



WATERSHED26 SHARED ACTION PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Shared Action Plan is a strategic framework designed to accelerate conservation agriculture adoption, improve watershed health, strengthen rural economies, and align public-private investment across the Upper Mississippi River Watershed. It was developed based on the insight and expertise of the Athene Watershed26 committee members. The Shared Action Plan, while a collaborative document, is not explicitly endorsed by individual committee members nor the organizations they represent.

FOUR STRATEGIC PILLARS



EMERGING VOICES



FINANCE SOLUTIONS



SCIENCE & DATA



STACKED BENEFITS

The plan is intended to serve as a shared roadmap for nonprofits, producers, landowners, agribusinesses, higher education institutions, investors, conservation organizations, public agencies, and community leaders.



STRATEGIC PILLAR 1: **EMERGING VOICES**

STRATEGIC GOAL

Build public understanding, workforce capacity, and next-generation leadership for conservation agriculture and watershed stewardship.

ACTION STEP 1

Deploy new media trainings and campaigns that support conservation priorities, educational resources, and collective wins.

ACTION STEP 2

Conduct a study on middle infrastructure needs to accelerate adoption of regenerative and alternative agriculture.

ACTION STEP 3

Increase workforce development and higher education opportunities in conservation agriculture.



Scan to learn about tactics and success metrics



STRATEGIC PILLAR 2: **FINANCE SOLUTIONS**

STRATEGIC GOAL

Unlock scalable financing and investment systems that accelerate conservation outcomes.

ACTION STEP 1

Create a toolbox/playbook for conservation financing options.

ACTION STEP 2

Pilot programs that create clear financial pathways for nature-based and agricultural investments.

ACTION STEP 3

Map ecosystem conditions necessary for capital deployment.



Scan to learn about tactics and success metrics



STRATEGIC PILLAR 3: **SCIENCE & DATA**

STRATEGIC GOAL

Leverage science, technology, and data systems to improve conservation outcomes and accelerate adoption.

ACTION STEP 1

Use data to identify high-impact watershed targets.

ACTION STEP 2

Invest in the existing resources available within the conservation ag sector to expedite the pace of practice adoption.

ACTION STEP 3

Support the development, scaling, and application of innovative systems, practices, and technology in the conservation ag sector.



Scan to learn about tactics and success metrics



STRATEGIC PILLAR 4: **STACKED BENEFITS**

STRATEGIC GOAL

Demonstrate and maximize the interconnected economic, environmental, and community benefits of conservation investments.

ACTION STEP 1

Analyze the economic value of water and conservation across sectors.

ACTION STEP 2

Implement a standardized assessment tool for large-scale infrastructure placement and water quality investment.

ACTION STEP 3

Holistically approach watershed interventions through creative funding structures.



Scan to learn about tactics and success metrics

WATERSHED26 SHARED ACTION PLAN

CONCLUSION

This Shared Action Plan provides a collaborative roadmap for scaling conservation agriculture and watershed resilience across the Upper Mississippi River Watershed.

By aligning communications, financing, science, and cross-sector benefits, partners can accelerate measurable environmental outcomes while supporting thriving agricultural communities and regional economies.

ATHENE WATERSHED26 COMMITTEE MEMBERS



EMERGING VOICES

Sophia Campbell, Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Hannah Dake, Great Outdoors Foundation
Tanner Faaborg, 1100 Farm
Molly Hanson, RDG Planning & Design
Afton Holt, CornerPost Marketing
Rebekah Jones, Iowa Agriculture Water Alliance & Agriculture's Clean Water Alliance
Devin Stortz, Ducks Unlimited
Joy Van Wyngarden, Joy of All Trades



FINANCE SOLUTIONS

Vincent Gauthier, Environmental Defense Fund
Hannah Inman, Great Outdoors Foundation
Morgan Snyder, Walton Family Foundation
Tee Thomas, Quantified Ventures



SCIENCE & DATA

Amanda Brown, Polk County Conservation
Melissa Campbell, Great Outdoors Foundation
Sara Carmichael, Great Outdoors Foundation
Kyle Cotten, INFRA
Catherine DeLong, Iowa State University
Susan Kozak, Iowa Department of Agriculture & Land Stewardship
Andrew McCoy, HDR
Amy Saltzman, Walton Family Foundation
Todd Sutphin, Iowa Soybean Association
John Swanson, Polk County Public Works
Dr. Larry Weber, IHR—Hydroscience and Engineering



STACKED BENEFITS

Pat Boddy, City of Urbandale
Jen Cross, Great Outdoors Foundation
Trina Flack, Catch Des Moines
Rich Leopold, Polk County Conservation
Tami Madsen, Central Iowa Water Works
Graham McGaffin, The Nature Conservancy Iowa
Joe McGovern, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation
Dr. Stephanie Oppel, ICON Water Trails
Melissa Walker, Des Moines Water Works