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SUMMER 2025

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IN THIS ISSUE

Dear Fratco family,

There's something about summer, the long days and the sense of movement, that brings a different kind of momentum. And around here, you can feel it. We've got new faces in the shop, new ideas taking shape in the field and big steps forward that remind us why we do what we do.

One of those new faces is Addy, a bright and driven engineer who's already bringing fresh thinking to the table. Innovation has always been part of our DNA, but it's people like Addy who help make sure we don't just keep up—we keep getting better.

We're also proud to highlight a few of the incredible businesses we're lucky to work with—folks like Liles Enterprises and Schlatter's Inc. Their stories aren't just about projects; they're about people. People who lead with integrity, work with purpose and believe in doing things the right way. That's something we'll always stand behind.

And then there's our new plant in Alabama. It's more than a new facility—it's a sign of what's possible when you build with intention. We're growing because of the trust you've placed in us, and we take that seriously.

As you flip through this issue, you'll also find conversations about conservation drainage, nitrogen efficiency and other big-picture topics that matter not just to our industry, but to our shared future. These aren't easy problems—but they're worth solving. And we're committed to doing our part, one step at a time.

At Fratco, growth isn't about getting bigger. It's about getting better—together.

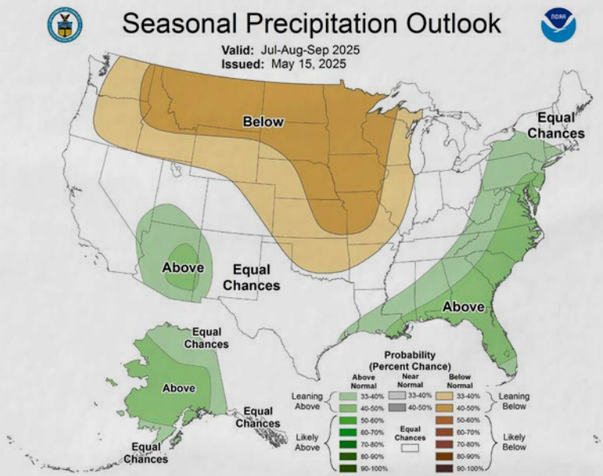
Thanks for being part of it,

Chris Overmyer
President and CEO

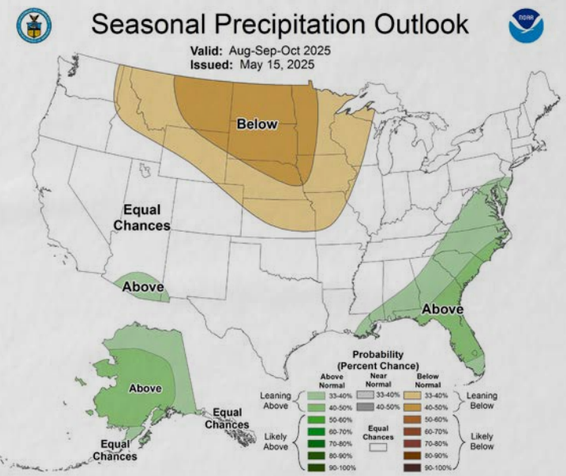
Precipitation Outlook

FROM THE NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE

JUL-SEP



AUG-OCT



ABOVE NORMAL PROBABILITY

33% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

EQUAL CHANCES

BELOW NORMAL PROBABILITY

33% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

The future brings a constantly shifting landscape, and weather predictions are no exception. In an industry where preparation is the cornerstone of success, having a glimpse into what lies ahead can make the difference between a normal day or an unforeseen setback. Staying vigilant with daily and weekly weather updates is essential. Take proactive steps towards a successful future by considering seasonal forecasts for a broader perspective on the coming season.

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

www.weather.gov

A ship is safe in harbor, *but that's not what ships are for.*

- WILLIAM G.T. SHEDD, AMERICAN THEOLOGIAN

Shaping Your Own Path

There's a certain comfort in staying where it's safe. In a harbor, a ship is protected—tied off, anchored and still. But that's not its purpose. A ship was built for the wide-open sea—for risk, movement and a mission.

People are made with purpose, too. And that purpose rarely involves playing it safe. Growth almost always starts with risk—starting a new project, leading a team, embracing innovation. It can feel unsettling, even overwhelming at times. But just like a ship, we weren't built to sit idle. We were made to go, to grow and to serve.

Success doesn't usually look like staying in calm waters. It's facing the waves head-on, adjusting your sails when needed and pressing forward with resilience and courage. Every obstacle, every unknown, is an opportunity to sharpen your skills, strengthen your character and deepen your impact.

The open water can be unpredictable, but it's where real progress happens. It's where ideas are tested, dreams are realized and purpose is fulfilled. So, whether you're launching a new idea, navigating an unexpected challenge or charting a course into unfamiliar territory, don't be afraid to leave the harbor behind.

You weren't made for stillness. You were built for the open water—and the journey ahead is yours to take. ■

INDUSTRY NEWS

FRATCO'S FOCUS REMAINS STRONG AMIDST PROPOSED NRCS CUTBACKS

There's a lot we don't know yet.

A recent budget proposal from the White House has sparked uncertainty throughout the ag community, especially around the future of USDA field offices and conservation programs. The plan includes potential staffing reductions and restructuring at key agencies like the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). While nothing is final, as these proposals still need congressional approval, the possibility alone has stirred concern in our industry, as these reductions could impact vital water management practices.

The value of local, on-the-ground support can't be overstated for those who work directly with landowners and producers. NRCS staff provide more than technical knowledge—they bring trust, continuity and an understanding of the land that only comes from being part of the communities they serve.

That's why people across the ag and drainage industries are paying attention even in a "wait and see" moment like this. Any reduction in local capacity could have real consequences for conservation efforts, especially when it comes to implementing systems like controlled drainage or saturated buffers—solutions that rely on collaboration between landowners, contractors and field staff. Keegan Kult, Executive Director of the Agricultural Drainage Management Coalition (ADMC), noted that even the possibility of reduced field staffing could disrupt momentum around key water quality initiatives. "Programs that promote conservation drainage systems, like saturated buffers and controlled drainage, rely heavily on technical support from NRCS staff at the local level," said Kult. "Reducing that footprint could slow adoption and limit producers' access to the tools and guidance they need to make impactful conservation decisions. Even privately designed systems by Technical System Providers rely on timely reviews and approvals from NRCS."

We don't know how this will unfold. But we do know that the industry has weathered uncertain times before. And it will again.

At Fratco, we're not in the business of politics or predicting policy, but we are in the business of showing up. For over a century, we've worked alongside contractors, farmers and engineers to keep fields productive and projects moving. That doesn't change when things get complicated.

As an industry and a community, we have to band together. We all want clean water. So whatever happens, we will have to work together to fill in the gaps. In the meantime and as always, we'll keep doing what we do best: providing reliable pipe, dependable service and a partnership you can count on—no matter what lies ahead.

MEET

ADITYA "ADDY" KOTECHA

PROCESS ENGINEER

For Addy Kotecha, the road to Fratco started halfway around the world. Born and educated in India, Addy earned a degree in chemical engineering from Savitribai Phule Pune University in India before working in his family's automobile parts business. But the desire for new challenges and a broader engineering career brought Addy to the U.S., where he pursued a Master's degree in engineering management from Northeastern University in Boston. After an internship in Minnesota, his path landed him at Fratco as a process engineer.

Today, Addy plays a key role in making Fratco's operations more efficient, reliable and innovative. "My job is very hands-on," Addy explains. "It involves solving problems with machines, quality and processes—making things work better, safer and smarter." Addy is particularly proud of his involvement in launching in-house NCLS testing for pipe lifespan, which significantly reduced turnaround time, ultimately benefiting customers.

A big part of Addy's work involves cross-team collaboration and communication. "Process engineering is not just about machines. It's about people—getting different teams to align and building systems that are mistake-proof," he says. Lean manufacturing principles and continuous improvement drive much of his day-to-day focus.

What stands out to Addy most about Fratco? The culture.

> ***I love the freedom to approach challenges in my own way. People here really value individual thinking, and the support from the team has been incredible.***

That supportive environment was especially helpful during Addy's relocation journey from Boston to Indiana.

Outside the plant, Addy stays active with hiking and is a lifelong cricket fan. He has recently gotten into watching the NBA. "I'm still loyal to cricket, but the NBA has grown on me—especially during playoffs."

As Addy continues to optimize processes and tackle new challenges at Fratco, one thing is clear: his story is proof that talent, curiosity and a commitment to doing things right can bridge continents—and improve every pipe that rolls off the line. ■

ROOTED IN TRUST, GROWN WITH GRIT

THE STORY OF LILES ENTERPRISES

In a corner of northwest Missouri—where four miles west puts you in Nebraska, a short drive north lands you in Iowa and Kansas lies just to the southwest—Liles Enterprises stands as a testament to the kind of quiet resilience and family-driven purpose that defines the heart of America's drainage industry. But this isn't just a business story. It's the story of Rob and Susan Liles—partners in marriage, in business and in a shared belief that good work, done with integrity, always finds its way.

"We just kind of took it one step at a time," Rob says. "When you don't come from a corporate background, you don't build an empire. You build trust. One customer at a time." And that's exactly what they've done—laying the foundation in 1994 when Rob joined his father's construction business, pushing forward through hardship after his father's untimely passing and ultimately expanding into Liles Enterprises, the pipe distribution center that today serves a multi-state region.

But don't mistake their growth for luck. What started as a spot to park equipment turned into a thriving drainage hub thanks to a helpful comment from a truck driver—"This would make a good drop yard"—and a decision to act on a gut feeling. From that spark in 2014 to a major strategic switch to Fratco in 2024, the Liles' journey has been anything but ordinary.

"We've given every little bit of blood, sweat and tears to this business," Susan says. "But the best part is, we've done it together."

A BUSINESS BUILT ON FAMILY—AND DIRT

Ask Susan how Liles Enterprises grew, and she'll tell you it was a team effort from day one. Though she spent over a decade in banking, she stepped into the family business full-time in 2014 after Rob's mother retired. "If we're going to be a family business, don't you think it'd be better if I ran the books?" she recalls asking Rob. "Nobody else is going to take care of the books like I am."

What began with two employees now includes three generations, blending the Liles' construction roots with the evolving needs of the drainage market. Their son, Jameson, helps with construction and GPS mapping services. Wyatt (dating their daughter, Sarah) floats between tasks depending on demand.

CONTINUE READING

The lines between Liles Construction and Liles Enterprises blur often—and intentionally so. “We tried to keep them separate at first,” Susan says. “But really, one doesn’t exist without the other.” Their construction experience enhances their distribution business, especially when customers come to Rob not just to buy pipe, but to talk installation strategy.

“I’ve been installing tile since 1995,” Rob says. “When someone walks in and says, ‘Have you ever used this?’ I don’t just sell them something—I can tell them exactly how it performed in the field.”

FROM TRUST TO TRANSITION

That practical knowledge is part of what gave Liles Enterprises staying power in a market long dominated by a local competitor who sold and installed pipe. “When we started out, that company had been around 40 years,” Rob says. “But we earned customers’ trust by being honest and by knowing our stuff.”

Over time, that same trust extended to their supplier relationships But after nearly a decade with one manufacturer, Rob and Susan began to feel their needs—and their customers’ expectations—were outgrowing the partnership. They wanted more than a pipe supplier. They wanted a collaborator who valued quality, flexibility and responsiveness as much as they did.

That’s when Fratco entered the picture.

“At first, it was intimidating,” Rob admits. “We knew switching manufacturers wouldn’t be easy. But we also knew it was the right move.”

Rob was introduced to Fratco at a Missouri Land Improvement Contractors Association event in early 2024. The conversation there sparked a deeper dialogue—and a few months later, Liles Enterprises officially came on board as a Fratco distributor.

Rob and Susan at the start of Liles Enterprise, 2014

Liles Enterprises Shop in Fairfax, MO

“It didn’t take long for Fratco to realize we weren’t your average customer,” Rob says. “I was asking about product specs, manufacturing quality and how to make things better.”

Fratco rose to the challenge. “One of our customers needed two full truckloads of 15-inch pipe drilled with 1/8-inch holes—not slotted,” Rob recalls. “They didn’t have it in stock, and it was peak season. But our salesman and the yard crew drilled every stick by hand and had it delivered in three days. That’s what going above and beyond looks like.”

STRENGTH IN SPECIALIZATION

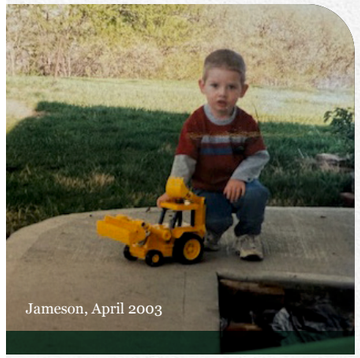
Liles Enterprises offers more than just pipe. Their distribution yard, which spans seven acres, supplies HDPE and HDPP pipe, precision risers, couplers and metal culverts. They also provide GPS mapping and field design—critical services that help their ag customers plan efficient and effective pipe installations.

And while agriculture remains a cornerstone of their business, Rob and Susan see growing potential in commercial work. “We’re right between Omaha and Kansas City,” Susan says. “We’re seeing more calls for stormwater systems, and Fratco’s polypropylene ProCorr is a great fit for those jobs.”

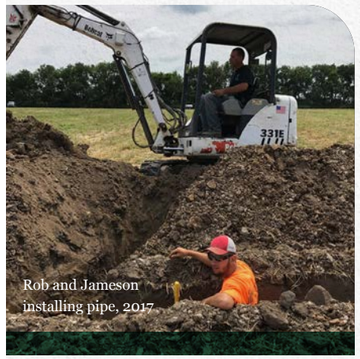
Their regional knowledge also gives them a unique advantage. “It’s amazing how things vary between states,” Rob says. “Missouri contractors might want precision risers, but cross the border into Nebraska or Kansas, and they’re asking for concrete drive-over risers. You’ve got to stay flexible.”

THE HUMAN SIDE OF DRAINAGE

Behind every order, delivery and design, there’s a familiar face. Their receptionist, Emily Stickell, has been dating their son, Jameson, for four years. Their yard manager, Steven Hale, is the only team member not related by blood or relationship—but he’s just as much a part of the family.



Jameson, April 2003



Rob and Jameson installing pipe, 2017

Even their daughter, Sarah, now a licensed LPN, weighs in on business decisions when needed. “She’s probably the best salesperson of the bunch,” Susan laughs. “She’s got a spark.”

From a very young age, Jameson seemed destined for the family business. While other kids were building block towers, he was out in the backyard pushing dirt with a toy bulldozer, mimicking the machines his dad ran in the field. Dump trucks, excavators and mini dozers weren’t just playthings—they were early tools of the trade.

That early fascination stuck. Today, he plays a vital role in both the construction and drainage sides of the family business, handling everything from GPS mapping to deliveries, showing how some career paths really do start in the sandbox.

“Jameson is a sponge,” Rob says. “He’s just always understood this world.”

ALWAYS ON, ALWAYS AVAILABLE

The Liles’ phones are always on. With remote access to their inventory system and a willingness to answer calls late at night or on weekends, they’ve built a reputation for reliability.

“I’ve been in the contractor’s shoes,” Rob says. “Trying to finish a job before two inches of rain hits, and you need one last coupler. That’s why we make sure someone’s always available—even if it’s Saturday at 3:00 p.m.”

That kind of service, and the wisdom that comes with lived experience, is part of what draws new contractors to their lot. “A lot of the younger guys have heard through the grapevine that Rob’s the guy to talk to,” Susan says. “He’s been where they are. And he’s willing to help.”

GROWING TOGETHER

Looking ahead, Rob and Susan see more than just opportunity—they see alignment. Their partnership with Fratco isn’t just about sourcing quality pipe. It’s about working with a company that mirrors their own values: integrity, accountability and an unwavering commitment to doing things the right way.

“From the very first conversation, we could tell Fratco wasn’t just another manufacturer,” Rob says. “They care about quality like we do. They listen. They treat you like a partner, not a number.”

That shared mindset has made all the difference—especially during the early months of their transition to Fratco in 2024. The relationship was built on mutual trust, a hands-on approach to solving problems and a belief that customer service doesn’t clock out at 5 p.m.

They’re a family business, too,” Susan adds. “They understand what it means to give something your all. That’s why it works.”

With Fratco’s expanded product offerings and support, Liles Enterprises is poised to further expand into commercial drainage while continuing to serve its core agricultural customers with the same attention to detail and boots-on-the-ground expertise it has always been known for.

“We’re not here to just sell pipe,” Rob says. “We’re here to build something that lasts—just like Fratco. That’s what makes us a good team.” ■

SOUTH-BOUND & BUILDING

FRATCO'S NEXT CHAPTER IN FORT PAYNE

The town of Fort Payne might not have been on many people's radar. It wasn't on Fratco's either—at first. "We were actually looking at somewhere adjacent to our current manufacturing footprint," recalls Bill Champion, Fratco's COO. "But the South had just blown up for us. People were paying freight just to get our pipe down there."

And that's when everything shifted.

THE PIVOT: GOING SOUTH WITH PURPOSE

Fratco's leadership had long been eyeing expansion. But the team, led by Chris Overmyer, Craig Douglass and Bill Champion, realized something about the Southeast: it wasn't just growing—it was changing.

"For years, the concrete industry owned that market," Bill explains. "You didn't see a lot of plastic pipe in public works and transportation projects. But now, the cost factors and advancements in the plastic pipe industry have made it impossible to ignore."

That realization led to a full pivot in search parameters—and ultimately, to a small but promising town with big potential.

SITE SEARCH: DATA MEETS DIRT ROADS

Enter Jason Lingenfelter, Fratco's Project Manager and logistics mastermind. His task: identify the best possible site for a brand-new facility. That meant digging into more than dirt. "We started with 21 sites across Tennessee, Georgia and Alabama," Jason says. "Every site had two pages of data: tax rates, utilities, access to infrastructure and proximity to major cities. We looked at it all."

He built detailed maps and dynamic spreadsheets, each link clickable and backed by real-world walk-throughs.

> **"At one point, Chris and I were flying in and walking 30-acre sites on foot. He wanted to feel the ground himself."**

Eventually, Fort Payne checked every box—utilities, road access, workforce potential, an exceptional community and state-level incentives that were impossible to match.

LOCAL HELP FOR LOCAL SUCCESS

The State of Alabama was ready, and the city of Fort Payne was very welcoming. "The people were great, but the process was new to all of us," Bill says. "We were the first economic development project of a larger magnitude that fell under Alabama's new economic development statute from 2021. We all had to learn how to navigate it."

Jason adds, "There were about 32 people involved—city attorneys, councils, clerks, developers. Getting everyone on the same page took time." The city of Fort Payne worked hard to make sure all the t's were crossed and i's were dotted. So, by mid-2025, Fratco will be pouring concrete.

With help from Alabama Industrial Development Training (AIDT), Fratco will have a fully-trained team ready before the first pipe rolls off the line. "They're sending a film crew to Francesville to build custom training modules based on our real operations," Jason says. "They'll handle drug testing, interviews and even ongoing education. And it's all at no cost to us."

BUILT THE FRATCO WAY

Unlike a few of Fratco's other facilities that were retrofitted from existing buildings, the Fort Payne plant is being built from scratch—around the machinery itself. "We've learned from our other plants," Jason explains. "This time, we're designing for ideal flow, access and long-term scalability."

The 42,000 square foot facility will house a mix of cutting-edge and proven equipment: a Unicor UC5XX and a refurbished Corma Corrugator with room to add a Unicor UC1800 at a later date. The facility will begin by producing pipe from 3 inches up to 18 inches: SingleCorr (3 to 15 inches), SmoothCorr (4 to 18 inches), ProCorr (12 to 18 inches) and FlexCorr (4 to 15 inches). After the UC1800 is added, it will include 24- to 48-inch SmoothCorr and ProCorr pipe in its Alabama-manufactured lineup.

They are not cutting any corners with this new plant. "Just the gravel bill to prep the yard is close to a million dollars," Jason says. "And that's before we wire the building—electrical estimates are also pushing seven figures." The site contains 32 acres with room to grow—and outside storage already factored in, a major lesson learned from earlier facilities.

A NEW TEAM WITH OLD VALUES

Fratco won't just be bringing pipe to Fort Payne—it's bringing along its quintessential culture, too. "This isn't your standard corporation," Jason says. "Fratco's been around 100 years for a reason. It's the way we treat employees and customers—like family."

With the help of the AIDT, the plant is expected to start with around 50 to 60 employees, including drivers, office staff and production workers. Fratco is prepared to offer all the perks to these new employees, including tuition assistance and an above-average starting pay for the region.

WHY THIS HELPS EVERYONE

Fratco's move into Alabama might raise a few eyebrows among long-time Midwest customers—but the truth is, this growth helps everyone.

"This gives us redundancy," Bill says. "It's security for our existing customers. If a machine goes down in Iowa, we don't have to scramble. And it frees up our Midwest facilities to serve their own regions better." Jason agrees,

> **"We're shipping huge volumes of pipe south right now. Getting this plant online relieves that pressure. It improves efficiency everywhere."**

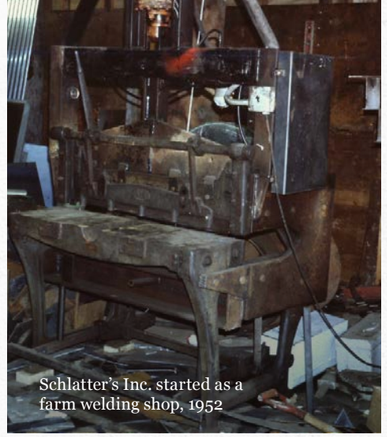
This intentional redundancy allows Fratco to ensure that all of their customers have the supplies they need to make their businesses a success—the quintessential trademark of the water management industry, teamwork.

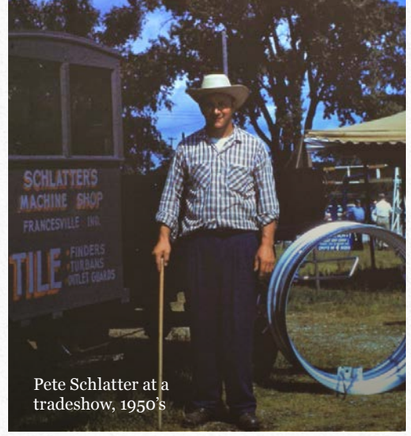
WHAT COMES NEXT

If Fort Payne is any indication, Fratco's future includes more strategic growth, not just in square footage, but in how the company expands. It's about building smarter—not just bigger. As the foundation is poured in Fort Payne, one thing is clear: Fratco's growth isn't just measured in miles or machines—but with care and attention to ultimately push the limits of service and quality. ■

FROM WELDING SPARKS TO GPS PRECISION

THE SCHLATTER FAMILY LEGACY FORGED IN FRANCESVILLE


Schlatter's Inc. started as a farm welding shop, 1952



Pete Schlatter at a tradeshow, 1950's

Manufacturing Drainage Accessories for Fratco, 1950's-1960's

Moving to their current location, 1962


Pete in the "Foo Mobile", 1977

In 1952, Alfred "Pete" Schlatter opened the doors of a modest welding shop in Francesville, Indiana. Just a stone's throw from the fire station, this small-town machine shop wasn't built on big dreams of corporate success—but on a desire to serve the hardworking farmers in the community. Pete was a welder, a fixer and a problem-solver. He built his business by mending broken equipment, fabricating custom solutions and lending a hand to his neighbors whenever they needed it. Francesville was—and still is—a small town, boasting a mere thousand residents, but the Schlatter family's reputation for quality work and integrity reaches far beyond the town limits. In the early years, the shop focused on repair work, especially in the off-season when farm equipment sat idle. But it was a chance conversation at church that sent Schlatter's down a path that would forever change its future.

Richard Overmyer, Pete's friend and fellow church member—and the grandfather of Fratco's CEO, Chris Overmyer—had an idea. As Ron Schlatter recalled, "Richard suggested to my dad that the tile industry needed different accessories that could be used in conjunction with the installation of the drainage pipe. And so my dad started that, and it was very good for our business, which provided work through the wintertime." That single suggestion laid the groundwork for a business expansion that would carry on for generations.

What began as a side project soon became a key offering. Schlatter's began manufacturing drainage accessories, with Fratco promoting and selling the products. That partnership gave Schlatter's steady work year-round and helped cement their role in the growing farm drainage industry. It was a simple collaboration built on trust, but it blossomed into something much greater.

CONTINUE READING

Becoming the first U.S. importer of the Barth Drainage Machine from Holland, 1973

Ron and his three children. *(From left to right: Joey, Jake, Ron and Nanci),* 2025

IF YOU'VE HAD THE SCHLATTER LAST NAME—OR EVEN MARRIED INTO IT—YOU HAVE WORKED HERE.”

A FAMILY BUSINESS THROUGH AND THROUGH

Schlatter's Inc. has always been a family business. After decades of leadership, Pete passed the torch to his son, Ron, who helped steer the company through decades of growth and innovation. From a young age, Ron worked alongside his father, learning the value of hard work and the importance of treating people right.

By the 1970s, drainage work was booming thanks to healthy corn prices and major advancements in both equipment and plastic drainage pipe. Recognizing an opportunity, Schlatter's became the first U.S. importer of Barth drainage machines from Holland. “In the summer of 1973, I made my first trip overseas to see the manufacturing plant … to see if this would be a fit,” Ron recalled.

The next several decades saw a flurry of expansion and new services. Schlatter's added laser-based grading systems, became dealers for Buckeye Traction Ditchers and Wolfe Equipment, and by the late 1990s, partnered with Trimble Navigation to bring precision GPS control to farm drainage work. The company became known not just as a local repair shop, but as an international leader in farm drainage technology.

Today, the business is in the capable hands of the third generation. Ron's children—Nanci, Jake and Joey—each play a vital role. Nanci handles bookkeeping and coordinates operations. To help the business stay involved in all facets of the industry, she also serves as executive director for Indiana LICA. Jake runs the shop, oversees all machine repair and manufacturing and isn't afraid to get his hands dirty in the field, no matter the weather. Joey joked as Jake rolled his eyes, “When it's frozen out, I get to sit behind my computer, but Jake's got to go work in it.” Joey focuses on GPS technology and outside sales, often traveling across the country to install systems and train operators.

Even beyond the immediate family, Schlatter's has always been a family affair. Aunts, uncles and even Grandma Eleanor have taken turns behind the desk. “If you've had the Schlatter last name—or even married into it—you have worked here,” Joey said.

WHAT SCHLATTER'S OFFERS

Schlatter's Inc. may be small, with just nine full-time employees, but its impact is big. The business revolves around three core areas:

- **Machine Sales and Service**: Schlatter's sells some of the most respected names in the industry, including RWF BRON drainage plows and PTX Trimble machine control systems. But they don't just sell—they service and rebuild them, taking on the toughest projects.
- **Technology Sales and Support**: GPS technology is essential in modern farm drainage. Schlatter's installs, services and trains customers on advanced systems to ensure pipe is laid precisely on grade and in perfect alignment. Their GPS school, running for over two decades, has drawn contractors from 19 states and as far as Canada and Australia.
- **Custom Manufacturing**: Schlatter's also fabricates custom drainage equipment and accessories, like onboard reel carriers and disc closers for pipe installation. Many are built specifically to work with Fratco pipe, making Schlatter's a vital link in the drainage supply chain.

As Joey put it, “We basically sell the machines and the GPS machine control systems to put drainage pipe in the right spot—vertically as well as horizontally. Because the pipe that Fratco produces is only as good as how well it's being installed in the ground.”

A LIFELONG PARTNERSHIP WITH FRATCO

Few industry partnerships have the longevity, depth and mutual respect of Schlatter's and Fratco. From manufacturing outlet guards to collaborating on logistics and field solutions, their relationship has always been rooted in shared values: honesty, reliability and service.

Over the years, the two companies have backed each other up in countless ways. “There will be times when a machine is broken down and desperately needs a part,” Ron shared. “And I know for sure people have ordered a load of tubing, so a Fratco truck would go down there and take the part that our customer needed.”

Their partnership goes beyond products—it's about teamwork. “Us and Fratco out in the industry—we kind of look out for each other,” Joey said. “If one of us hears a problem with the other, we let them know so we can get it taken care of.

“Both of our companies want to stand behind our mistakes and make it right for our customers.”

Whether it's pipe installation, part delivery or training, customers know they're in good hands. Schlatter's and Fratco aren't just suppliers—they're partners who've helped shape the farm drainage industry across the Midwest and beyond.

WHY THEY'RE THE PERFECT PARTNER

What makes Schlatter's the ideal Fratco partner? It's who they are: problem-solvers, teachers, innovators and friends. They don't just sell products—they stand beside customers through breakdowns, upgrades and learning curves. They take on challenges others won't, whether it's crawling under a plow in the freezing cold or fixing equipment competitors won't touch.

“It's the challenge that is a big part of my drive,” Jake said. “We work on every brand. A lot of our work comes from GPS customers who bought from the competition—but the competition doesn't want to work on it. So, we'll fix it.”

“Dad's always said to be very hesitant to tell somebody no,” Nanci added. “He'd say, ‘They might not have been a customer previously, but they will be now.’”

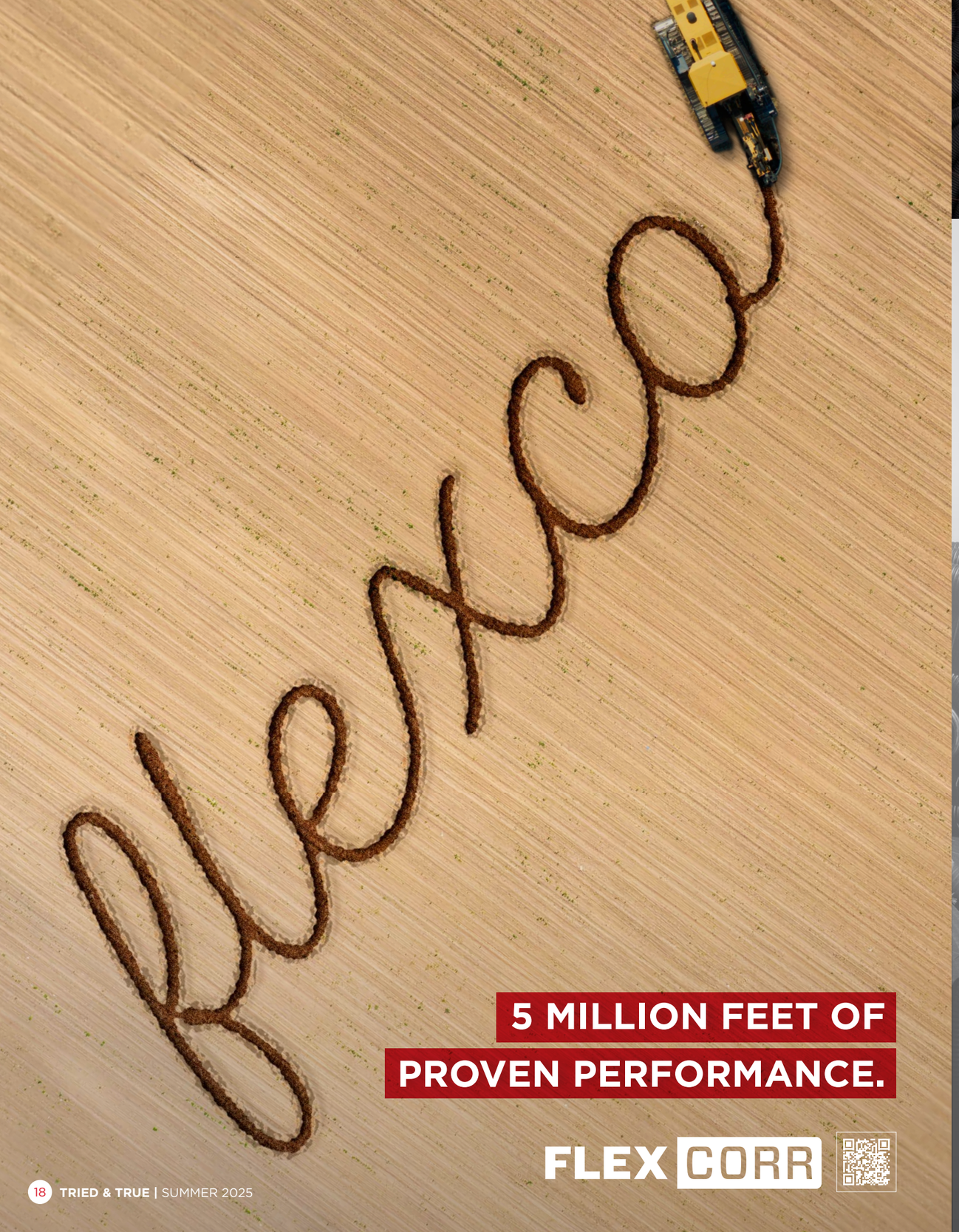
They also understand what Fratco stands for—quality, customer support and relationships. That's why the partnership works. It's not about convenience—it's about commitment.

Most of all, the Schlatter family knows their work matters. It's not just business—it's legacy. ■

Pete (left) and Ron (right), 1970

LISTEN HERE!

Scan to hear about Schlatter's history from Ron!



WORK ANNIVERSARIES

Daniel Koebcke	*38 years*	Lucas Duensing	*5 years*	Maria Andrade	*1 year*
Willie Parish Jr.	*38 years*	Jerome Weiland	*5 years*	Tyler Jordan	*1 year*
Dean Speece	*32 years*	Mark Garay	*5 years*	Aditya Kotecha	*1 year*
Kent Towler	*30 years*	Felix Jonatham	*4 years*	Fabricio Barrera Ramos	*1 year*
Edward Leszek	*28 years*	Andrew Leman	*4 years*	Blake Christofferson	*1 year*
John Danford	*21 years*	Darrell Luepnitz	*3 years*	Alfonso Martinez	*1 year*
Raymond Carter	*20 years*	Ana Alvarenga	*3 years*	Noah Johnston	*1 year*
Roger Cavness	*20 years*	Tommy Mangan	*3 years*	Adam Luttrell	*1 year*
Anthony Hannon	*19 years*	Madison Moseley	*2 years*	David Gonzalez	*1 year*
Stacie Baccam	*14 years*	Pablo Enrique Perez Reyes	*2 years*	Jim Ortiz	*1 year*
Jeffrey Webb	*9 years*	Sergio Medina	*2 years*	Carlos Otero Chavez	*1 year*
Brendan Noggle	*7 years*	Shain Yenna	*2 years*	Joseph Rudish	*1 year*
Hans Peter	*6 years*	Daniel Beiswanger	*2 years*	Ryan Quezada	*1 year*
Magdalena Alfaro	*5 years*				

WELCOMING NEW HIRES

Alexyan Infante	Maria Gutierrez Exposito	Rubin Cain
Jorge Cabrera	Manuel Hernandez Raymundo	
Leandro Diaz	Ivan Llibre	

DRAINAGE DOESN'T JUST MOVE WATER—IT MOVES THE NEEDLE

How Conservation Drainage and Smarter Nitrogen Use Are Changing the Future of Farming

Featuring the research of Dr. Michael Castellano, Iowa State University

When most people think about field drainage, they picture one thing: getting water off the land so crops don't drown. Simple enough, right?

Not quite.

Thanks to scientists like Dr. Michael Castellano at Iowa State University, we now know that drainage isn't just about removing water—it's about managing it. And when you manage water better, you manage nitrogen better. And when you manage nitrogen better, you're saving money, improving yields and protecting the environment. Suddenly, your humble pipe line looks a lot like a Swiss Army knife.

Dr. Castellano leads groundbreaking research in soil biogeochemistry, specifically how nitrogen moves, transforms and—too often—gets wasted. His work with the Iowa Nitrogen Initiative, a collaboration between public and private ag powerhouses, is setting a new bar for sustainable farming.

Their mission? Help farmers apply just the right amount of nitrogen—no more, no less—by leveraging real-time data, smarter infrastructure and (you guessed it) conservation drainage.

WHAT'S REALLY AT STAKE WITH DRAINAGE?

Let's talk about nitrogen. It's expensive. It's essential. And it's slippery—literally. Crops only absorb a portion of the nitrogen you apply. The rest? It can leach into waterways, evaporate as greenhouse gas or hang around doing nothing while your yields suffer. It's a classic case of "paying more to get less."

That's where drainage comes in. Properly drained fields create the ideal soil conditions for microbes to do their job—making nitrogen more available to plants and less likely to escape as pollutants.

One study using the Agricultural Production Systems Simulator (APSIM) found that corn in drained systems needed 12% less nitrogen than undrained fields to hit optimal yields. Let that sink in: same yield, less input.

"Drainage allows nitrogen mineralization from organic matter to happen more effectively," Dr. Castellano explains. "That means less fertilizer needed overall."

Translation: You're not just draining water—you're tapping into nitrogen that's already there. Free fertilizer, anyone?

CUTTING COSTS WITHOUT CUTTING CORNERS

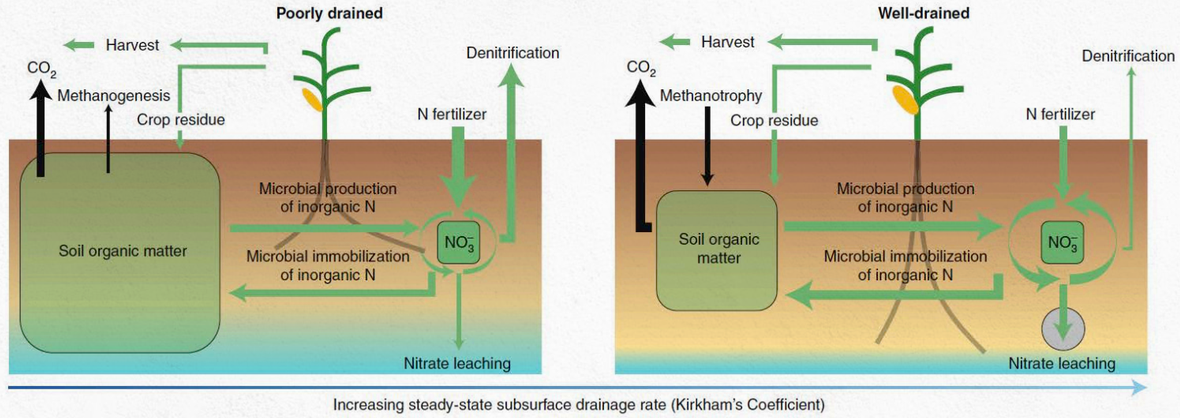
Fertilizer prices have been on a wild ride. When you're throwing thousands of dollars into inputs, playing the guessing game is risky business.

"Right now, most fertilizer recommendations are based on field averages," Dr. Castellano says. "That means 30 to 40% of fields are getting too much or too little."

Conservation drainage, especially controlled drainage, tightens that range. His research shows these systems can cut year-to-year variability in nitrogen needs by 75%. That's a big deal.

More predictability = less financial stress = better sleep at night.

CONTINUE READING



THE WATER QUALITY ELEPHANT IN THE FIELD

Let's address the murky water in the room: drainage gets a bad rap for contributing to nitrate runoff.

Yes, it *can* increase nitrate levels in water—if left unmanaged. But modern systems are designed to tackle that head-on.

Dr. Castellano is a vocal advocate for pairing drainage upgrades with edge-of-field conservation practices like:

- Constructed wetlands
- Controlled drainage gates
- Denitrifying bioreactors

All these tools help capture and remove nitrogen before it reaches creeks, rivers or your neighbor's fishing hole.

> **"Drainage is not incompatible with water quality," Dr. Castellano says. "In fact, it gives us the opportunity to solve water quality challenges without sacrificing productivity."**

Win-win.

SURPRISE: DRAINAGE CAN FIGHT CLIMATE CHANGE, TOO

Another twist: well-managed drainage systems reduce greenhouse gas emissions—especially nitrous oxide (N_2O), a gas that's about 300 times more potent than carbon dioxide.

In waterlogged soils, nitrogen has a higher chance of escaping as nitrous oxide. But drain the excess moisture, and you keep nitrogen where it belongs: in the soil, feeding your crops.

Dr. Castellano's research shows that drained fields emit three to four times less nitrous oxide than soggy, undrained fields. Plus, those same systems cut back on the amount of nitrogen fertilizer needed in the first place—an emissions double-whammy.

His team estimates that good drainage can reduce carbon dioxide equivalent emissions by around 2,000 kilograms per hectare per year—roughly the same as the CO_2 released from driving a car 5,000 miles.

So yes—installing a drainage system might just be the most climate-friendly thing you do this year.

DRAINAGE ≠ DITCHES: IT'S DATA-DRIVEN WATER MANAGEMENT

Gone are the days when drainage just meant "get water out fast." Today's systems are engineered to be smart, seasonal and strategic.

- Controlled drainage lets you adjust the water table depending on the time of year.
- Shallow systems reduce the risk of nutrient loss.
- Constructed wetlands and bioreactors work as cleanup crews at the edge of your field.

"There's an immediate opportunity to redesign Midwest drainage systems for multiple ecosystem services," Dr. Castellano says.

In other words, let's not just fix the flood. Let's grow the crop, protect the creek, and cut the carbon—all in one go.

SO, WHAT'S THE TAKEAWAY?

Drainage is no longer just about keeping your boots dry. It's about:

- Maximizing nitrogen use
- Reducing fertilizer waste
- Protecting water quality
- Lowering greenhouse gas emissions
- Creating more resilient farming systems

As Dr. Castellano puts it, "Drainage is a tool—it's not about removing water, it's about managing water better."

At Fratco, we couldn't agree more. Whether you're a contractor installing controlled drainage systems or a farmer trying to dial in your fertilizer budget, the future of drainage is smarter, more sustainable and—thanks to research like this—scientifically sound.

Because in the end, good drainage doesn't just move water. It moves the entire ag industry forward.

WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT CONSERVATION PRACTICES?

Check out our full infographic series on eco-friendly drainage strategies, including constructed wetlands, controlled drainage and bioreactors!

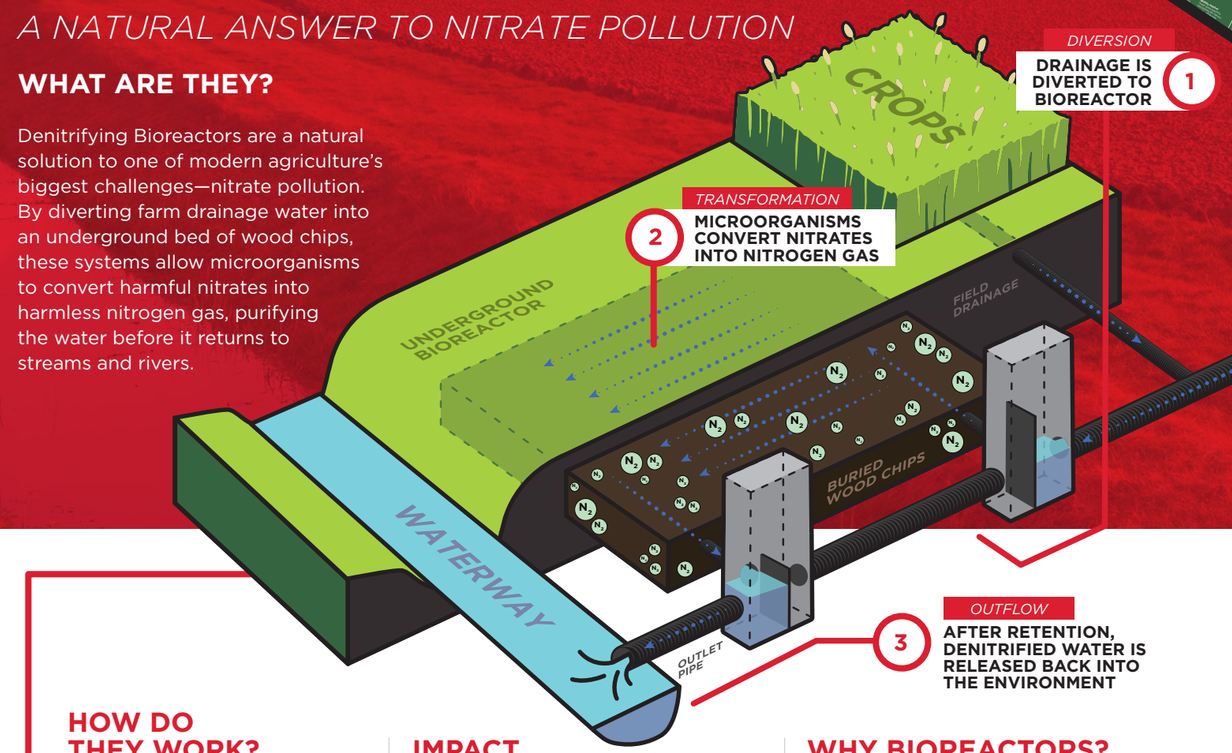
Scan to download the full series of Strategies for Eco-Friendly Water Management infographics!

DENITRIFYING BIOREACTORS

A NATURAL ANSWER TO NITRATE POLLUTION

WHAT ARE THEY?

Denitrifying Bioreactors are a natural solution to one of modern agriculture's biggest challenges—nitrate pollution. By diverting farm drainage water into an underground bed of wood chips, these systems allow microorganisms to convert harmful nitrates into harmless nitrogen gas, purifying the water before it returns to streams and rivers.



HOW DO THEY WORK?

1. **Diversion**: A control structure channels part of the drainage water towards the bioreactor.
2. **Transformation Zone:** The water percolates through the wood chips, allowing microorganisms to strip away nitrates under anaerobic conditions.
3. **Retention and Outflow:** Designed for a 3 to 8 hour retention, these systems efficiently handle 15 percent of peak pipe flow, optimizing nitrate removal.

IMPACT

These systems are most effective when installed alongside drainage systems serving 30 to 100 acres with 6- to 10-inch mains, in locations with consistent water flow to ensure steady treatment.

PERFORMANCE & COST

These bioreactors fit neatly into the farm landscape, typically measuring 100 by 20 feet. They reduce nitrate loads by an average of 24 to 42 percent under steady flow conditions and cost $10,000 to $20,000 to install depending on size.

WHY BIOREACTORS?

Space-Efficient | Their relatively small footprint makes them a discreet yet effective addition to the land.

Adaptable Performance | Best suited for drainage systems with a steady flow, they're designed to tackle nitrate runoff head-on.

Environmentally Conscious | An investment in bioreactors is an investment in cleaner waterways and a healthier planet.

SOURCE: AGRICULTURAL DRAINAGE MANAGEMENT COALITION (ADMC)

Denitrifying Bioreactors stand as a testament to how innovative, nature-based solutions can effectively address agricultural nitrate pollution, marrying environmental sustainability with agricultural efficiency in a single, cost-effective approach.

FIELD JOURNAL

TRIED & TRUE TRICKS OF THE TRADE

TELLING IT HOW IT IS—PROFESSIONALLY

SPEAK CLEARLY, WORK SMOOTHLY

Working out in the field isn't exactly like a boardroom meeting, and that's part of the charm of getting to work out there. The language is straight to the point, the jokes fly fast and everyone appreciates honesty. But when it comes to business communication, especially with clients, vendors or managers, the balance between being straightforward and maintaining professionalism becomes crucial.

At its core, good communication is all about clarity and respect. Be clear about what you need, what's expected and what the results are. It's the same principle as giving clear directions on a job site—everyone knows where they're headed and what to do next. Casual banter is great and often helps build relationships, but make sure your message isn't lost in the mix. You can still be relatable while being precise, using plain language to communicate your points, but leaving no room for misunderstanding.

The trick is to know your audience. If you're talking to a longtime colleague, a little humor or friendly ribbing make the job that much more enjoyable. But with new clients, vendors or superiors, it's wise to dial back the casualness until you know where the lines are. Stay professional in tone, use straightforward language and keep the banter for when you've built a stronger relationship. Remember, telling it how it is doesn't mean being blunt or rude—it's about making sure your message is clear, honest and productive. Keep it simple, keep it respectful and always make sure you're moving the conversation—and the work—forward.

communication works for those who work at it.

BEATING THE HEAT

KEEPING YOUR COOL WHEN THE TEMPERATURE RISES

When the sun's beating down, things on the worksite can get more than just uncomfortable—they can get downright dangerous. Heatstroke, dehydration and heat exhaustion are no joke. So here are the best ways to keep cool and beat the heat this summer.

1. HYDRATE LIKE YOUR JOB DEPENDS ON IT (BECAUSE IT DOES):

Drink water. Lots of it. And then some more. When you're out in the heat, your body sweats to keep you cool. Downing plenty of water keeps you hydrated and prevents your internal engine from overheating.

2. DRESS SMART:

Lightweight, loose-fitting and light-colored clothing are your best friends when the heat is on. Dark colors absorb more heat, and tight clothes don't let your skin breathe. Choose fabrics that wick away sweat and keep you dry. Why? Because dry skin is cooler than sweaty skin.

3. TAKE BREAKS IN THE SHADE:

Regular breaks in a cool, shaded area can make a world of difference. It's like hitting the reset button on your body's internal thermostat. Giving yourself a break from the direct sun lowers your skin temperature and gives your body a chance to recover.

4. KNOW YOUR LIMITS:

Pushing yourself too hard in the heat is asking for trouble. Listen to your body. Feeling dizzy, nauseous or getting cramps? That's your body waving a red flag. Take a breather and cool down. Overdoing it can lead to serious heat-related illnesses.

5. EAT LIGHT:

Heavy meals can increase your body temperature and make you feel sluggish. Opt for smaller, lighter meals that are easier to digest. Your body will thank you for not having to work overtime.

6. USE COOLING PRODUCTS:

From wet towels around your neck to cooling bands and hats, there are plenty of products out there designed to keep you cool. They work by increasing evaporation, which pulls heat away from your body, helping to maintain a healthy core temperature.

7. STAY INFORMED:

Keep an eye on the weather forecast and plan accordingly. Being aware of heat advisories means you can take extra precautions when it's going to be a scorcher.

Staying cool on the job isn't just about comfort; it's about staying safe. It's better to play it cool and smart than to end up overheated and having to sit out of the action.

Howdy, Fratco Family!

WIN THIS LIMITED EDITION *TRIED & TRUE* CAP

Complete the word search, snap a picture of it and email it to **tried-true@fratco.com** by September 30th. We will pick FIVE lucky winners to receive a *Tried & True* hat! Fill out the information below and include it in your photo!

Name:_____
Street Address:_____
City:_____State:_____Zip:_____
Email:_____

O S K K Q H M A N T D B M G I K N F B P E P C
P E A G A I D T P D R I M P V R L M S L N K A
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W D J L W X R S C R N R K Z C R R I J R P W O
B S Q M A I L A R T S U A S L A H C E T O K M

WORD SEARCH CLUES

Ships were built for risk, movement and a *(7 LETTERS)*.

Don't be afraid to leave the *(6 LETTERS)* behind.

Agency at risk in proposed federal budget cuts. *(4 LETTERS)*

This conservation practice relies heavily on technical support from NRCS staff at the local level. *(2 WORDS, 15 LETTERS)*

Jameson Liles handles everything from construction to *(2 WORDS, 10 LETTERS)*.

Alabama town where Fratco is building its newest plant. *(2 WORDS, 9 LETTERS)*

High-end training program helping launch Fratco's Alabama team. *(4 LETTERS)*

Fratco's Project Manager who led the site search. *(12 LETTERS)*

Town where Schlatter's was founded and still operates. *(12 LETTERS)*

Schlatter's GPS school has drawn attendees from as far as *(9 LETTERS)*.

Dutch manufacturer of drainage machines first imported by Schlatter's. *(5 LETTERS)*

Last name of our newest engineer. *(7 LETTERS)*

The way Fratco treats employees and customers is like *(6 LETTERS)*.

Iowa State professor researching nitrogen use and drainage. *(10 LETTERS)*

Simulation tool used to model nitrogen use in ag systems. *(5 LETTERS)*

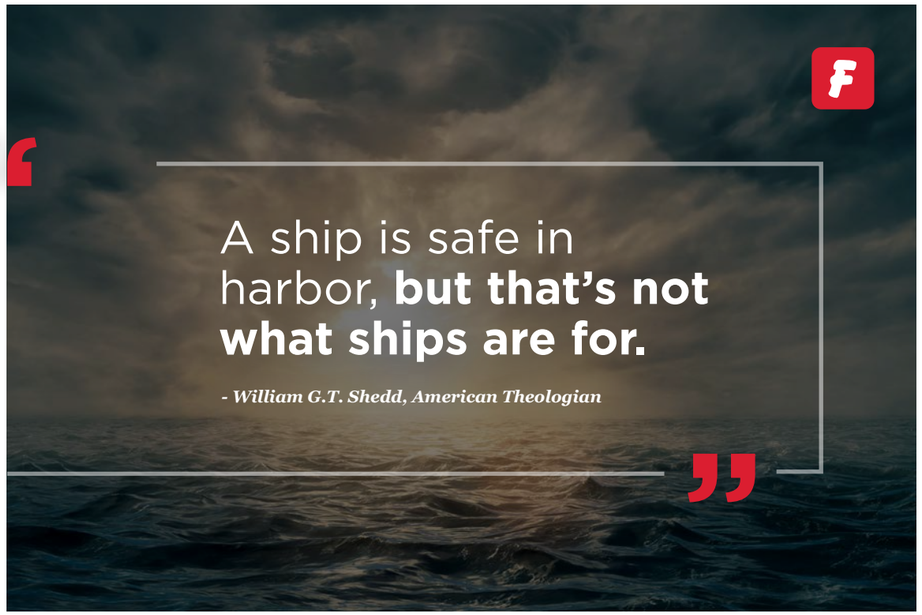
Fertilizer nutrient that's expensive and easy to lose. *(8 LETTERS)*

Structure that reduces nitrate runoff by promoting microbial activity. *(10 LETTERS)*

Condition caused by overheating, can lead to fainting. *(10 LETTERS)*

You should avoid eating this kind of meal in extreme heat. *(5 LETTERS)*

Good business communication requires clarity and *(7 LETTERS)*.



INSTRUCTIONS: Cut along the dotted line for 5x7 frames. Cut out the image for 4x6 frames.

FRATCO

Fratco
4385 S. 1450 W.
P.O. Box 368
Francesville, IN 47946