purpose of the meeting will be for the regular election of Directors whose terms expire in 2019. Those names and the names of those nominated to fill the vacancies are listed below. No nominations by petition were received in any of these districts.

A report of the financial condition of the Association and the primary activities of the Association during 2019 will be presented.

Members then may consider the transaction of any other business which may come before the annual meeting.

Each member present at the annual meeting will be entitled to cast one vote for each directorship to be voted upon, and one vote for any other issue that may come before the members.

Those board members whose terms expire in 2019 are: Dennis Amoss, Doug Goblen, and Curtis Frank. Those nominated to fill the position of Directors whose terms expire are:

**DISTRICT 2**

Dennis Amoss  
6040 170th Street  
Albia, IA 52531

**DISTRICT 3**

Doug Goblen  
1643 100th Street  
Corydon, IA 50060

**DISTRICT 7**

Curtis Frank  
3591 250th Street  
Oakville, IA 52646

The nominees receiving the most votes in each district where vacancies exist, will be declared to have been elected.

Doug Goblen

Secretary/Treasurer  
Rathbun Regional Water Association, Inc.

RRWA  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
Randy Eddy, Chairman  
Denny Amoss, Vice Chairman  
Doug Goblen, Secretary & Treas.  
Curt Frank  
Garry Schiller  
Charla Warner  
Ken Wuthrich

# RRWA MISSION STATEMENT

Rathbun Regional Water Association, Inc. strives to improve the quality of life in our region by providing our customers with safe, high quality drinking water and related services.

We believe the success of our organization depends on our commitment to the following values:

- Good communication and cooperation between our customers, employees, management, and board.
- Innovative, dependable, highly trained employees that take pride in their work and are dedicated to serving our customers.
- Responsibility as a team for the efficient and reliable delivery of reasonably priced product and services to our region.
- Equal opportunity for growth and excellence for every employee.
- Proactive involvement with economic growth and environmental stewardship.

## Biography of Nominees

### DISTRICT 2

**Denny Amoss** and his wife Karen of 46 years reside at 6040 170th Street near Albia, Iowa. They have two grown children, Troy Amoss and his wife Lori of Poplar Bluff, Missouri, Lynnette Major and her husband Josh of Albia, and seven grandchildren. Denny is a retired Road Foreman for Monroe County. He is a Monroe County Fair Board member, FFA Alumni member, and serves as a Monroe County Board of Supervisor. He and his wife are involved in many community and church activities. He has enjoyed his last five years as a Board of Director and looks forward to the opportunity to again serve the patrons of RRWA.

### DISTRICT 3

**Doug Goben** and his wife Denise live on a farm northwest of Corydon at 1643 100th street and have a small livestock and row crop operation. They have three grown children, Jake (Cheri), Cole (Jennifer) and Sadie (Brett) who all reside in Wayne County and five grandchildren. Doug served on the Soil and Water Conservation District as a Commissioner for eleven years and was a member of the Chariton Valley RC&D Board during the same time period. He has enjoyed being on the Board for the last five years and would appreciate your vote to continue serving Rathbun Regional Water as a Board member.

### DISTRICT 7

**Curtis Frank** and his wife Kathy live in Mediapolis, Iowa and operate a grain and hog operation in the Oakville area. They have been married for forty years and have eight children and twenty-two grandchildren. Curtis has served on the Des Moines Country Drainage Board for twenty-two years and the Two Rivers Levee and Drainage district. He also has served on the Mediapolis Ambulance Service. He has enjoyed serving on the RRWA Board and looks forward to serving in the future years.



# Drink Local: Get it from the Tap

Cathy Law, IRWA Member Services and Events Coordinator

Do you remember the days of drinking from a water fountain or getting a glass of water straight from the tap? It seems almost antiquated in this day and age. Now bottled water is everywhere — in offices, airplanes, stores, homes and restaurants across the country. According to the Beverage Marketing Corporation, bottled water was an \$18.5 billion industry in the United States in 2017. Bottled water consumption grew from 12.8 billion gallons in 2016 to 13.7 billion gallons in 2017 (a seven percent increase), helping bottled water surpass sodas as America's favorite drink. It's refreshing, calorie-free, convenient to carry around, tastier than some tap water, and healthier than sugary sodas or artificially sweetened diet drinks.

(<https://recipes.howstuffworks.com/why-americans-spend-billions-bcttled-water.htm>)

Consumers, however, are paying dearly for that convenience. The International Bottled Water Association reported that the average cost of bottled water is \$1.27 per gallon, or \$1.11 per gallon for domestic non-sparkling water. Baltimore City Department of Public Works sells their water for \$2.50 per unit, which comes to about \$0.003 per gallon, making bottled water around 400 times more costly than tap water. (<https://www.wmar2news.com/business/consumer/americans-spend-16-billion-a-year-on-bottled-water>)

There is no arguing that hydrating your body is important for optimal health. It might surprise you to learn that water makes up about 60 percent of our body weight. And what does water do for the body? The benefits of drinking water are many: it's vital for almost every function in the body. Water acts as a building block, a solvent for chemical reactions, and a transport material for nutrients and waste. Water also helps maintain blood volume, allows proper circulation, helps regulate our body temperature, and acts as a shock absorber for our joints and brain. There are still more health benefits of

water: it helps lubricate the linings of our inner organs and maintains healthy kidney function. The question is, what is the best, most healthy way to consume the water your body needs?

## What's in That Bottle?

Pretty names and labels promise consumers that bottled water is crisp, clean water straight from a beautiful mountain stream. Or maybe the clear liquid is simply offering a "pure" life. They convey the feeling that just sipping from their convenient plastic bottle will actually make you smarter. But is bottled water, and the package it comes in, safe, or at least safer than tap water? Most water bottles are made from a kind of plastic called polyethylene terephthalate, or PET. Manufacturing this type of plastic releases a variety of toxic chemicals into the air, including nickel, ethylbenzene, ethylene oxide, and benzene. According to a report by the Berkeley Plastics Task Force, making a 16-ounce PET bottle creates more than 100 times as much air and water pollution as making a glass bottle. Worse still, some of the toxic chemicals in the plastic can leach out over time into the water inside — particularly if the bottle is rinsed and reused.

(<https://www.moneycrashers.com/bottled-water-vs-tap-water-facts/>)

Chemicals, such as bisphenol A (BPA) and benzyl butyl phthalate (BBP), are laced into plastic bottles. These chemicals have the potential to seep into the water if bottles are exposed to heat or light, or if the bottle of water sits around for a long time. And because the plastic is porous, you'll likely get a swill of harmful bacteria with each gulp if you reuse the bottles.

That being said, some of the bottled water on grocery store shelves actually does come from natural sources. Of the bottled water brands, 55 percent draw their products from natural springs. It is estimated, however, that the remaining 45 percent of available bottled water is the same as the water you get from your own tap.





## Is Bottled Water Safe?

The Federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulates bottled water as a food. That means it regulates allowable levels of chemical, physical, microbial and radiological contaminants; requires Good Manufacturing Practice standards for boiling and bottling; and regulates labeling.

However, the FDA doesn't have the ability to oversee a mandatory testing program, like the EPA does, with public water suppliers. So although it can order a bottled water recall once a problem has been found, there is no guarantee that the bottle of water you bought is safe.

The FDA's rules exempt many forms of what most of us would consider bottled water from its definition of "bottled water," and therefore, according to the FDA, exempts them from all of the FDA's specific standards for bottled water testing and contamination. If the product is declared on the bottle ingredient label simply as "water," or as "carbonated water," "disinfected water," "filtered water," "seltzer water," "soda water," "sparkling water," or "tonic water," it is not considered "bottled water" by the FDA.

In addition, the FDA oversight doesn't apply to water packaged and sold within the same state, leaving some 60 to 70 percent of bottled water, including the contents of water cooler jugs, free of FDA regulation. In this case, testing depends on the states, but often state primacy agencies don't have adequate resources to oversee bottled water.

## Bottled Water and the Environment

It is hard to argue the fact that waste management has become a large problem in the world, with landfills growing to enormous sizes and recycling rates remaining dismally low. The number of plastic bottles produced by the bottled water industry, and subsequently discarded by consumers, has only exacerbated this problem.

Bottled water produces up to 1.5 million tons of plastic waste per year. According to Food and Water Watch, that plastic requires up to 47 million gallons of oil per year to produce ([foodandwaterwatch.org/water/bottled](http://foodandwaterwatch.org/water/bottled)). And while the plastic used to bottle beverages is of high quality and in demand by recyclers, over 80 percent of plastic bottles are simply thrown away. Then there's the waste of the water itself, says Todd Jarvis, PhD, Associate Director of the Institute for Water and Watersheds at Oregon

State University. According to his calculations, it takes about 72 billion gallons of water a year, worldwide, just to make the empty bottles. (<http://www.rd.com/health/wellness/rethink-what-you-drink/4/#ixzz3ZrwjfCso>)

Besides the sheer number of plastic bottles produced each year, the energy required to manufacture and transport these bottles to market severely drains limited fossil fuels. Bottled water companies, due to their unregulated use of valuable resources and their production of billions of plastic bottles, have caused a significant strain on the environment.

## Is Tap Water Safe?

The fact is that tap water is tested more frequently than bottled water. In the United States, our drinking water is continuously monitored and treated according to federal standards. It is considered generally safe if it comes from a public water system in the United States, such as one run and maintained by a municipality. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has the authority to monitor all public water systems and sets enforceable health standards regarding the contaminants in drinking water.

Before drinking water leaves a treatment plant on its way to your house, it must meet strict safety standards. That doesn't mean that your water is free of all contaminants, but that the levels of any contaminants don't pose any serious health risk.

Of course, accidents can happen. If the water supply becomes contaminated by something that can cause immediate illness, the supplier must promptly inform you. Suppliers also need to offer alternative suggestions for safe drinking water such as issuing a boil order. In addition,

they have 24 hours to inform customers of any violation of standards that could have major impact on health following a short-term exposure.

By July 1 of each year, public water suppliers are required to mail their customers a drinking water quality report, sometimes called a consumer confidence report or CCR. The report tells where your water comes from and what's in it. The Iowa Rural Water Association provides a website convenient for utilities to submit their CCR free at [www.iowaccr.org](http://www.iowaccr.org). Consumers can easily visit this site, look for their city and/or system's CCR, and download it within minutes.

## What can you do?

There's a simple alternative to purchasing bottled water: buy a stainless steel thermos or BPA-free bottles, and use them. Don't like the way your local tap water tastes? Inexpensive carbon filters will turn most tap water into sparkling fresh drinking water at a fraction of bottled water's cost.

Local food is everywhere these days: community-supported agriculture (CSAs), farmers markets, farm-to-table dining. That local food is grown and cooked with — you guessed it — local water! It's the invisible part of the sustainable, healthy food you eat.

So become an advocate for tap water! It's time to optimize your hydration quotient and appreciate your local water supply just as much as you do your local farmers market. Shouldn't we care for and support our water sources like we support healthy, natural local farm products?

Tap water is clearly the safest, healthiest and most sustainable choice. When you imbibe your community's tap water, you show that you value the source, the utility, and the professionals that bring it to you. Drink local!



**DRINK LOCAL  
GET IT  
FROM THE TAP!**

FAITH IN THE FAUCET

IOWA RURAL WATER ASSOCIATION

# Dry or Sweet, It's a Treat

Lynia Ghormley

What amazing Iowa product is full of water, but doesn't get it from a well, pipeline or faucet? How can that be, you ask? When the source of the product itself is bursting with water straight from the ground and the clouds — grapes! Wineries in Iowa don't need to add water to their wines — the liquid in wine comes from the grape juice alone — but they couldn't produce wine without it. Bob Wersen, president of Tassel Ridge Winery in Leighton, says that it takes about five gallons of water to make one gallon of wine. The water is used for washing floors, hoses, tanks and trench drains. Employees add soaps and citric acids to the water to clean and neutralize the tanks. Tassel Ridge has three vineyards near Oskaloosa, and uses Oskaloosa city water in the facilities there. The winery itself uses Mahaska Rural Water for its wine processing.

The history of winemaking in Iowa resembles a crazy roller coaster ride. Iowa farmers first started trying to grow Concord grapes in the 1850s. In the beginning, grapes grown in Iowa were not even used for wine here, but shipped out of the state to other wineries. In the 1980s there was an attempt to start Iowa wine production, but it failed. Growers tried again in the 1990s, and this time it became a successful venture. Several wineries also opened in the 2000s. Fox Ridge Winery (Traer, 2004), and Fireside Winery (Marengo, 2007) source their water from Poweshiek Rural Water, and Cat Tale Country Wines (Ocheyedan, 2010) is served by Osceola County Rural Water System.

Tassel Ridge Winery opened in 2006, and has grown to become the largest winery in Iowa, producing 180,000 bottles of wine per year and employing 45 workers, one-fourth of them full-time. The state now has nearly 100 wineries, producing a large variety of wines and offering a range of activities and related products. The industry is currently once again taking a hit, with local wine consumption dropping due to competition from seltzers and other alcoholic beverages, but Wersen is optimistic that the business will pick up when the novelty of these products has worn off. Throughout millennia wine has always been a staple in fine dining and many types of social events, withstanding the test of time as a healthy and delicious libation.

Many of us, when we think of a vineyard, picture a dry hillside in an area of Italy, France or Germany not otherwise known for abundant agriculture.

You might find it surprising that grapes grow so well in Iowa, when we are famous for our rich black dirt sown mainly with corn and soybeans. Wersen dispels the myth that only dry, sandy soil can support vineyards when he says that "corn soil" or well drained hills equals good grapes." His vineyards are composed of a loess soil mix left by glaciers and the Des Moines River, which is excellent for growing several varieties. Tassel Ridge alone grows eleven different varieties on 75 acres.

Iowa weather, however, does influence which varieties will survive here. Unexpected late and early frosts preclude growing a reliable crop of Concord and Catawba grapes, so juice to produce those wines is purchased from upstate New York. Iowa-grown grapes must be special cold-hardy varieties to survive our harsh winters. Insects and other natural invaders can also be a problem. Different varieties are known for different qualities, such as resistance to pests. Hybrids have been fashioned by crossing a hardy grape not necessarily known for good flavor with a native American or European variety that has wonderful taste, so the vines produce great-tasting grapes that can withstand pest invasions.

The best part of having so many local wineries is the many activities they host for wine enthusiasts. Each winery has a list of events to tickle the wine fancier's fancy. Most offer tours regularly, where vineyard techniques and wine making are explained in layman's terms; ending in the tasting room, where you can sample whatever vintages you like, with advice from experienced wine experts to help you make an informed purchasing decision. Beware, or you may leave the winery with a whole case of your favorites, as this author has done several times!

Other activities include live music performances from popular Midwestern bands, such as the ones at Fireside Winery and Fox Ridge Winery. You can enjoy great music, excellent wine, and often snacks as well. Fox Ridge Winery throws a Fall Festival in October, and Fireside Winery holds a Holiday Open House in December.

Tassel Ridge Winery celebrates their Iowa Harvest Red Release in early December and several other regular events throughout the year: Wine Dinner & Murder Mysteries (eight per year), Wine and Wood Fired Oven Calzone Days, Wine and Wood Fired Oven Pizza Days, and special burger and

pasta evenings. It also serves lunch daily, featuring soups, salads and sandwiches. Wersen's personal interest lies in food pairing. He believes that a good pairing makes both the food and the wine taste better. Events are carefully orchestrated to show off both to their best advantage.

Other amenities are sometimes offered to winery guests. Fox Ridge Winery offers a 100-seat banquet room that can be rented out for parties, receptions and meetings, with additional seating on the shady lawn. The Retreat at Fireside Winery, a four-bedroom guesthouse near the winery, Tanger Outlet Center and the Amana Colonies, can be rented for a night or a week, and is an elegant getaway for you and your family or friends.

Many wineries host tasting events not only in their own facilities, but around the state wherever their wines are sold in retail stores. For instance, you can attend a Fireside wine tasting in Pella, Council Bluffs, Davenport, and many other locations.

If you prefer to sample wines from several wineries in a short period of time you might be interested in traveling one or more of the eight Iowa Wine Trails. Each trail features a particular area of the state, with between four and fifteen wineries each:

- Iowa Wine Trail – 11 wineries (Anamosa, Baldwin, Bankston, Clinton, Decorah, Fredericksburg, Guttenberg, Marquette and West Branch)
- I-80 Wine Trail – 10 wineries (east and west within 10 miles of the Interstate)
- Western Iowa Wine Trail – 7 wineries (from Elk Horn to Thurman and back to Crescent)
- Heart of Iowa Wine Trail – 8 wineries (central one-third of the state from north to south)
- Amana Colonies Wineries – 7 wineries
- Scenic Rivers Wine Trail – 8 (southeast corner of the state)
- Northwest Prairie Wine Trail – 15 (east of Interstate 35 west to the Iowa border and Highway 175 north to the Iowa border)
- Back Roads Wine Trail – 4 (on or around Highway 92 southeast of Des Moines)

If you are not an experienced wine drinker, you may be wondering where your tastes lie in wine. Are you a typical Iowan when it comes to what you pour into a stemware glass? Wersen, although his true passion is for making really good dry wines for food pairing, observes that most Iowans prefer a sweeter wine, so he grows many varieties of



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8

- 1 Arawn Hodgkirs, chef, and Joel Johnson, tap room server, host bistro lunches and wine samplings at Tassel Ridgetasting room.
- 2 Greg Huff, IRWA CEO, and Robert Wersen, Tassel Ridge President, discuss the Iowa wine business.
- 3 Tassel Ridge Winery uses a cross-flow filtration system to remove solids after fermentation, producing a really clean wine.
- 4 A Tassel Ridge worker shrinks plastic seals over wine bottle caps.
- 5 Series of catwalks allows Tassel Ridge winemakers to access the tops of wine tanks for inspection and cleaning.
- 6 Tassel Ridge President Robert Wersen checks the wine tanks in the cellar.
- 7/8 Tassel Ridge wine is stored in a climate-controlled case room until shipment.

grapes and produces a plethora of sweet wines. For tastings, he provides customers with an oversized chart listing all of the Tassel Ridge wines. A taster can travel from the upper left corner – the driest wines – to the sweetest wines in the bottom right corner, working from whites through rosés to reds. He suggests starting somewhere in the middle and working your way either up, down, left or right until you find the right wine (or several) to tickle your taste buds.

Wersen says that wine drinkers often start with a sweet wine, and as they become more experienced wine drinkers over time, drift up and left to the drier wines. Overall, however, Tassel Ridge's most popular wine is still their Red, White, & Blue, a red wine which falls into the bottom right corner among the sweetest wines they offer.

If you are of the opinion that only Californians and Europeans know how to make a good wine, Iowa wineries and their devotees would beg to differ.

Visit an Iowa winery, do a tasting, and give it a chance to change your mind. You may be pleasantly surprised to find that you don't have to take a trip to France or the Napa Valley to experience some of the best wine in the world!

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# Water Matters

with Dale Barrie and John Veach

Once again I'm talking with Dale Barrie and John Veach. As a reminder, these guys are two of THE water and wastewater industry leaders in Iowa. Their combined operator experience and knowledge of Iowa's water quality and industry standards is vast.

Dale started his career at a young age and in 2004 shifted gears to join the Iowa Rural Water Association staff as the western Iowa Circuit Rider. Over the years he also served as Training Specialist and temporary Eastern Iowa Circuit Rider. His assistance and training has helped countless young operators obtain licenses to work in the state of Iowa.

John Veach served 13 years at IRWA. John came to IRWA with 20 years of experience with PeopleService Inc. and the City of

Clarinda. John's service to wastewater utilities across the state has been invaluable. He served as the primary wastewater trainer for IRWA, having coordinated hundreds of hours of classroom training, and has been a tireless advocate on behalf of small wastewater systems facing new rules and regulations.

**What is the number one thing most operators want their customers to know about the water and wastewater system? How can consumers help to make their jobs easier?**

**John:** The NUMBER ONE problem today in wastewater collection and treatment systems are "flushable" wipes. There is currently a large educational push to tell consumers that these wipes do not ever break down in the collection or treatment system. They are causing millions

of dollars of damage by plugging up lines and destroying mechanical equipment at the plants. There have been a tremendous number of back-ups and overflows due to these wipes. A collection system is designed for domestic waste, so just because it will go down the toilet doesn't mean it should. I have heard many times that "the city" man plugged up and caused damage. As an operator, I know the "city" does not contribute to the collection system, homeowners do, so be mindful of your contribution.

**Dale:** Be watchful and aware of your system – notify your water system if you see water running or standing in areas which normally are dry; if there are any changes in pressure or quality at your tap; or if you see any unusual activity around water supplies, treatment plants, storage tanks, hydrants or valves.