

TRIED & TRUE

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FALL 2022

FRATCO

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To Tried & True Readers,

As we draw closer to our centennial celebration, it's important to remember that Fratco stands on the shoulders of giants. Some of those giants are our present-day employees and contractors who keep the company growing strong year after year. Some of those giants are figures in our company's past who, while no longer with us in person, are still alive in our hearts and with us in spirit. All of these people—past and present—share similar qualities: a bright vision for the future, a burning commitment to excellence in the present and an undying respect for the progress achieved in the past.

Fratco has thrived by building on that progress with every passing moment, and some of that progress is as old as history itself. This issue's featured article, "Ancient Drainage," takes a look at the early developments in water management that made modern civilization possible. It's an eye-opening read that I hope will remind you how inspired, efficient and innovative the human race truly is—and always has been.

The breakthroughs described in "Ancient Drainage" explain how water management systems redefined mankind's agricultural potential, but since those early days, drainage has become so much more than a utility for farming alone. That's why I'm pleased that "Off the Farm" takes the time to explore the use of drainage systems outside of the agricultural sector. Many experienced Fratco contractors are already familiar with these lesser-known places pipe is used, but others may discover new opportunities.

When it comes to drainage solutions, no matter the industry, place or project, we are committed to providing quality, durable products that exceed your expectations. No matter the job, no matter the year—that much will never change.

Sincerely,



Chris Overmyer
President and CEO

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Locations

- 1** **Francesville**
4385 S. 1450 W.
P.O. Box 368
Francesville, IN 47946

2 **St. Anne**
499 S. Oak St.
St. Anne, IL 60964

3 **Mt. Pleasant**
1600 W. Washington St.
Mt. Pleasant, IA 52641

4 **Algona**
2502 E. Poplar St.
Algona, IA 50511

5 **Westfield (Stateline Tile)**
23942 IA Hwy 12
Westfield, IA 51062

★ **Corporate Office**
105 W. Broadway St.
P.O. Box 311
Monticello, IN 47960

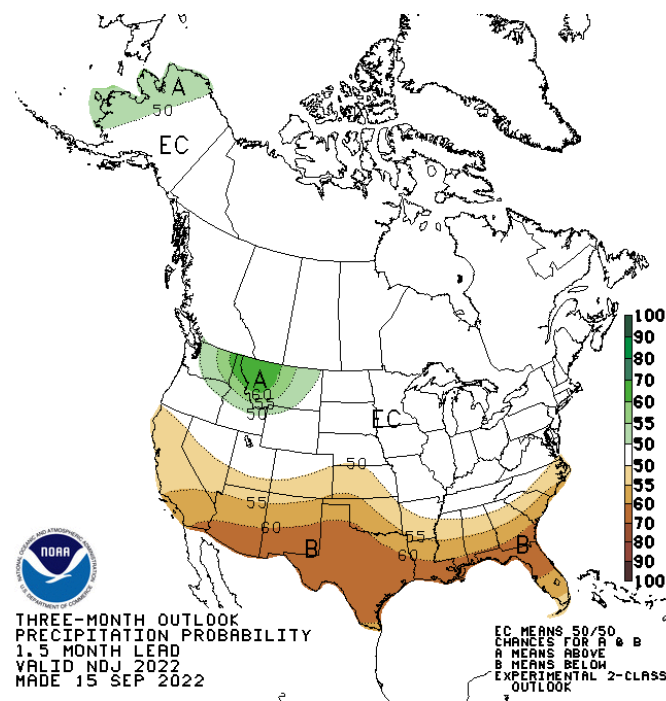


PRECIPITATION OUTLOOK

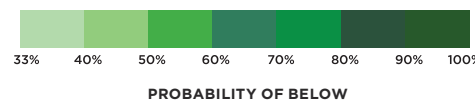
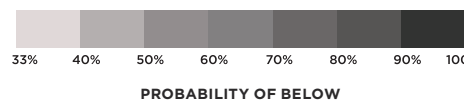
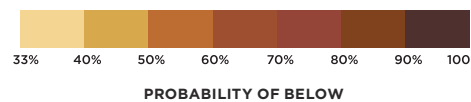
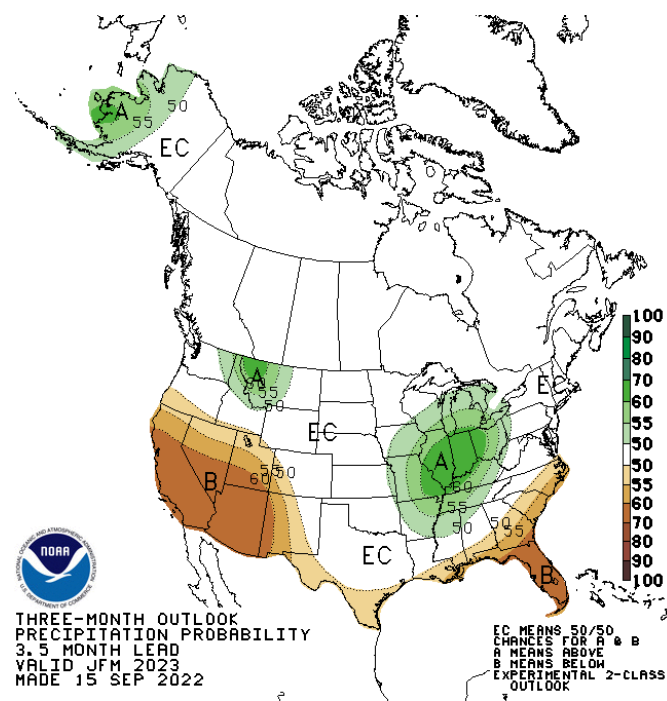
FROM THE NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE

2022 - 2023

NOV-DEC



JAN-FEB



Nothing about the future is set in stone, and weather predictions are no exception. But in an industry where thorough preparation is fundamental, having an idea of what lies ahead can be the difference between business as usual and battling rain delays. Always keep an eye on daily and weekly weather outlooks, but also set yourself up for success by planning ahead through seasonal forecasts.

For the latest weather information, visit the National Weather Service's website.

www.noaa.gov

MEET

JOSE REQUEÑA

SALES REPRESENTATIVE AND
DISPATCH ASSISTANT



In the four years since he started at Fratco, Jose Requeña has seen the pipe industry from three distinct perspectives. He first began at the plant in manufacturing, moved on to assisting with dispatch in the yard, then became an asset in the sales department. Now, his well-rounded experience in the Fratco supply chain allows him to serve customers' needs on all fronts.

"Since I first started here, I've seen the same customers coming back again and again. I've started forming relationships with them, and I love that I'm now in a position to help them from a big picture point-of-view."

From that point-of-view, it's clear to Jose why he's had the chance to create so many long-term bonds.

"Customers keep choosing Fratco because we provide the highest quality product and the best customer service. It makes me proud to know I'm playing a role in a successful company that's known for being the best."

But pride isn't the only perk that Fratco employees experience, according to Jose. "Fratco's benefits are incredible, and the feeling of being trusted and valued as an individual creates a great work environment."

Jose's favorite aspect of that great work environment is the camaraderie among employees and the growth mindset they all share. "I enjoy connecting with my peers in the company. They always motivate me to become a more efficient employee. Everyone is always growing at Fratco. It's a great feeling." Indeed, Jose's only regret is that he didn't come work for Fratco sooner.

"A lot of companies treat their employees as cogs in the machine. At Fratco, you really feel respected as a person, not just as a worker."

Jose's advice to anyone interested in joining the Fratco family? Go for it. "I've always told anyone wanting to apply for a job at Fratco that it's a great choice for employment. They go the extra mile to make you feel appreciated and secure. As long as you're a reliable person with a great work ethic, you'll do well here and like it."

FEATURE STORY

ANCIENT DRAINAGE

THE EARLY ORIGINS OF WATER MANAGEMENT TECHNOLOGY

Fratco has been a leader in the modern drainage industry, but what about before the notion of industry existed at all?

In other words—how did water management practices first begin? Who gets the credit for developing this essential technology? And what did that technology look like long before the words “drainage pipe” were synonymous with “Fratco”? As it turns out, early drainage techniques have a lot in common with the technology used today, and there’s plenty to learn from ancient civilizations’ water management methods and mindsets.

MESOPOTAMIA’S WATER MANAGEMENT NETWORK

Mesopotamia was home to civilizations of firsts: the first to build advanced and enduring structures, the first to develop strict ethical codes and, of course, the first to make waves in water management practices. Much like Fratco’s modern-day work culture, ancient Mesopotamian societies were grounded in tradition while they thrived off innovation.

Much of that innovation was driven by necessity. Located in the region that makes up modern-day Iraq, Turkey, Syria and Kuwait, the name “Mesopotamia” itself roughly translates to “between two rivers.” These neighboring bodies of fresh water—the Tigris and Euphrates—were a double-edged sword, however. On one hand, they provided Mesopotamia with lush, fertile land ripe for agriculture, while on the other, they made the area prone to devastating floods.

Those circumstances presented Mesopotamians with a literal “sink or swim” scenario—their civilization could either master the rivers and flourish or fall victim to flooding and perish.

Historical evidence shows that Mesopotamians rose to the occasion with some of humanity’s first engineering projects. Archaeological dig sites in the region reveal a complex network of basins and canals that mitigated flooding while irrigating farmland. Evidence suggests that some of these structures may have even been used for up to a millennium before being replaced. While this primitive technology may not have been as efficient as modern-day perforated pipe, it was still effective enough to support one of the first mass agricultural operations.

It appears that a culture of communal support arose around these structures. Ancient records suggest that farmers were required by Mesopotamian law to assist each other in digging and maintaining canals—especially in times of need when flooding was prevalent.

IRAN AND THE QANAT

In contrast to Mesopotamia’s abundance of water, early civilizations in Iran were forced to contend with an arid desert climate where water was scarce. In order to preserve this precious commodity in a territory that’s 85% dryland, a series of underground tunnels called “Qanats” were carved out of the earth by ancient laborers. These tunnels transported water to the surface for agricultural purposes as well as drinking. According to National Geographic, the network of Qanats still in place beneath Iran is so vast, it’s estimated that their total combined length could span the distance between the earth and the moon.

This water management infrastructure was the lifeblood of the region’s civilization. Ancient rulers placed great importance on maintaining these structures, even going so far as to bestow the honorary title of “mirab” upon the official tasked with maintaining an area’s Qanats.

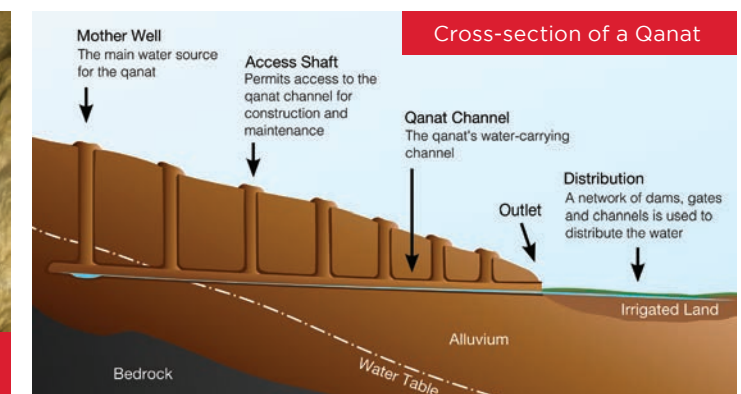
Today, the legacy lives on as modern-day mirabs work to restore and preserve ancient Qanats within Iran. Modern mirabs see their task as a means to honor their historical forerunners, with one prominent mirab stating, “These Qanats have been the source of life for me and all of my ancestors. It’s my duty to preserve them until the last second of my life.”

The Qanats were just one facet of ancient Iran’s water management marvels. In other agricultural zones, archeologists discovered clay soil pipes and baked clay bricks—structures that are strikingly similar to the clay tile of the 1900s that preceded today’s plastic pipe. These systems would have been used for drainage in a similar manner to Fratco pipe found on the farmland of today.

Continue Reading



Water channel, Qasabeh Qanat, part of a Qanat system in Iran



CHINA’S DRAINAGE
DECREES

In ancient Chinese dynasties, water management was on the minds of bureaucrats and philosophers alike. Confucius himself wrote of an ancient Chinese statesman who “was concerned by the threats caused by rainstorms and subsequent floods” and issued decrees to prevent agricultural disasters. Specifically, the statesman made it clear that regional governments were obligated to “build an embankment, dredge the ditch, make a water channel to enable water to flow correctly and build a reservoir to store water or discharge flood, so that people have farmlands to cultivate.”

In addition to these localized water management systems, regional drainage infrastructure was developed in ancient China on a grand, coordinated scale. Drainage systems constructed in the Yellow River Basin are a testament to the importance placed on water management by the highest levels of Chinese leadership around 500-400 BC. An ancient text called the Kao Gong Ji—“The Book of Diverse Crafts”—goes into great detail on the design and construction of drainage systems of this era as well.

MAYAN AND INCAN
WATER MANAGEMENT

On the other side of the world, indigenous civilizations of the South and Central American continents were also keen on water management. In ancient Maya, early agricultural experts designed sophisticated systems to retain and redistribute water for farmland and cities alike. The use of water management in both a rural and urban context mirrors the way Fratco pipe is also utilized in a variety of settings outside of agriculture today, as described in “Off the Farm” on page 14 of this issue.

The Incan civilization also had an incredible grasp on proper drainage practice. Their unique approach to farming led to the construction of artificial terraces with plots arranged in steps. Here, water drainage systems could be implemented in a way that circumnavigated the area’s steep terrain. These terraces can still be seen in the ruins of Machu Picchu, where they were once pivotal to the city-state’s longevity and success.

THE WISDOM OF
THE ANCIENTS

It’s difficult to imagine the time, effort and resources required to construct the world’s early water management systems—especially considering the advanced excavation technology, scientific knowledge and product engineering we rely on today. Still, the need for proper drainage was so great, our early ancestors had no choice but to find their own solutions.

No agricultural civilization could have prospered and progressed without effective drainage infrastructure. How interesting that such an early technology is still a major cornerstone of our civilization today—more refined by modern innovators like Fratco, yes, but identical in purpose, necessity and spirit.

With Fratco’s 100-year anniversary coming up in 2023, the company is proud of its heritage and four generations of family-owned legacy. When looked at through the lens of distant history, however, it becomes clear that Fratco is carrying a torch that dates back much farther than a century. The company is honored to be part of an ancient tradition of human ingenuity. ■

Industry
News

PPI HAS ANNOUNCED A NEW WEBSITE
WITH EDUCATIONAL CONTENT
CENTERED AROUND PLASTIC PIPE

PPI’s new educational site currently offers four courses, one of which is dedicated to drainage pipe installation.

In the announcement for the channel, PPI president David M. Fink stated: “Our members used their expertise to put together programs that are substantial and important. Our mission is to advance the acceptance and use of plastic pipe systems through research, education, technical expertise and advocacy. This new eLearn site provides educational content to improve the understanding of and the use of plastic pipe in diverse applications. Additionally, we have a staff of professional engineers who are available to answer questions and help design a plastic pipe system.”



The new platform’s courses are currently available for free at elearn.plasticpipe.org

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NORTH AMERICA
CONSERVATION AND
DRAINAGE EXPO

JANUARY 2023 | DES MOINES, IA

Visit Fratco at the inaugural North American Conservation and Drainage Expo in January.

Gain insight, knowledge and hands-on experience from product and equipment manufacturers, conservation experts, farm managers, legal experts and more at this one-of-a-kind expo organized by industry professionals for industry professionals.





Jim Mathias (right) and son, Tyler (left)

THE PERFECT FIT

Lick Creek Enterprises, LLC



Jim and Donna Lee Mathias
of Lick Creek Enterprises, LLC

The town of Birmingham, Iowa doesn't have the notoriety of the famous Alabama city that shares its name. Of course, that's to be expected for a town that only boasts a few hundred residents—367, to be exact, according to the 2020 Census. But despite the size and population differences, Iowa's Birmingham does have one thing that Alabama doesn't: Lick Creek Enterprises, LLC.

Owned by husband-and-wife duo Jim and Donna Lee Mathias, Lick Creek Enterprises was the first business in Iowa to carry Fratco pipe, even predating Fratco's plant in Mt. Pleasant by several years.

Naturally, Jim is happy to now have a Fratco location just thirty miles away from his shop. "As you'd expect, product availability and supply has increased since they opened in Mt. Pleasant," notes Jim. "The freight bill is also much cheaper since you don't have to haul it as far."

OFF ON THE RIGHT FOOT

The idea of long-distance hauling has a special significance for the Mathias family because their relationship with Fratco began with a delivery that truly went the extra mile.

"We had secured a big contract, and we planned to use another pipe company in the area. However, that company decided they'd rather take the project over for themselves than sell us the pipe. I called up Steve Overmyer, who was still Fratco's president at the time, and he said he could supply me with the shipment of dual-wall I needed instead."

Then, Steve asked Jim when he needed the pipe.

"I told him I needed it as soon as possible," recalls Jim with a chuckle. "I assumed it would take a few days to arrange the delivery." Steve Overmyer and his team in Francesville had different plans.

"Steve showed up with the semi load of pipe we needed the next morning," says Jim. "He had driven it to me himself—overnight—all the way from Indiana to Iowa."

Ever since then, the relationship between Lick Creek Enterprises and Fratco has grown stronger with every passing year as Jim and Donna Lee's customers continue to be thrilled with the quality and reliability of Fratco products.

"Fratco pipe is steadily a good product," Jim explains. "It never fluctuates in quality—it's always reliable that way."

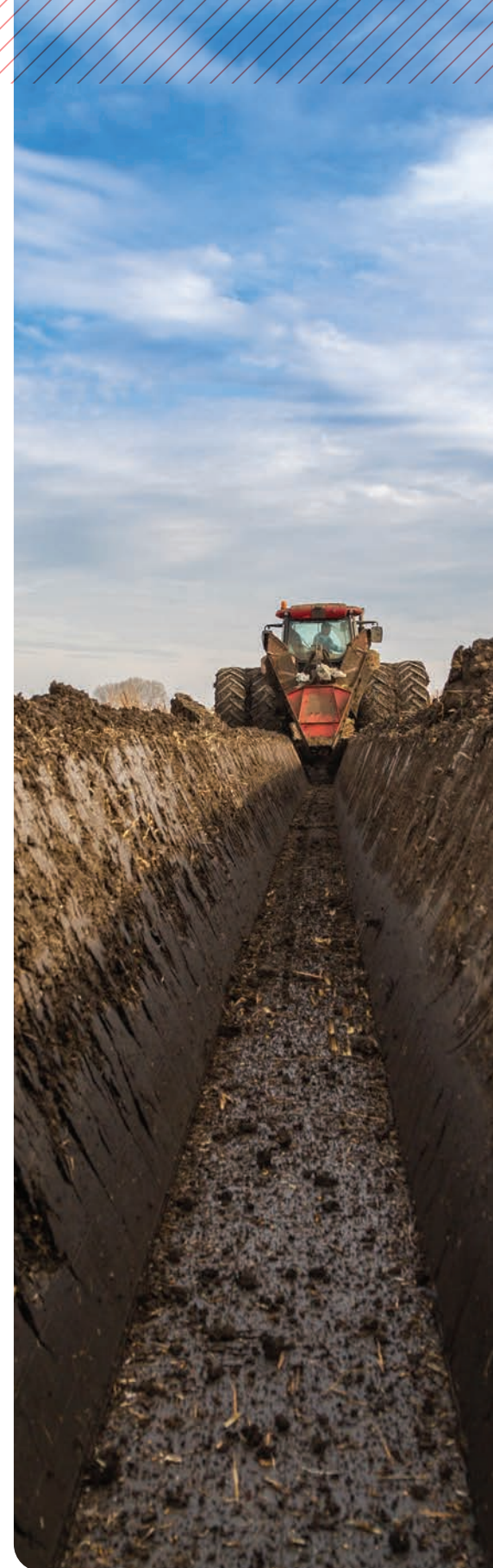
Jim goes on to explain that, even through the resin shortage, his company always had everything they needed from Fratco, both in terms of product supplied as well as the company's service and support.

"You can't help but form relationships when you're dealing with the same people over and over again with positive results," Jim explains. "I've gotten to know my rep at Fratco, Alan Kruszka, pretty well over the years."

"Fratco supports us in everything we do," Jim says. "We both aim for quality in every endeavor."

These days, the supply-and-demand relationship between Jim and Fratco goes both ways. Since Lick Creek Enterprises also specializes in fabrication, they currently make many of the specialized pipe fittings that Fratco carries. Overall, this relationship demonstrates how businesses can grow together with each side benefiting from the other's specialized expertise.

Get to know Jim's rep,
ALAN KRUSZKA
[FRATCO.COM/MEET_ALAN_KRUSZKA](https://fratco.com/meet_alan_kruszka)



Continue Reading ▶



FROM HUMBLE BEGINNINGS TO PROMISING FUTURES

Lick Creek Enterprises and Fratco have more in common than their constant strive for quality. As it turns out, both businesses began small, with each company built up from the same cornerstone: family.

“We started out very small, working out of my dad’s garage,” says Jim. “Donna Lee helped me with everything in the beginning. From paperwork to welding, she was always right there by my side. She had to be, or we wouldn’t have made it.”

Now, having long since expanded their business to its own building on the outskirts of Birmingham, Jim laughs as he looks back on those humble beginnings. “Some days we didn’t know whether we were half-crazy, and some days we wondered whether or not we were fully crazy.”

It wasn’t all struggle, though. “It was nice to have your own company, especially when your kids are growing up and they can work there with you,” says Jim, who has two children with Donna Lee. “It’s something where, when your kids are older, you can offer them opportunities if they want them.”

Presently, the youngest Mathias son, Tyler, works among several people employed by Lick Creek Enterprises. When asked whether his son will inherit the company after he retires, Jim simply smiles and says, “If he wants it.”

As a multi-generational company, Fratco wishes the best to Jim, Donna Lee and Lick Creek Enterprises’ potential second generation of leadership. Their business has been invaluable to Fratco’s mission of unbeatable customer service and unparalleled quality products, and the company looks forward to sharing more mutual success alongside the Mathias family for years to come. With Fratco’s 100-year anniversary coming in 2023, now is the time to celebrate valuable partnerships such as these.

WORK ANNIVERSARIES

Dan Koebcke	35 years	Carrie Carver	3 years
Cheryl Owens	31 years	Cameron Edwards	2 years
Bobby Howard	20 years	Carlos Gonzalez	2 years
Scott Craig	20 years	Clayton Davis	2 years
Steven Wuerthner	17 years	Zachary Wesley	2 years
Bob Dandurand	11 years	Reece Elkins	1 year
Marla Bachert	10 years	Ron Probasco	1 year
Travis Fett	7 years	Shannon Price	1 year
Kiley Miller	4 years		

WELCOMING NEW HIRES

Angel Hernandez	Mike Alliss
Ashley Neve	Nichole Brown
Ashtin Howard	Nick Struder
Blake Calvert	Rebecca Alameda
Chad French	Robert Woods
David Abundez	Tommy Magden
James Jung	Troy Calvert
Jason Dorothy	

Off the Farm

DRAINAGE PIPE USAGE **OUTSIDE** OF THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR



While agricultural drainage may be a common implementation of Fratco products, many experienced contractors know that drainage technology also intersects with a wide variety of industries beyond food production.

For those less familiar with the universal importance of water management systems, here are just a few examples of industries that depend on good drainage. Keep them in mind the next time you're cruising down the highway, taking off for a vacation or hitting the green at your favorite golf course. After all, there may be Fratco pipe buried beneath your feet!

COMMERCIAL CONSTRUCTION

In the rural sprawl of the Midwest, every brick and mortar business needs a place for customers to park. Those parking lots need drainage systems that protect their asphalt surfaces from water. If you've ever encountered a paved lot that looks to be in the process of turning into gravel, then you were probably parking in a place with poor drainage. Preventing this sort of damage is much easier and cost-effective than attempting to repair it after the fact.

Parking lot drainage systems are a beast all their own, though. With no need to retain water for crops, maximum space for excess water is created by burying plastic "chambers"—things that look similar to bisected lengths of plastic pipe—in tight and compact rows. From there, water is free to quickly drain into lower gradients of earth beneath the lot.

In addition to subterranean drainage, a parking lot may also require a fine balance of water basins, grates and proper slope to ensure water flows where intended. Who would have thought that something as seemingly simple as a parking lot could require so much engineering?



Stormwater chamber installation

RECREATION

Golf courses are another place with a particular need for effective drainage. Unlike the paved surfaces of parking lots, golf courses need systems that facilitate fertile conditions on the fairway above. Therefore, drainage needs to be arranged in well-thought out grids and patterns that more closely resemble agricultural layouts.



For more on water management in golf courses, see "Greener Fairways & Good Deeds" in the Spring 2021 issue of *Tried & True*.

Athletic fields also rely on subsurface drainage systems to maintain optimal conditions for competition. Live grass and artificial turf alike are damaged by improper water management, creating potentially dangerous playing conditions for athletes. The artificial turf of Algona High School's football field, for example, was desperately in need of updated drainage when Fratco offered to assist.



To learn more about drainage's role in sport venues and Fratco's contribution to Algona High School athletics, see "Under the Turf" in the Fall 2021 issue of *Tried & True*.



Subdivision drainage construction

RESIDENTIAL

While most homeowners aren't digging trenches in their yards, consider the structural needs of paved subdivisions where homes are built. Without an underlying water management system in place, cul de sacs across the nation would quickly turn into wading pools infested with all kinds of unwelcome pests.

Contractors working in the residential business must collaborate with planners and officials, integrating their installations into city sewer systems to ensure the drainage needs of each community are met.

Continue Reading ►



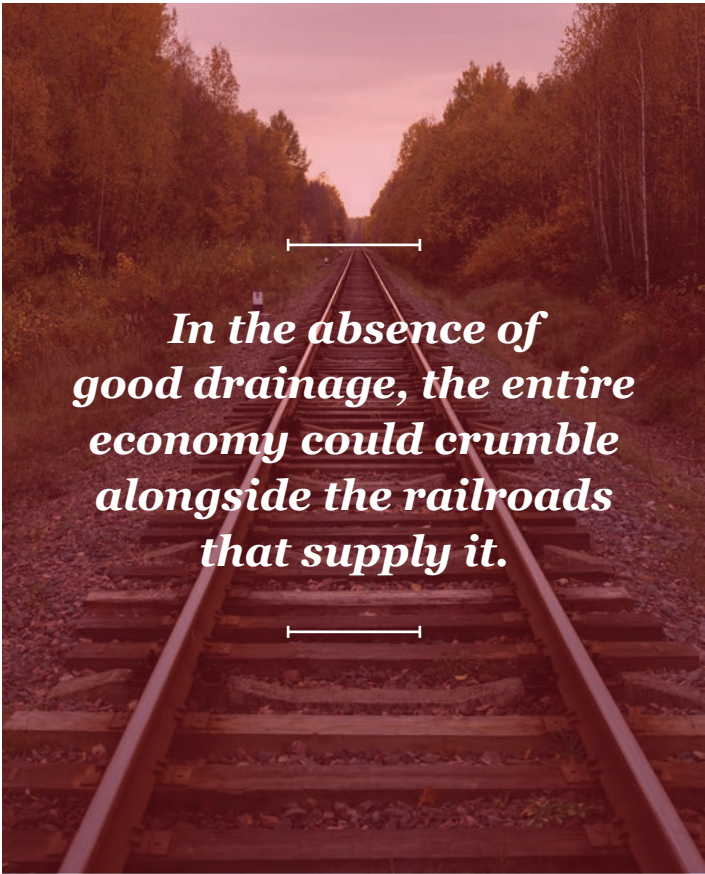
TRANSPORTATION

Just like parking lots and subdivisions, drainage systems are essential to the longevity of highways and roads. Here, corrugated pipe works its wonders to keep water levels low and infrastructure dry.

Many railway lines also require drainage systems beneath their foundations to prevent water damage to tracks. According to the American Association of Railways, 1.7 billion tons of cargo are transported via freight train every year in the United States. In the absence of good drainage, the entire economy could crumble alongside the railroads that supply it.

Finally, what is an airport's runway but a really big parking lot for planes? Miles and miles of corrugated pipe lie beneath America's travel hubs, protecting paved surfaces that must remain in excellent condition for takeoff and landing.

The Bureau of Transportation Statistics reports that over 600 million people traveled by plane in America in 2021 alone—all of them protected from bumpy landings, in large part, thanks to HDPE pipe systems.

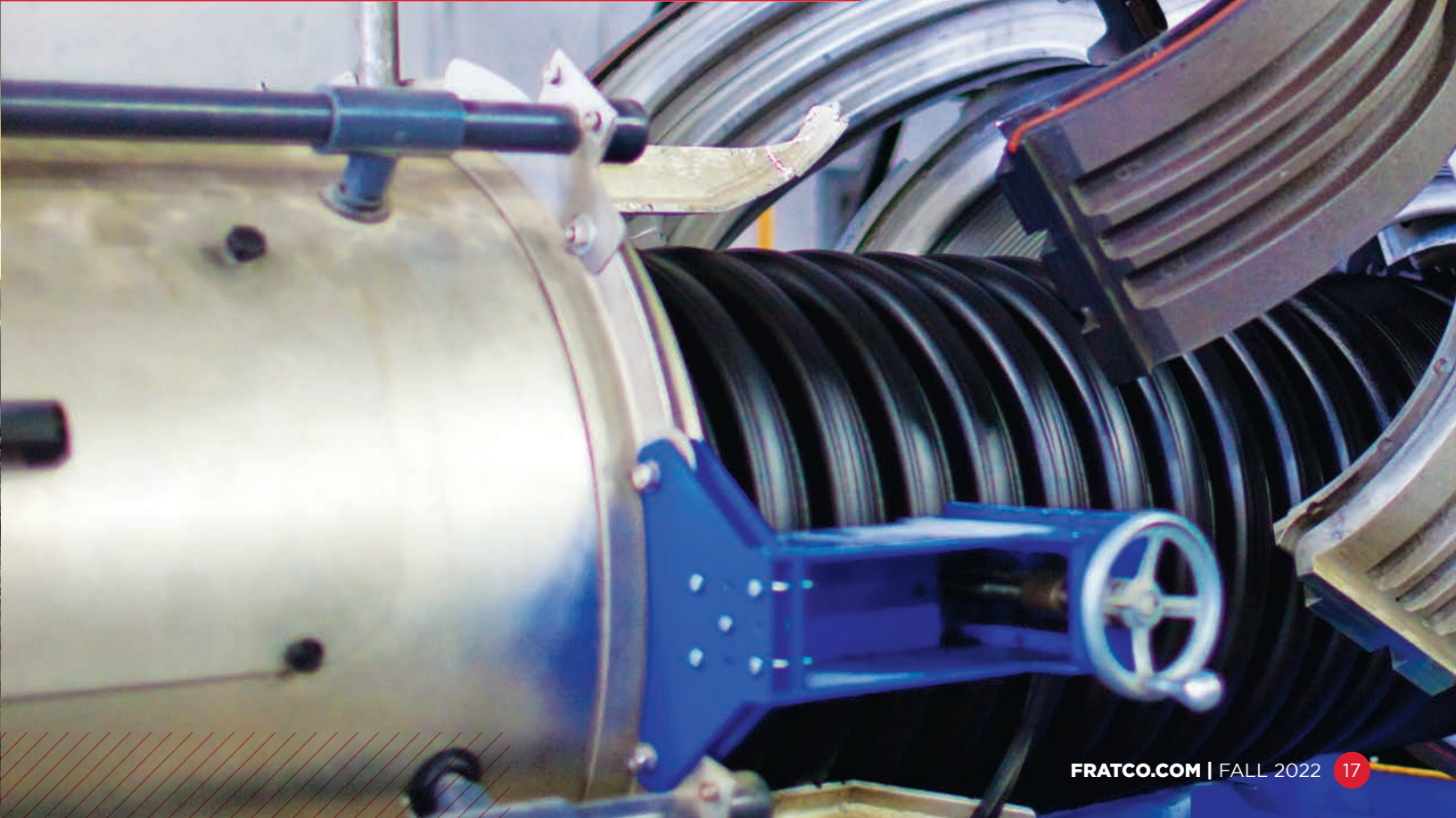


UNIQUE PROJECTS AND MORE

Not every piece of pipe is used for drainage—at least not at Fratco. In special cases, certain designs and materials can be retrofitted for non-drainage products and purposes.

In line with Fratco's mission of sustainability, for example, some materials are used in partnerships to create specialized containers for transporting fresh fruit around the world. As an extension of the company's Americana roots and family focus, Fratco has helped other companies create baseball field fence toppers. While effective drainage solutions will always be Fratco's first priority, it's interesting to see how quality materials can be put to alternative uses.

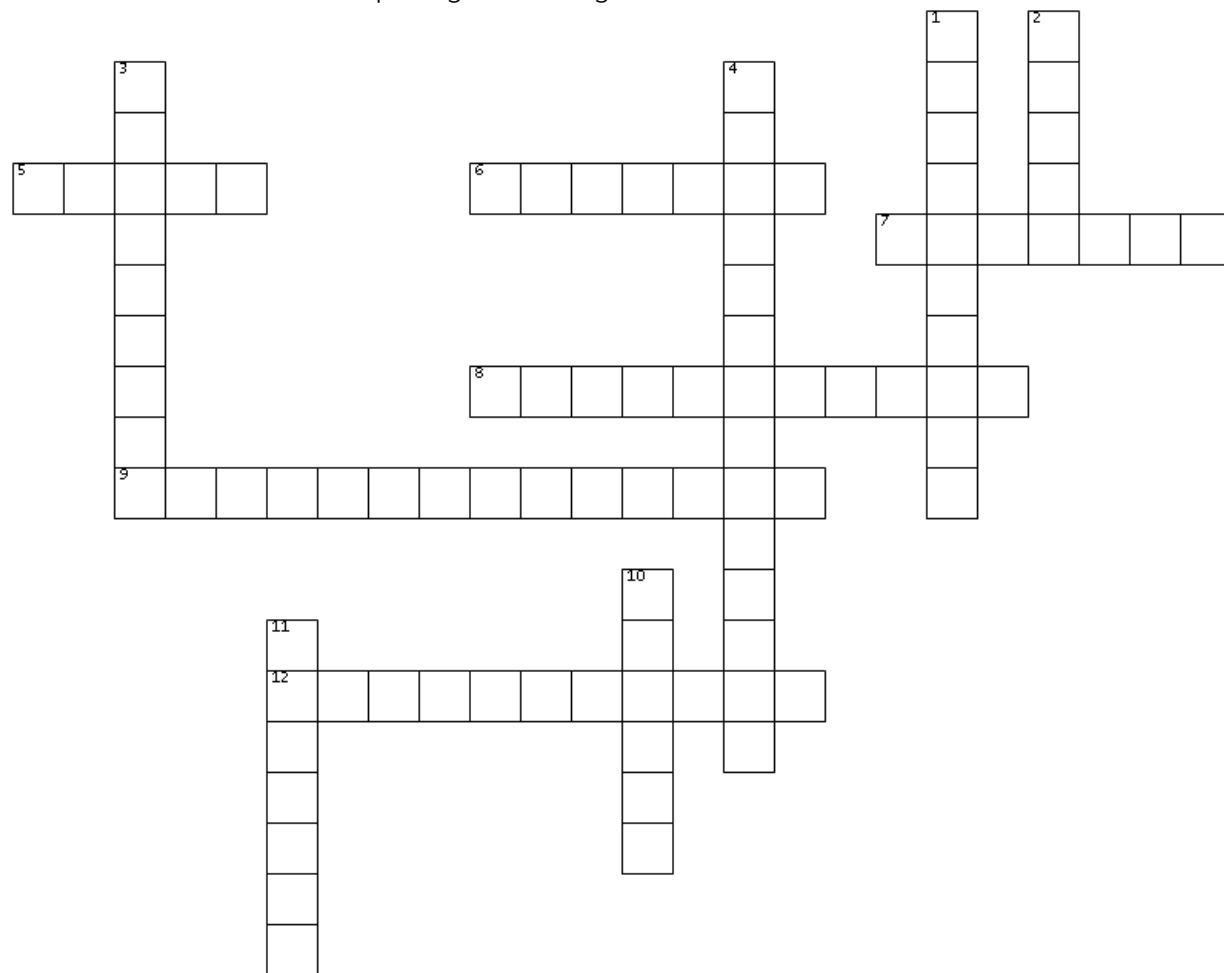
The examples given in this article highlight the interlocking importance of quality drainage solutions. The food grown on farms needs drainage pipe just as much as railroads need proper drainage to transport those yields. The businesses that process and sell those products need proper drainage installed so customers can visit their stores and put food on their tables. From seed to storefront, the country remains well-fed thanks to the water management structures in place. Proper drainage is an invisible and underappreciated aspect of national infrastructure—one that is absolutely critical. ■



CROSSWORD

ACROSS

5. One of the world's first water management structures
6. A piece of public infrastructure that needs miles of drainage pipe installed
7. Used by ancient Incans to arrange farm plots in steps
8. Ancient civilization between two rivers
9. One of Fratco's core environmental goals
12. A residential zone that requires good drainage



DOWN

1. A major Fratco milestone to be celebrated in 2023
2. A natural resource that nourishes crops but can also destroy them
3. Wise sage who knew the importance of agricultural drainage
4. Vital non-ag sector where drainage systems are essential
10. Used by ancient peoples in conjunction with canals to help prevent floods (*plural*)
11. Construction material that lasts longer with good drainage

ANSWER KEY

1. CENTENNIAL 2. RIVER 3. CONFUCIOUS 4. TRANSPORTATION 5. QANAT 6. HIGHWAY 7. TERRACE
 8. MESOPOTAMIA 9. SUSTAINABILITY 10. BASINS 11. ASPHALT 12. SUBDIVISION



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