

JANUARY 2024 | Rathbun Regional Water Association

QUENCH

news by the glassful

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SOURCE WATER PROTECTION:
Q&A with Wapello Rural
Water Association



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on the cover

This classic, unique corncrib has withstood many winters in northern Iowa. Seeing this beautiful snow field reminds us that due to current Iowa drought conditions, snow might be a welcome sight.



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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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NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING

JANUARY 2024

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 29, 2024, 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 2024. 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 2023 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 2024 are: Charla Warner and Garry Schiller.

Those nominated to fill the position of Directors whose terms expire are:

District 5: Charla Warner – PO Box 37, Bonaparte, IA 52620

District 6: Garry Schiller – 1798 255th Street, Donnellson, IA 52625

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 *CHAIRPERSON*

Denny Amoss *VICE CHAIRMAN*

Doug Goblen *SECRETARY & TREAS.*

Curt Frank

Garry Schiller

Charla Warner

Ken Wuthrich

BIOGRAPHY OF NOMINEES

DISTRICT 1

Charla Warner has lived in the Bonaparte area all her adult life and has served on the RRWA board of directors since 2019. She has three grown children, five grandsons and three great grandchildren. She is very active in the community, currently serving as president of Township Stores, Inc. which is the local grocery store in Bonaparte. Charla is also actively involved in the daily operations of the store. She is also the president of the Bonaparte Cemetery and the treasurer of the Bonaparte Historical Association.

DISTRICT 6

Garry Schiller, and his late wife Teresa, have been lifelong residents of Lee County and joined RRWA as a customer in 1988 when the first phase of the Lee County system was built. Garry became a board of director for RRWA in 2012. Garry and his brother farm approximately 600 acres, mostly south of Donnellson, raising corn, soybeans, and wheat. The Schiller's have two grown children and enjoy four grandchildren. Garry served as a member of the Central Lee Community School Board for seven years, between 1974 and 1981. He served on the Farm Service Corp. board of directors for nine years, the Lee County FSA County Committee for nine years, and has also served for three years on the board of the United Church of Christ in Donnellson.

Landowners can receive cost share for conservation practices.

5 Important Reasons to Protect Rathbun Lake

Landowners in the Rathbun Lake watershed are the key to protecting water quality in the lake. Landowners who install conservation practices on land in the watershed can help reduce the sediment and phosphorus that are carried in runoff to Rathbun Lake. There has never been a better time for landowners in the watershed to take action to protect Rathbun Lake. Here are five important reasons:

REASON #1

Rathbun Lake is the only source of drinking water for almost all the farms, homes, and businesses in the watershed.

REASON #2

Water quality in Rathbun Lake is threatened by the large amounts of sediment and phosphorus that enter the lake from land in the watershed.

REASON #3

Poor water quality in Rathbun Lake negatively affects the lake as a source of drinking water and impacts other uses of the lake such as recreation.

REASON #4

Landowners can receive one-on-one, on-farm assistance from professional staff to help them plan and install conservation practices on their land.

REASON #5

Landowners can receive significant financial assistance to help pay for the cost of installing conservation practices on their land in the watershed.

Hundreds of landowners have already installed conservation practices on their land in the watershed to protect Rathbun Lake. Commonly installed practices are terraces, ponds, cover crops, and seeding cropland to hay and pasture. **Landowners in the Rathbun Lake watershed area of Appanoose, Clarke, Decatur, Lucas, Monroe, and Wayne Counties who are interested in installing conservation practices should contact their local Soil and Water Conservation District office.**

Landowners receive one-on-one, on-farm assistance.



Keep a Lid on It... **PLEASE!**

Winter is here! Don't let the cold weather interrupt your water service. RRWA asks our customers to make sure the lid that covers your meter pit fits tightly on top of the pit. You should also check the frost lid inside the meter pit. The frost lid must fit snug on the inside lip of the meter pit. Frost lids can be made of Styrofoam, plastic, or aluminum depending on the style of your meter pit. The frost lid helps hold in heat from the ground to keep your meter pit from freezing when the temperature outside drops during the cold winter months. Remember to always inspect your meter pit for any damage.



Properly placed lid on top of meter pit.



Frost lid positioned inside meter pit.

Please contact RRWA if your meter pit is damaged or if you have any questions about your water service by calling 1-800-233-8849.



RRWA and CoBank SHARING SUCCESS

*Supporting the important work
of nonprofits in Iowa*

For more than a decade, Rathbun Regional Water Association (RRWA) and CoBank have jointly supported the efforts of nonprofit organizations in Iowa. This partnership has been made possible through CoBank's Sharing Success Matching Grant Program. Since the Sharing Success Program began in 2012, CoBank and its customers like RRWA have together contributed nearly \$76 million to nonprofit groups across the country working to improve the quality of life in their communities. RRWA and CoBank have contributed more than \$200,000 to organizations that carry out activities which benefit residents in the Association's service territory.

Organizations and activities supported by matching funds from RRWA and CoBank through the Sharing Success Program include the following:

Rathbun Land and Water Alliance

The Alliance provides leadership, coordination, and assistance for efforts to protect Rathbun Lake. Rathbun Lake is the source of drinking water for RRWA. The Alliance works with hundreds of farmers to apply conservation practices that protect and improve water quality in the lake. Funds from RRWA and CoBank are used for farmer outreach as well as to assist with lake protection practices.



Rod Glosser and Randy Eddy with RRWA present an Iowa Rural Water Scholarship to Lucas Henderson, son of RRWA employee Jennifer Henderson.

Iowa Rural Water Scholarship Program

Since 2006, the program has awarded 84 scholarships for a total of \$81,000 to college-bound students. Eligible recipients are children of employees with Iowa Rural Water Association (IRWA) member communities and rural systems. Priority is given to students pursuing a career in the water industry. RRWA, CoBank, and other IRWA members and business partners support the program.

Iowa Children's Water Festival (ICWF)

RRWA and CoBank support helps ensure the ICWF continues to be a premier youth educational event. The annual Festival teaches 5th graders from across Iowa about the importance of water. The ICWF is offered as an in-person event at Des Moines Area Community College in Ankeny, Iowa and as a virtual "Water Festival in a Box" to reach the greatest number of students possible in the state.



RRWA staff Jennifer Henderson, Marcy Thamke, and Tesa Hinton volunteering at the Iowa Children's Water Festival.

Food Bank of Iowa

Food Bank of Iowa activities in RRWA's service territory include school pantries, backpack programs, mobile pantries, and senior programs. CoBank and RRWA have helped build the Food Bank's capacity to meet the need for food assistance in southeast Iowa by assisting with the purchase of a box truck for food distribution and cold storage equipment for food pantries in local schools.

Iowa Community Action Partnership (ICAP)

ICAP provides services to more than 13,000 families annually that are struggling with poverty in southeast Iowa. Services offered include early childhood education, parenting classes, mental health counseling, and direct economic support for essential needs. RRWA and CoBank have helped ICAP assist families with housing-related expenses such as mortgage, rent, and utilities.

About CoBank

CoBank is one of the largest private providers of credit to the rural economy in the United States. The bank delivers loans, leases, and other financial services to agribusiness, rural infrastructure, and Farm Credit customers in all 50 states. RRWA has been a CoBank customer since 1989.

Tell RRWA about your WATER SERVICE LINE

Earn a Chance to Win a \$50 Gift Card!

RRWA is required to identify water lines made of lead that serve our customers. Please help RRWA by telling us about your water service line.

THREE WAYS to TELL RRWA and EARN a CHANCE to WIN!

1. Complete the water service line survey on RRWA's website at: <https://www.rrwa.net/lead-service-line-survey.aspx>
2. Complete the survey by scanning the QR Code:
3. Complete the survey by calling RRWA at 1-800-233-8849 to speak with a customer service representative.



RRWA customers who complete the survey will be entered into a monthly drawing for a \$50 gift card. Please only complete one survey for each RRWA account. ***We have already had nine \$50 gift card winners!!***

SPEAKING OF SMART METERS...

@#\$%&!@#\$%&!, another water leak just cost me \$500!!

Why don't you get a smart meter from RRWA?

How could a smart meter help me with a water leak?!

A smart meter sends an email to let you know about a leak.

So, a smart meter could have saved me \$500?!



You betcha, and RRWA will install a smart meter for free!

Don't Get Stuck Paying for Water Leaks!

Call RRWA Now to Request Your **FREE SMART METER**
1-800-233-8849

YEARS OF SERVICE

Recognition

The successful growth of RRWA depends a great deal on the hard work and commitment of its employees. Annually, RRWA recognizes employees for their years of service to the Association. In 2023, 12 employees were honored for a combined 125 years of service.

5 YEARS OF SERVICE

CODY BRUGGEMEYER, Water Distribution/Construction

MIKE DICKHOFF, Water Treatment Plant Operator

JON FOSTER, Information Management/GIS Specialist

MATT HADEN, Systems Engineer

JUSTIN KNAPP, Field Area Representative

CODY WEST, Field Area Representative

KEN WUTHRICH, Board of Director

10 YEARS OF SERVICE

ANDREW HUNOLD, Field Area Representative

JASON RASKIE, Water Treatment Plant Operator

20 YEARS OF SERVICE

SCOTT JACKSON, One Call Coordinator

25 YEARS OF SERVICE

ROD GLOSSER, CEO/CFO

JIM NUSBAUM, East Distribution Superintendent

City of Milton and RRWA Work Together

Rathbun Regional Water Association (RRWA) supplies drinking water to 58 communities in southern Iowa and northern Missouri. Many of these communities purchase water in bulk from RRWA and deliver it to residents and businesses through their own distribution system. The City of Milton has purchased bulk water from RRWA since 1989. RRWA supplies approximately 750,000 gallons of water per month to the City from a meter located near the edge of town. Like RRWA's other bulk water customers, the City of Milton owns, operates, and maintains all the water distribution system inside of the community including the mains, valves, tower, pump, and other equipment.

Last summer, residents in the City of Milton experienced periods of lower-than-normal water pressure. Initially, the City was concerned that changes in RRWA's system could be the cause of this low water pressure for its residents. Jim McLain and Gary Cooper with the City of Milton contacted Kelly Carel, RRWA's Distribution Superintendent, to discuss the low-pressure issue. During their discussion, Kelly assured Jim and Gary that there had not been any changes in RRWA's system that would cause low water pressure for residents in the City of Milton. In addition, Kelly shared that RRWA's system had more than adequate capacity to meet increased customer demand due to the high temperatures and drought conditions of the summer.

Jim, Gary, and Kelly worked together to investigate and address the cause of low water pressure for residents in the City of Milton. The City's water system requires the manual operation of a pump and valve to control the flow of water from RRWA. At times, multiple adjustments must be made manually each day to ensure adequate water supply and pressure for City residents. In addition, a new valve in the City's system did not have the required settings to help maintain a stable water pressure for residents. This new valve had been installed as part of the City's system in February 2023. The difficulties of manual operation and the need for different valve settings became most noticeable in the summer due to the relatively high water demand by City residents and the resulting low water pressure that they experienced. Jim, Gary, and Kelly determined that making the required manual adjustments

and identifying the correct valve settings were both necessary to avoid overflowing the City's water tower and to provide adequate water pressure to residents.

As a long-term solution, the City of Milton decided to complete the installation of a control system that will automatically operate the pump and adjust the valve settings. The new system will monitor and respond to water level and pressure at the City's water tower and in RRWA's water main that supplies the City. Pump operation and valve adjustments will be controlled automatically to maintain a desired level of water in the City's tower and stabilize water pressure for residents.

These control systems can be complex to set up and operate. Kelly contacted Rod Witt, RRWA's Maintenance Specialist, to advise Jim and Gary about this type of system. Rod's extensive experience with these systems enabled him to share information about them with the City and offer his assistance as needed. The City continues to work on installing this new automated control system.

RRWA encourages communities served by the Association to contact us with any questions or concerns about their drinking water. "We are always glad when communities like the City of Milton reach out to us with questions," Kelly stated, "and will do whatever we can to help resolve their issues." RRWA takes very seriously its responsibility to provide quality, reliable, and affordable drinking water to all customers including to the 58 communities and their residents that are served by the Association. **Please call RRWA at 1-800-233-8849 with questions about your drinking water or visit RRWA's website at www.rrwa.net to learn more about the Association.**





AN UNEXPECTED GEM

West Lake Okoboji

An unexpected gem among a sea of farm fields, West Lake Okoboji is a glacial spring fed lake in Northwest Iowa. It's deep, clean and cool waters that often glisten with a blue hue attract millions of visitors each year. The waters of West Lake Okoboji are also enjoyed in the form of a beverage from West O Beer, crafted with water from the lakes spring fed sources. Keeping this water clean and protected requires the efforts of many.

Iowa Lakeside Laboratory was established in 1909 by Thomas Macbride and his colleagues. Their goal was to offer summer courses that would enable students to learn about nature in the field. Lakeside has grown into a year-round residential environmental educational facility on a 147-acre campus. Students come from around the world to take classes at Lakeside, including the renowned diatom course. Diatoms are a special type of algae that use silica in their cells and are an important tool in assessing the health of aquatic ecosystems. The Lakeside Diatom course has been offered here for more than 60 years. This fall it will host the North American Diatom Association. Most people in the world who have studied diatoms are in some way connected to Iowa Lakeside Lab.

Now home to environmental education programs for all ages, as well as host to many environmental groups, Lakeside is helping to increase awareness and care for protecting the health of this precious resource. Researchers, writers and artists now work and study here, and all appreciate the West Lake Okoboji waters, whether they are studying it, kayaking through it, or painting it. Perhaps most important are the researchers and volunteers who are testing and protecting it.

Dr. Mary Skopec, Director of Iowa Lakeside Laboratory says, "Water monitoring and laboratory testing is an integral piece of Lakeside Lab's mission. Our partnership with the State Hygienic Laboratory, which is co-located on the Lakeside property, provides testing services to drinking and wastewater utilities, lake associations, state and county partners and interested citizens."



Iowa Lakeside Laboratory is home to one of the longest running citizen volunteer water quality monitoring programs, The Cooperative Lakes Area Monitoring Program.

“The Cooperative Lakes Area Monitoring Program (CLAMP) is a citizen science program that has monitored the health of the Iowa Great Lakes for the past twenty-five years and has documented significant improvements in the lakes during this time, which helps to underscore the value of watershed management programs aimed at improving water quality,” says Skopec.

Due to these efforts and programs that support them, the lake has exceptional water quality and clarity. The glacial waters of West Lake Okoboji are so clear, that the term, “Blue Water Lake,” has often been associated with it. While not a scientific term, it has been associated with areas that enjoy exceptional water quality. When sunlight penetrates these pure waters, other wavelengths are absorbed more strongly than blue. Most natural waters contain dissolved organic matter that selectively absorbs blue wavelengths. Scientific term or not, many residents will take pride in the idea that it is one of three blue water lakes in the world, along with Lake Louise in Canada and Lake Geneva in Switzerland.

Pride in our water also creates opportunities for the Lakeside Lab to partner with area businesses on clean water efforts—including West O Beer. Owners Matt and Michaela Matthieson made cleaning water the brewery’s mission from day one, and now, thru their Taproots “On Us” initiative, West O donates a portion of their profits to the Lab. This year they also volunteered their time (and some crisp West O beverages) to Lakeside’s Science on the Menu event and spoke about the science of brewing beer with West Lake Okoboji water. The program brings citizens together for a fun learning experience and dinner. They are helping to raise awareness and support initiatives that help to protect these waters, and not just for the purpose of brewing beer.

DNR Fisheries Biologist Mike Hawkins says, “Iowa’s natural lakes face tremendous biological, physical, and social pressures. Threats from invasive species, sediment and nutrient runoff, and increasing recreational use and development all create incredible challenges for agencies, lake associations, and local communities working to manage and protect these complex natural resources and their watersheds.”

The DNR works in partnership with Lakeside Lab to monitor and protect the area. “Iowa Lakeside Lab stands on the shores of West Okoboji Lake creating a hub that connects educators, students, professionals, and the local community with the science of natural resources. Combining this connection with class projects, graduate programs, and volunteer groups, Lakeside has provided more than an educational opportunity. Iowa Lakeside Laboratory provides monitoring, research, and data that helps natural resource agencies and the community make critical decisions for managing lakes and water quality.”

The Friends of Iowa Lakeside Laboratory and those that support their efforts will continue their dedication to keeping West Lake Okoboji clean and blue for all to continue to enjoy. This is made possible when so many organizations and individuals work together for a common goal.

If you are interested in learning more, or supporting their cause, visit friendsoflakesidelab.org



Wapello Rural Water Association's treatment facility near their wellfield south of Delta, IA.



SOURCE WATER PROTECTION

Q & A WITH Wapello Rural Water Association

By: Aaron Schroeder *Source Water Specialist* – Iowa Rural Water Association

Source water protection planning is the act of protecting drinking water sources by developing and implementing strategies, partnerships, and activities to mitigate future and existing threats to source water quality and quantity. Common potential threats in Iowa include point sources (e.g., a wastewater discharge), nonpoint sources (e.g., fertilizer runoff), and others such as abandoned wells, which can act as a conduit for a pollutant to reach groundwater. In Iowa, source water protection planning is a voluntary process—public water supplies are never required to complete a source water protection plan, but completing a source water protection plan is often recommended by the Iowa Department of

Natural Resources during routine inspections; and is good practice for the long-term health of a water utility.

As Source Water Specialist at the Iowa Rural Water Association, my primary job duty is facilitating the development and implementation of source water protection plans for public water supplies in Iowa. Working with public water supplies ranging from municipal systems and rural water systems; to small systems such as rural campgrounds and churches has afforded me the opportunity to further learn about different types of water sources and the effort that goes into producing quality water throughout the state of Iowa. Over the

past year and a half, I've had the pleasure of assisting Wapello Rural Water Association (WRWA) in southeast Iowa in developing and implementing a source water protection plan. WRWA provides water to 15,601 customers in southeast Iowa, comprising many small towns and rural users. Their water treatment plant and wellfield are located four miles south of Delta, IA. WRWA sources its water from seven wells in the South Skunk River Alluvial Aquifer. Dan Westgard, WRWA Treatment Plant Superintendent initiated their source water protection planning efforts. I took the time to ask Dan a few questions regarding the source water protection planning process and how it's benefitted them as a utility.

AARON: What sparked WRWA's interest in developing a source water protection plan?

DAN: The Iowa DNR provided an initial contaminant source inventory via a phase I source water assessment. This helped us identify two inactive wells in our groundwater capture zone that we were able to plug with the assistance from the property owners and Keokuk County Environmental Health. This project sparked our interest and led us to contacting the Iowa Rural Water Association to work on putting together a formal source water protection plan document. Our first step was organizing a planning team to guide the development and implementation of the plan.

AARON: What specific challenges does WRWA face regarding source water protection?

DAN: WRWA's wells are classified as "highly susceptible" due to their shallow nature and lack of overlying confining material (such as clay or shale). This magnifies the importance of proper source water protection measures.

AARON: Do you have any upcoming projects related to the results of the source water protection plan?

DAN: Currently we are in the process of locating and plugging abandoned wells in our 2-year time of travel capture zone. Additionally, we plan to install physical barriers immediately around each of our active water supply wells.

AARON: What are some things you learned throughout the source water protection planning process?

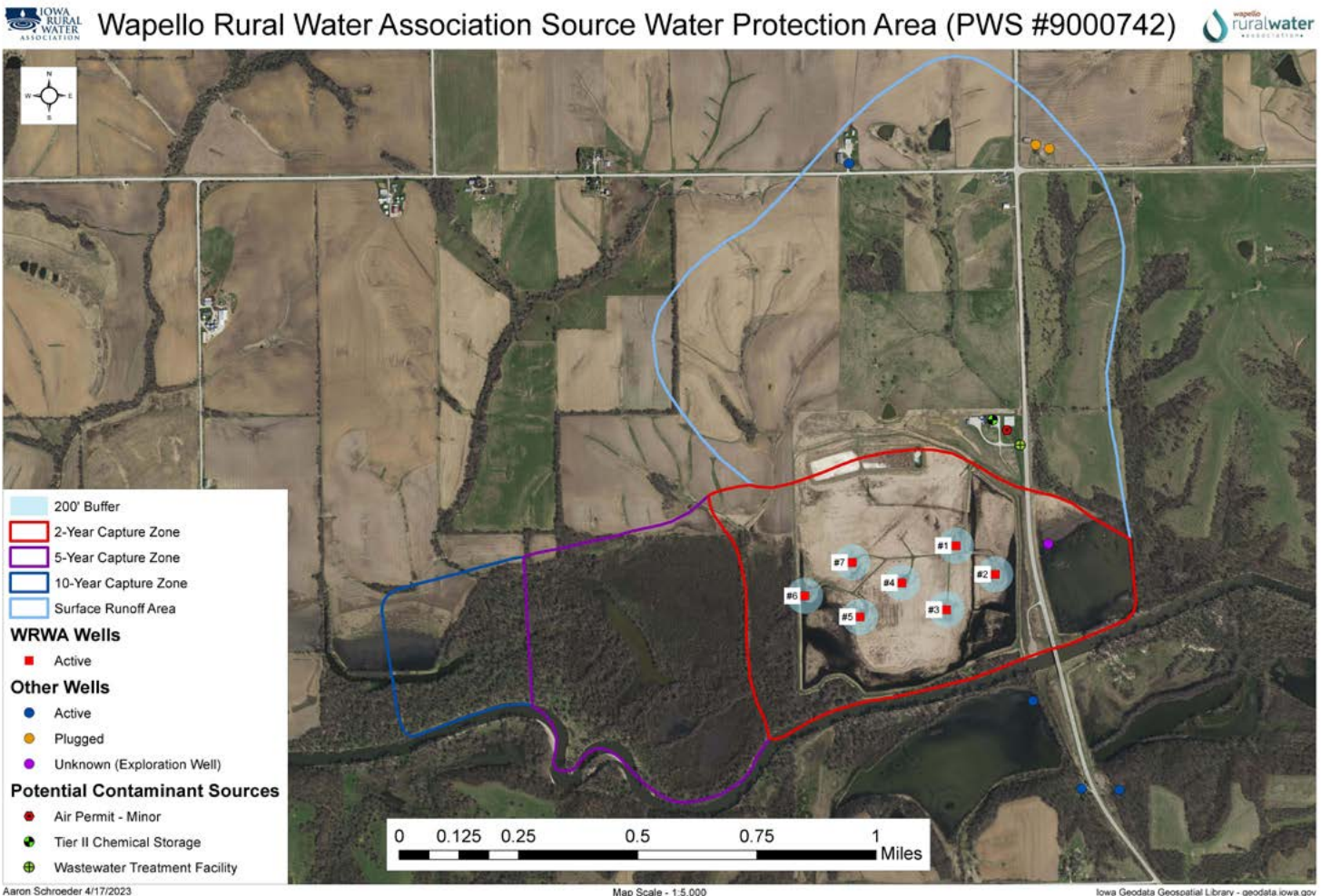
DAN: The source water protection planning process has allowed us to familiarize ourselves with neighbors and organizations who share an interest in partnering to ensure safe drinking water.

AARON: Any advice for utilities interested in source water protection, or other things you'd like to add?

DAN: We recommend any utility go through this process. It will help find vulnerabilities

and give the tools to strengthen those areas. Aaron Schroeder and the Iowa Rural Water Association were instrumental in the entire process. Our source water planning team and utility understand the importance of this plan and know it is always evolving. We learned a lot through the entire planning process and are in a better position thanks to the planning process.

Working with WRWA on a source water protection plan was a learning experience for me as well. Before initiating the formal planning process, WRWA was already engaging in source water protection. As mentioned, they have been addressing abandoned private wells in the area. Additionally, WRWA has done an excellent job of managing land use in their capture zones. Their nitrate levels have a 10-year average near 0 parts per million (ppm) (the MCL is 10 ppm). WRWA's efforts show the positive effect proper source water protection strategies can have on a water system.



Aerial Imagery of Wapello Rural Water Association's wellfield and source water protection area. Best management practices in the 2-year capture zone are the highest priority.



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WATER MATTERS:

Iowa Enters 4th Year of Drought

FACTS:

- In Iowa, as the state enters its fourth year of drought, the longest stretch in two decades, many utilities are taking steps to compensate for the precipitation shortages. – Tim Hall, Iowa Department of Natural Resources hydrologist.
- Two eastern Iowa counties, Tama and Benton, had the lowest recorded amount of rain in June, July and August in 120 years. That's drier than any three years during the 1930s Dust Bowl. – Tim Hall, IDNR
- Iowa was about 9.5 inches below normal rainfall through September 2023 and about 16 inches below normal for the three-year duration of the drought. – Tim Hall, IDNR
- Already typically among Iowa's driest months, November brought an average of one-hundredth of an inch of rain across the state. – Tim Hall, IDNR

HOUSEHOLD WATER CONSERVATION TIPS:

- Limit any lawn and garden watering to the hours of 8:00 PM to 8:00 AM
- Look into getting a rain barrel collection system to use for watering plants
- Do not "sweep" your garage and driveways with the water hose
- Do only full loads of dishes in the dishwasher
- Do only full loads of clothing in the laundry
- Check your system for leaks (toilets, outdoor faucets, sprinklers)
- Turn off the water faucet while brushing teeth or shaving
- Keep a pitcher of drinking water in the refrigerator instead of letting the faucet run until the water is cool

