

# TRIED & TRUE

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SPRING 2026

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## Fratco family,

If there is one thing this business has taught us, it is that the ground is always shifting. Markets change. Technology improves. New ideas push the industry forward. The key is staying willing to adapt and always looking for a better way.

That mindset is reflected throughout this spring issue of *Tried & True*. The stories you'll read touch on many sides of our industry—from the evolving engineering behind pipe joints to the changing conversations around water management and the global factors influencing material markets. Each one is a reminder that the work we do continues to evolve, and so must we.

You will also see that progress is never built alone. Partners like Great Basin Pipe & Irrigation and SpringSeal are great examples of the collaboration that keeps our industry moving forward. Whether it's refining system performance or improving the details that make installation more reliable, these partnerships show what can happen when people work together with a shared commitment to quality.

Here at Fratco, we are focused on building for the future while staying grounded in the values that brought us here. From expanding systems into the West to opening plants in the South, we continue looking for opportunities to improve, grow and serve our customers even better.

At the end of the day, our greatest strength has always been the people who make up this industry—the employees, customers and partners who show up every day ready to do the work.

Thank you for being part of the Fratco family and for continuing to build what comes next with us.

See you out there,



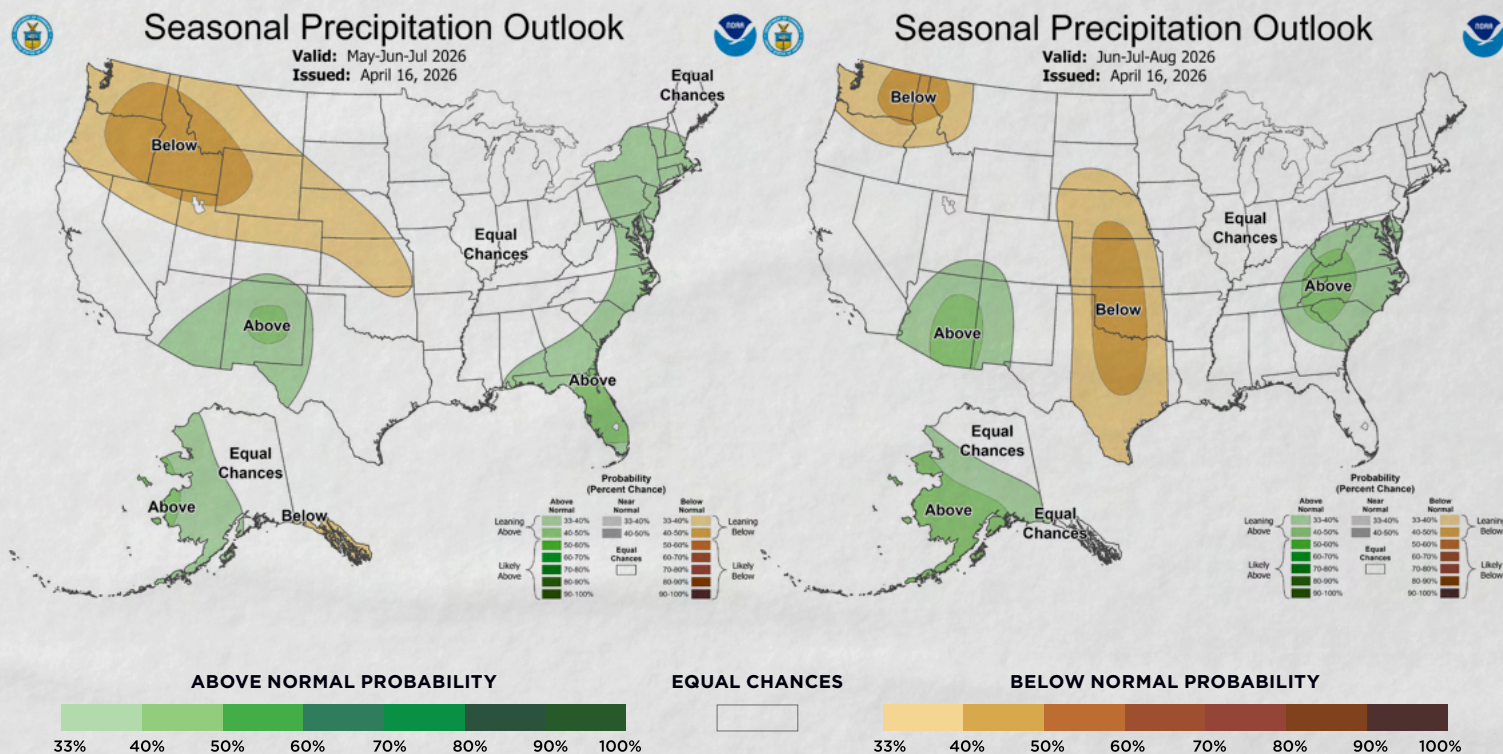
**Chris Overmyer**  
President and CEO

# Precipitation Outlook

FROM THE NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE

MAY-JUL

JUN-AUG



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](http://www.weather.gov)



Blueprint for Success

The secret of getting ahead is getting started.

- MARK TWAIN, AMERICAN WRITER

## Built to Grow

There's something about spring that feels like a fresh start. The ground softens. The days get longer. The air shifts. It's a season that reminds us that growth doesn't happen by accident, but begins with action.

Twain's words are simple, but powerful. Getting ahead doesn't require a perfect plan or flawless execution. It requires starting. And starting is often the hardest part.

In our industry, spring means movement. It means projects breaking ground, plans turning into progress and preparation turning into production. It's when ideas

move off paper and into the field. But that momentum only happens because someone decided to begin.

Growth, whether personal or professional, works the same way. You don't have to overhaul everything overnight. You don't have to see the entire road ahead. You just have to take the first step. Make the call. Set the goal. Show up ready.

Spring reminds us that even the strongest foundations started as something small. Every successful

season begins with preparation and the willingness to move when the opportunity is there.

So as the year gains momentum, ask yourself: What needs to be started? What opportunity is waiting for action?

The secret to getting ahead isn't complicated. It's simply having the courage to begin.

Let's make this a season of growth—one step, one project, one decision at a time. ■

# INDUSTRY NEWS



## FRATCO FEATURED IN IRRIGATION LEADER

Fratco President Chris Overmyer was recently featured on the cover of the March 2026 issue of *Irrigation Leader*. The interview highlights Fratco's deep roots in the drainage industry and the company's ongoing commitment to innovation, quality and strong customer relationships.

In the feature, Overmyer reflects on Fratco's evolution from early clay pipe manufacturing to today's corrugated polyolefin pipe systems engineered for modern water management. The conversation also touches on Fratco's expansion into western irrigation markets and the development of flow-control structures designed to operate within enclosed pipe systems.



Scan here to read the full feature and view the digital copy of the issue.

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## MEET NOAH JOHNSTON

### SALES REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE SOUTHEAST REGION

When Fratco made the decision to expand into the Southeast, the company needed someone willing to take a leap of faith. For Noah Johnston, that leap meant leaving his Indiana hometown of Monticello and heading to Alabama to help establish Fratco's presence in an entirely new market.

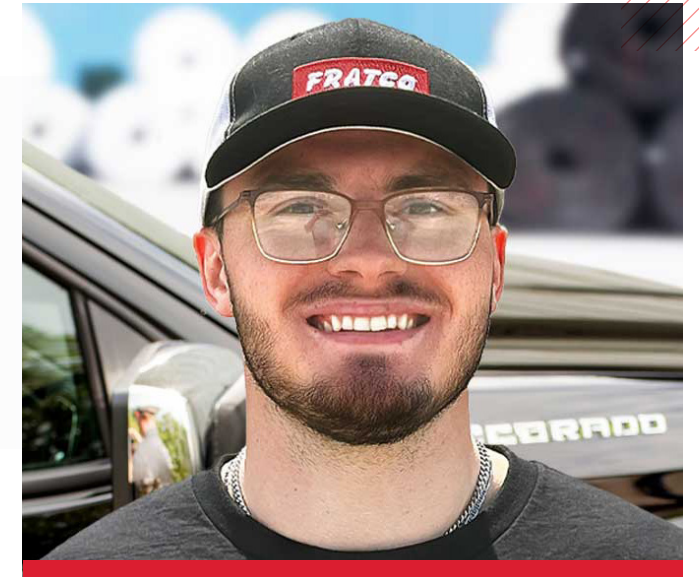
Noah joined Fratco in August 2024 with a clear goal: learn the business from the ground up and prepare to sell pipe in the Southeast region. At just 23 years old, he embraced a training plan that took him through nearly every corner of the company. "I knew absolutely nothing about pipe when I started," Noah admits. "Zero." That quickly changed.

He began by running a production line, then moved into maintenance, working on the machines. From there, he spent time in the yard loading trailers and serving customers, worked in the quality lab testing pipe and materials, and later trained with both inside and outside sales teams. Each role was intentional—designed to give him a full understanding of Fratco's products, processes and people.

"I learned from everyone, whether they were running a line or making big decisions for the company," he says. "I took something from each person along the way."

That hands-on experience is now serving him well as Fratco's Sales Representative for the Southeast Region. While the Alabama plant is still in development, Noah's current focus is building relationships, introducing Fratco to new customers and gaining a clear understanding of the southern market.

Though the territory is new, Noah says Fratco's approach remains the same.



***We're family-focused. We don't want to just be a pipe supplier—we want to build relationships that last a lifetime and help our customers grow their businesses.***

The move to Alabama wasn't an easy decision. Noah had previously worked in real estate for two years before deciding he was ready for a new challenge. When the opportunity to join Fratco and relocate came up, it felt both exciting and intimidating.

"I was never really one to want to leave my hometown," he says. "It was a scary thought at first. But I knew it was a good opportunity for me and for what I want to accomplish in life." That willingness to step outside his comfort zone has shaped his perspective both personally and professionally.

"Sometimes you just have to take the chance. I decided to leave everything and everyone I knew to chase this opportunity, and I think being open to that is important."

As he continues building Fratco's footprint in the Southeast, Noah carries with him the values he believes define both the company and his own work ethic: accountability, integrity and treating people the right way. With a strong foundation behind him and a new region ahead, Noah Johnston is helping ensure that Fratco's reputation for quality and relationships extends well beyond its roots, one connection at a time. ■



# BUILT FOR DRY GROUND

INNOVATION WITH  
GREAT BASIN PIPE & IRRIGATION



Shawn Peterson

In the Midwest, contractors fight against water.

In Utah, they fight for it.

Shawn Peterson is the owner and founder of Great Basin Pipe & Irrigation, a company built around the reality of life in the West.

“We are dry out here,” Shawn says. “Water is precious.”

Founded in 2022, Great Basin may be a young company on paper, but Shawn’s experience in the field goes back much further. A grain merchandiser and farmer by trade, he installed his first section of pipe more than ten years ago.

“It was just hit or miss at first,” Shawn recalls. “Word of mouth. One job here and there.”

Over time, those jobs became more frequent. Farmers needed better irrigation systems. Water management

became more urgent. In 2021, a local farmer contacted Fratco looking for irrigation pipe. Shawn and his crew installed that system, which sparked an ongoing partnership. By the following year, Great Basin Pipe & Irrigation was officially formed and operating as a Fratco distributor focused entirely on irrigation.

“We don’t do drainage,” Shawn says. “It’s purely irrigation.”

That difference defines everything about his business.

## INSTALLING FRATCO’S ALL-IN-ONE WATER TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

Every irrigation project Great Basin installs today centers around Fratco’s All-in-One Water Transportation System, developed by Fratco through a team led by Jerry Weiland.

The system combines HDPE pipe, stainless steel control structures and connection components into one coordinated design. Instead of piecing together materials from multiple sources, the All-in-One system is engineered to work together from start to finish.

For Shawn, that coordination matters.

“You have to calculate everything to get the amount of water the farmer wants,” he explains. “The system has to be designed right from the beginning.”

Fratco supplies the pipe and partners with Buffalo Ridge Metalworks for the stainless steel control structures. Shawn and his crew assemble those stainless structures based on the specific needs of each job. Marmac couplers are used to complete the connections in the field.

Once all of the materials arrive, the crew can assemble and install without waiting on separate fabrication steps.

The result is a system designed for efficiency, durability and long term performance in demanding western conditions.

## A DIFFERENT KIND OF CHALLENGE

For many *Tried & True* readers in the Midwest, the challenge is removing excess water. Fields need drainage to stay productive.

In Utah, the challenge is the opposite.

“The Midwest is looking to get rid of water,” Shawn says with a laugh. “Out here, we’re looking for ways to put more water in the ground.”

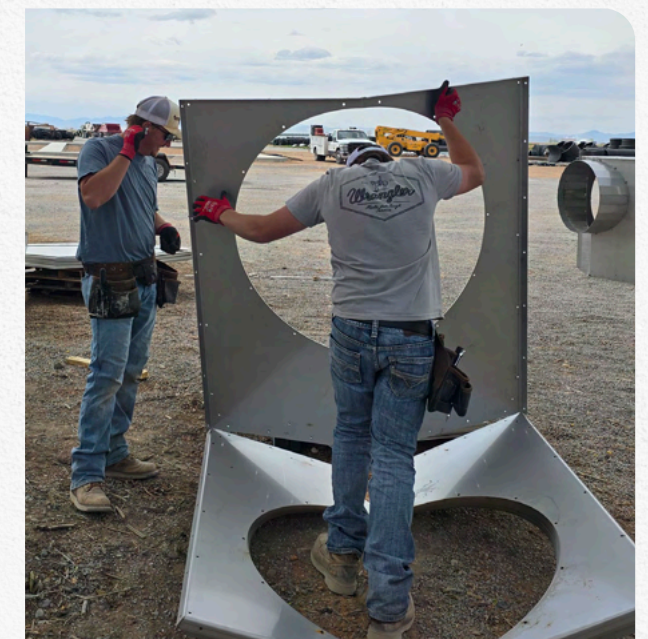
Every irrigation system begins with careful planning, just like with drainage systems. Before a single trench is dug, the land must be surveyed. Grade is critical. Water must flow at the right rate to reach the desired parts of the field.

“You have to survey it. You have to know your grade,” Shawn says. “If it’s not right, it’s not going to work the way the farmer needs it to.”

Designs are developed based on those measurements. Pipe layout, structures and flow points are planned before installation begins. The system is then installed according to exact specifications.

In a region where rainfall cannot be counted on, precision matters.

CONTINUE READING >>>



The Great Basin team assembling one of Fratco’s All-in-One Water Transportation Systems.

## THE GREAT SALT LAKE CONNECTION

Water conservation in Utah extends beyond individual farms. It connects directly to the future of the Great Salt Lake.

Over the past two decades, the lake has experienced a dramatic decline due to prolonged drought and upstream water use. Lower water levels have raised concerns about dust storms from exposed lakebed, wildlife habitat loss and long term environmental impact for surrounding communities.

“It’s a big deal out here,” Shawn says. “A lot of people are worried about the lake.”

Northern Utah plays a major role in supplying water that eventually feeds the Great Salt Lake. Improving irrigation efficiency helps reduce unnecessary loss and supports broader conservation efforts.

Programs such as NRCS and the Utah Water Optimization Program provide funding to help farmers modernize irrigation systems. These initiatives are part of a statewide effort to protect water resources and stabilize lake levels.

“There’s a lot of pipe going in up north,” Shawn says. “That’s because the water needs to go into the lake.”

For Great Basin, installing Fratco’s All-in-One Water Transportation System is not just about crop production. It is about using water responsibly in a region where supply is never really guaranteed.

## SOIL CONDITIONS SHAPE THE SYSTEM

Irrigation methods in Utah vary depending on terrain and soil conditions.

In many areas around Delta, flood irrigation remains common. The region’s soils often contain high levels of alkali and salt. Without enough water applied across the surface, those salts can rise toward the top layer of soil and damage crops.

“If you don’t flood it, those salts like to come up,” Shawn explains. “Plants don’t like that.”

Flood irrigation helps push salts down below the root zone. In flatter areas, this method remains effective and practical.

In areas such as Circleville, where fields are less level and closer to mountainous terrain, pivot systems are more common. Steeper ground makes flood irrigation difficult. Installing a pivot can be more efficient than leveling land.

“It depends on the farm you’re on,” Shawn says. “Location makes a big difference.”

Every job starts with understanding the land first.

## FROM CONCRETE TO STAINLESS

Before transitioning to Fratco’s All-in-One Water Transportation System, concrete control structures were standard. After pipe was installed, crews had to wait for concrete contractors to pour floors, then walls, then diversion bowls in stages.

“It just took forever,” Shawn says. “It was hard on the installer.”

Equipment had to move in and out multiple times. Scheduling delays slowed projects during the already short irrigation off season.

Working with Fratco and Buffalo Ridge Manufacturing, Shawn moved to stainless steel structures that could be assembled and installed more efficiently.



SmoothCorr pipe connects to the stainless steel control structure which manages water flow and diversion.

“Jerry was a big part of that,” Shawn says. “He said, let’s find something that’s more plug and play.”

Several revisions were made along the way to refine the design and improve installation. Today, the stainless structures reduce time in the field and simplify the overall process.

“It took several revisions to get where we’re at,” Shawn explains. “But it’s a lot easier now.”

That efficiency is critical when irrigation water shuts off October 1 and returns April 1. When the water shuts off before the freeze, this is prime time for Shawn and his team to install the All-in-One Water Transportation Systems.

“We stay busy from October to April,” Shawn says. “That’s our window.”

## A FAMILY OPERATION

Great Basin operates with a small, tight knit crew. Shawn employs three full time team members, all of them family.

His nephews, Tyler Atkinson, Jace Atkinson and Kylan Nelson, work alongside him in the field. Shawn’s son, Ruger, who is 14, helps clean the shop and works in the field when he’s not in school. Another son, Caden, has helped with fabricating weed catchers and maintenance on the equipment. Another son, Cael, has also worked with the company, but is now pursuing a career as a lineman.

“We have a lot of fun together,” Shawn says.

The team replaces aging metal river pipes, digs water lines, builds farm roads and constructs retention ponds. They also take on seasonal agricultural projects to stay busy year round.

Of course, working Western ground comes with its own surprises. In the spring, trenching can uncover

bullsnakes, locally known as blow snakes, that have been hibernating underground.

“You’ll pull up a bucket and there might be six or seven in there,” Shawn says.

It is simply part of working in the West.



Shawn’s son, Cael, holds a bullsnake he discovered.

## EXPANDING TO THE WEST COAST

Earlier this year, Great Basin completed its first installation in Southern California using Fratco’s All-in-One Water Transportation System.

A farmer interested in becoming a distributor traveled to Utah to see the systems in operation.

“He wanted to see it, touch it, walk through it,” Shawn says.

After seeing the system firsthand, the farmer moved forward. Pipe and stainless structures were shipped, assembled and installed. Water has already run through the new system.

Like Utah, California depends heavily on careful water management. The expansion reflects growing interest in coordinated irrigation systems designed for dry climates.

## BUILT FOR WHERE THEY STAND

Shawn Peterson built Great Basin Pipe & Irrigation around the realities of his region. It is practical work rooted in farming experience. It is shaped by drought, soil conditions and the responsibility that comes with managing limited water.

**You’ve got to make it work with the ground you’re on.”**

While many contractors featured in these pages focus on drainage, Shawn’s work highlights the other side of water management. Instead of moving excess water away, his systems guide it exactly where it needs to go.

In a place where the future of the Great Salt Lake remains uncertain and every growing season depends on careful planning, that responsibility carries weight.

Out West, water is not something you take for granted.

And for Shawn Peterson and Great Basin Pipe & Irrigation, that makes all the difference. ■



From the left: Kylan, Jace, Tyler and Shawn



TO LEARN MORE ABOUT FRATCO’S ALL-IN-ONE WATER TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM, SCAN HERE.

# SPRINGSEAL

## THE ENGINEERING BEHIND A WATERTIGHT JOINT



Mark Knapp

When a drainage job goes right, the pipe gets the credit. When a job goes wrong, the pipe still gets blamed. And somewhere in the middle—quiet, unnoticed and absolutely critical—is the gasket. It's the small component doing the big work: keeping water where it belongs, holding the joint together and helping systems perform for years after the heavy equipment has left the field.

That “little” part is exactly where SpringSeal Inc. has built its name.

Founded in 2003 by Mark Knapp, SpringSeal designs and manufactures gasket systems and sealing solutions—most notably for corrugated pipe. Knapp has been in the pipe and gasket world since the late 1980s, and he's spent decades focused on one mission that's simple to say but hard to pull off: make pipe joints seal better, assemble more consistently and perform longer out in the real world.

You don't see it. You don't brag about it. But if it's missing—or not doing its job—you'll know fast.

Let's be honest: nobody wakes up excited to talk about gaskets. Well, except maybe for Mark Knapp.

**“A lot of people don't think about pipe at all. But there's a lot that went into making that pipe—and our part is making sure that doesn't leak.”**

### A COMPANY BUILT ON DETAILS THAT MATTER

SpringSeal started with extrusion. In the early days, Knapp's team extruded gasket profiles and fused them “endless” to create finished gaskets for pipe ends. But the company didn't stay small—or single-process—for long.

Today, SpringSeal manufactures across multiple production methods, including extrusion, injection molding, thermal forming and fabrication. The business has expanded from one extrusion line to sixteen, and it now produces over 600 products across multiple industries including pipe, marine, architecture and transportation. Even with that

diversification, pipe remains the company's core. Knapp estimates pipe-related work still accounts for about 80% of what they do.

SpringSeal currently employs 84 people, most of them on the manufacturing side, with a smaller office and management team supporting engineering, quality and operations.

Growth, for SpringSeal, hasn't been about being bigger just to be bigger. It's been about having the capability to solve problems that pipe manufacturers and contractors actually face—especially when conditions aren't perfect.

### THE “YOU DON'T SEE IT” PART THAT MAKES EVERYTHING WORK

Gaskets have to keep sealing season after season—through temperature swings, exposure, settlement and all the other realities of buried infrastructure. That's

why gasket design isn't just rubber shaped into a ring. It's material science, geometry, installation consistency and long-term durability all packed into something most people never notice.

This is where SpringSeal's work has helped push the industry forward.

Knapp explains that early in SpringSeal's history, the company developed what he describes as the beginnings of the dual-durometer gasket program used by many corrugated pipe companies today—designs that combine materials with different hardness and flexibility characteristics to improve performance.

Back in those early years, it wasn't just a matter of making a gasket that fit. The goal was to improve the entire joint system—how it assembled, how it sealed and how it held up over time.

“It was the very beginning of one of the first gasket systems like its kind in the industry,” Knapp says. “It showed higher, better performance and definitely improved the pipe industry.”

### EARLY WORK WITH FRATCO

SpringSeal's relationship with Fratco goes back a long way—before SpringSeal even had its name on the door.

Knapp had worked with Fratco through a previous company while supplying gasket systems, during a time when Steve (Chris's father) was president. When Knapp founded SpringSeal in 2003, Fratco continued that working relationship and grew alongside the new venture.

“Fratco was one of the first companies we worked with,” Knapp says. “We decided to give it a shot.”

Over the years, that partnership has remained steady—built on communication, shared goals and a commitment to quality products in the field.

For Fratco, SpringSeal also provides gaskets with a recognizable red stripe—a simple detail with real value. It helps

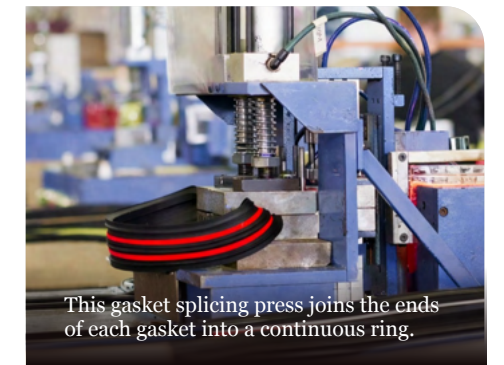
identify products in the field and supports branding at the point where contractors and distributors actually interact with it.

### SOLVING THE INSTALLATION CHALLENGE

Even the best pipe on the market can only perform as well as its joint. And consistency in the field matters.

Installations vary. Crews move at different speeds. Weather changes. Conditions aren't always textbook. SpringSeal works to reduce variability wherever possible—designing products that help ensure joints go together smoothly and perform reliably once they're buried.

One example is SpringSeal's pre-lubricated gasket film—a thin, wear-resistant coating applied over the gasket through a proprietary process referred to as slip coating.



This gasket splicing press joins the ends of each gasket into a continuous ring.

“It lowers the coefficient of friction,” Knapp explains. “It makes it have a lubricated feel—even though it can't be wiped off.”

The practical benefit is simple: more consistent assembly. In some cases, the film can significantly reduce the amount of additional lubrication needed in the field.

“It assures the pipe gets assembled properly,” he says. “It still will go together because the gasket has this lubrication film on it.”

It's a small adjustment that can make a big difference in real-world conditions.

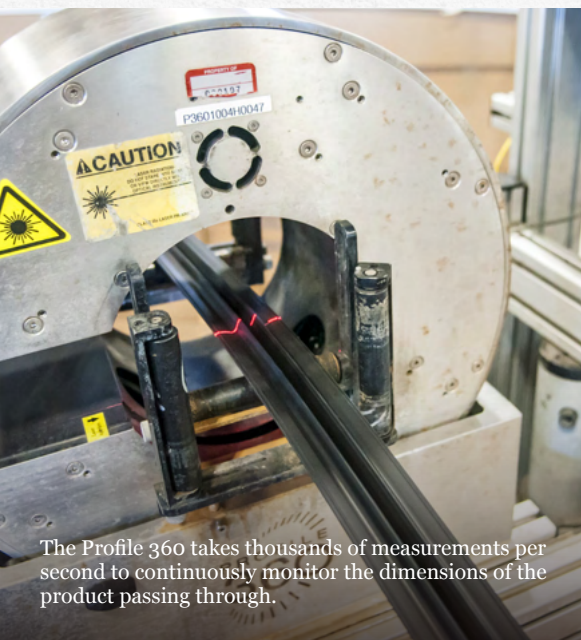
CONTINUE READING >>>



SpringSeal's thermoforming machine heats, molds, trims and finishes material all in one machine.



SpringSeal's gaskets play a pivotal role in sealing the HDPE pipe seen here, laid out for stormwater management.



The Profile 360 takes thousands of measurements per second to continuously monitor the dimensions of the product passing through.

### ENGINEERING MINDSET: BUILDING THE EQUIPMENT, NOT JUST THE PRODUCT

SpringSeal isn't only a gasket manufacturer—it's a company that treats manufacturing itself as an engineering problem to solve.

Knapp notes that SpringSeal builds much of its own equipment in-house, including fusion and downstream systems. That approach allows the company to control its processes, protect proprietary methods and move quickly when improvements are needed.

"We design all of our own equipment here," Knapp says. "We build machines from the ground up."

That mindset pairs with robust quality assurance systems. SpringSeal uses laser-based measurement equipment that continuously monitors gasket profiles as they run—capturing thousands of measurements per second and flagging when production trends toward out-of-spec.

To keep throughput high, SpringSeal also runs multi-strand production methods, producing multiple gaskets simultaneously before separating them later in the process. The result is high capacity without sacrificing consistency.

### PATENTS, PROGRESS AND PARTNERSHIP

Innovation is more than a buzzword at SpringSeal. Knapp reports the company operates under approximately 26 active patents, reflecting ongoing development and refinement across sealing applications.

But what stands out most in Knapp's perspective isn't just technology—it's the culture of the industry itself.

"Most of my customers are all my friends," he says. "Even my competitors... we don't share secrets, but we still communicate. We're all trying to make it better for the industry."

When asked how SpringSeal's values align with Fratco's, Knapp comes back to the basics: shared goals, shared commitment to quality and being there when problems need to be solved.

**"We're goal oriented. We want improvements to the industry and to our products. We're here to help them when they have an issue."**

And when asked what the best benefit of working with Fratco has been?

"Very easygoing," he says. "Very few issues. We work very well together. It's been a pleasure."

### THE TAKEAWAY: SMALL PART, BIG JOB

Gaskets aren't glamorous. They aren't the part customers point to in a field or jobsite. They aren't what gets discussed at the front of the room when a job is celebrated.

But if you've ever dealt with a leaky joint, an inconsistent assembly or a repair that needed to work the first time—then you already understand how important that "invisible" piece really is.

SpringSeal has spent more than two decades making sure that invisible piece does its job—quietly, consistently and for the long haul.

And in a world where water always finds the weakest point, that's not a small thing. ■



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**PRO CORR**



# BEYOND THE RUBBER RING

HOW PIPE GASKET  
DESIGN HAS EVOLVED

For many years, watertight joints in corrugated HDPE pipe relied on a simple idea: compress a solid rubber gasket between the spigot and the bell. It worked and became standard practice across the industry.

But as jobsite demands increased and performance standards became stricter, gasket design had to improve.

Much of the progress that followed was driven by engineers focused specifically on improving joint performance. Among those is Mark Knapp, founder and owner of SpringSeal, whose work over several decades helped shape many of the gasket designs used in corrugated pipe systems today.

Understanding how these seals have evolved helps explain why today's systems install easier and perform better.

## THE EARLY DAYS OF SOLID RUBBER GASKETS

Early corrugated pipe gaskets were usually made from 100 percent thermoset rubber such as EPDM or polyisoprene. These gaskets were large and heavy. They relied on bulk material and compression to create a seal.

They were strong and durable, but they had drawbacks:

- A large amount of material
- High stretch during installation
- Possible rolling out of place
- Possible distortion of the pipe wall
- Higher material cost

Installers often had to stretch the gasket over the pipe and hope it stayed seated during assembly. Rolling was common, especially in larger diameters. When a gasket rolled, it could lead to leaks or require the joint to be taken apart and redone.

It worked, but it was not always efficient.

## ENGINEERING A BETTER SEAL

By the mid-1990s, engineers began looking for a better way to design pipe gaskets—one that would improve sealing performance while making installation more reliable.

Mark, who has spent more than 35 years developing pipe gasket systems for the drainage industry, became a key figure in this shift. In 1996, he began developing gasket designs that used dual-hardness thermoplastic vulcanizate (TPV) materials. Instead of relying on a single solid rubber compound, his designs combined materials with different hardness levels into a single gasket profile.

This concept became widely known as multi-hardness gasket design, and it represented a significant step forward in corrugated pipe joint technology.

In simple terms, different parts of the gasket perform different jobs:

- A firmer base helps anchor the gasket in place
- A softer sealing surface compresses to block water
- In some designs, a low-friction outer layer helps the pipe slide together more easily

By combining materials in one extrusion, engineers reduced the amount of rubber needed while improving stability and consistency.

This shift marked an important step forward in gasket performance.

## IMPROVEMENTS IN SHAPE AND PERFORMANCE

Material innovation was only part of the evolution. Engineers also refined the shape and placement of the gasket inside the bell to improve sealing performance.

Many of these refinements built on the same engineering principles Knapp helped introduce—using material hardness and geometry together to control compression and movement.

Some designs moved the sealing surface closer to the bell wall. This reduced stress on the pipe during assembly and improved pressure performance. Other profiles increased the hardness of the base material, sometimes up to 80 or 90 durometer. A higher durometer means a firmer material, which helps prevent movement and improves stability during installation.

Pre-lubricated surfaces were also introduced. These coatings reduced friction and required less stretch during installation.

Together, these improvements helped create:

- Less rolling
- More consistent compression
- Easier assembly
- Better long-term sealing

For contractors, that meant fewer callbacks and more predictable performance in the field.

## WHY THIS MATTERS TODAY

Modern drainage systems are expected to last longer and perform under more demanding conditions. Some systems must handle higher internal pressures. Others must withstand heavier soil loads and traffic loads.

Multi-hardness gasket designs allow manufacturers to:

- Control compression more precisely
- Improve pipe stability
- Reduce wall distortion
- Use materials more efficiently
- Increase pressure capability

These improvements are not just technical details. They affect how the pipe installs and how it performs over decades underground.

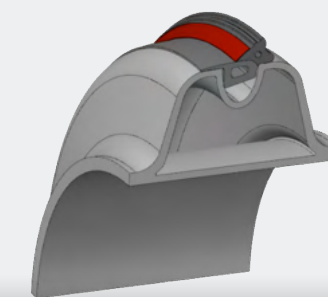
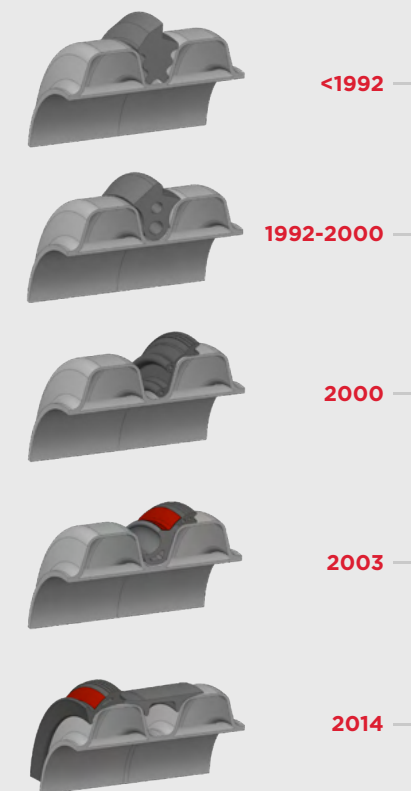
## LOOKING FORWARD

The evolution of gasket design shows how steady engineering improvements shape the drainage industry. What started as a simple rubber ring has become a carefully engineered sealing system.

Mark Knapp's work in multi-hardness gasket development helped move the industry toward more reliable, installation-friendly joint designs and engineers continue building on those principles today. As manufacturing methods and materials advance, gasket systems will likely become even more specialized for specific applications.

For contractors and engineers, understanding this progression builds confidence in modern joint systems. It also reinforces an important truth: long-term performance depends on both sound engineering and proper installation. ■

## THE EVOLUTION OF BELL/BELL (ANACONDA) GASKETS



Most recently updated in 2014, this is the LoxSeal Tri-Extruder inline gasket which features no rolling.



Frasco-branded pre-lubricated film gaskets are coated with a low COF film that cannot be wiped off or removed.

# RISING TIDES IN THE RESIN MARKET

UNDERSTANDING THE FORCES  
BEHIND PIPE PRICE INCREASES

PUBLISHED MAY 2026

# FPO

Global events often have a way of reaching into our industry, even when they begin thousands of miles away. The current conflict involving Iran has created uncertainty across the Middle East, one of the world's most important regions for energy and petrochemical production. Because plastics like polyethylene and polypropylene are derived from oil and natural gas, instability in that region quickly affects the raw materials used to manufacture corrugated drainage pipe.

Energy prices have already reacted. Oil prices have climbed above \$100 per barrel, and natural gas prices have risen as well. When energy costs increase, the cost of producing plastic resin rises. Polyethylene, the primary material used to manufacture HDPE drainage pipe, is seeing some of the fastest movement. Resin suppliers have announced price increases of more than 10 cents per pound and are signaling that additional increases may follow.

At the same time, global supply chains are tightening. Higher fuel costs are raising freight prices and slowing the movement of materials. Many countries that normally rely on Middle Eastern supply are now looking to North America for stability. That additional demand is pulling more resin into export markets and tightening supply here at home. What is driving the market is not just higher oil and gas prices, but also growing concern over global shipping routes and the movement of the raw materials needed to produce resin.

Because of these factors, the resin market has shifted quickly. Producers are limiting available supply and pricing new sales based on the cost to replace material today rather than what it cost last week. In simple terms, the market has moved from a buyer-driven environment to a seller-controlled one.

Resin is one of the largest cost components in corrugated HDPE pipe, so shifts like this eventually impact pipe pricing across the industry.

While moments like this can create uncertainty, they are not new to our industry. Our industry has worked through energy spikes, supply shortages and freight disruptions before. Each time, we have adapted and continued to deliver the products that farmers, contractors and communities rely on.

We are watching the market closely and working with our suppliers to manage these changes as responsibly as possible. As we have through every industry shift before, we will continue working alongside our customers to keep projects moving and water flowing. ■

# WORK ANNIVERSARIES

Todd Denton	35 years	Jesus Hernandez	8 years	Lucio Medina	2 years
Charles Houchell	29 years	Katie-Anne David	7 years	Willian Sandoval	2 years
Gavin Conley	21 years	Derek Overmyer	7 years	Miguel Espinoza	2 years
Bill Champion	15 years	Erick Garza Lozano	6 years	Jose Garcia	2 years
Craig Douglass	15 years	Matthew Rightman	6 years	Gene Slaney	2 years
Mason Doyle	15 years	Shain Yenna	4 years	Miguel Angel Rivera Salazar	2 years
Joel Kruger	14 years	Deyanira Gonzalez	4 years	Jose Luis Salazar Zarate	2 years
Brandon Herron	13 years	Robert Boyd	3 years	Jordan Campbell	2 years
Katrina Pelsy	12 years	Tyler Ricardez	3 years	Jesse McPherson	1 year
Jackie Sanchez	10 years	Brian Miranda Ortiz	3 years	Brandon Septer	1 year
Jose Requena	8 years	William Leek	3 years	Jeise Sanchez de Diaz	1 year
Skylur Moseley	8 years	Michelle Mills	3 years		

## WELCOMING NEW HIRES

Donielle Decker	Stephen King
Juan Gomez Soriano	Tanner Ruby

# WATER SCARCITY: IS IT CLOSER THAN WE THINK?

## WHY EVERYONE'S PERSPECTIVE ON FIELD DRAINAGE SHOULD CHANGE

In the 1930s, no one saw the Dust Bowl coming.

But when an extended drought scenario descended on the Great Plains after years of wheat farming had steadily replaced the region's moisture-retaining prairie grasses, well... suddenly, the problem was real.

That was a long time ago, and science has become far more sophisticated.

Yet, that's precisely why water insecurity is on everyone's radar.

Today, even places like the Pacific Northwest, where it "always rains," and the deep south, where water is everywhere, are experiencing new water-stress realities, brought on by everything from unusual climate cycles and aquifer depletion to population shifts and aging infrastructure.

And this doesn't even account for the entirely new demand pressure tied to the rise of AI data centers.

Something else no one saw coming in the 1930s.



A Dust Bowl farm in the Coldwater District.

### IS THE BREADBASKET AT RISK OF GETTING CRUSTY?

Outside of the Dust Bowl, America's heartland has historically been immune to concerns about water security. Over the past several decades, however, as weather patterns across the Midwest have become increasingly volatile, water isn't as reliable as it used to be.

For ag experts here, water insecurity isn't about how much rain falls in a year. It's about when it falls, how quickly it leaves the landscape and whether it's stored or managed effectively.

Midwest growers frequently experience two seemingly contradictory problems in the same year: intense precipitation in the off-season and pre-season, followed by prolonged dry periods.

Heavy spring storms can dump inches of rain in a matter of hours, saturating fields and insufficient drainage systems, while eroding soils and stripping away nutrients. Then, by mid-summer, crops may be stressed for moisture as rainfall shuts off during critical growing stages.

In other words, the Midwest is not necessarily getting less water overall. But the water it receives is arriving in ways that make it harder to optimize.

On a grander scale, the question becomes, "Is this a new reality or a trend toward something worse on the horizon?"

### LESSONS FROM THE WEST

Literally out there on the horizon are regions well ahead of the curve on water insecurity, where persistent drought conditions have already pushed farmers and engineers to rethink how water moves through agricultural landscapes.

In many of these regions, from California to places like Delta, Utah (featured in this issue's *Built for Dry Ground* article), subsurface networks similar in form to Midwestern drainage systems—perforated pipe, collector mains and engineered outlets—are being used not simply to move water away from fields, but to direct, capture and reuse it as needed.

For flyover states, these applications out west offer a useful case study. While the Midwest region faces very different hydrologic conditions, the underlying engineering principles are remarkably similar. The same subsurface pipe networks already installed beneath millions of acres of farmland could potentially be adapted to become equally valuable water-management systems.

CONTINUE READING >>>



Even if western-intense drought doesn't befall the Heartland someday, water management has incredible benefits that go beyond full-season water security, including better water quality, soil nutrient preservation and runoff control.

More foundationally, management is also a key feature of reducing aquifer dependence. Folks in Nebraska and Kansas might not be having Dust Bowl flashbacks yet. But, in recent years, the Ogallala Aquifer underneath their states and several others has been registering record lows.

### BEING MORE INTENTIONAL ABOUT PIPE SYSTEMS

Out west and all across the country, one promising approach is controlled drainage. By installing adjustable water control structures within pipe systems, farmers can hold water in the soil profile during parts of the growing season rather than allowing it to drain away immediately. This stored water can help sustain crops during dry periods while also reducing nutrient loss.

Another strategy is drainage water recycling, where water is stored in ponds or reservoirs and later reused for irrigation during dry spells. Although more common in research settings today, the concept illustrates a broader shift toward treating water not as waste to be removed, but as a resource to be administered.

Managed aquifer recharge is yet another initiative, and it's gaining momentum in Department of Transportation (DOT) applications as well as agriculture. Rather than simply pulling stormwater away from streets and lots, open drainage systems are designed to collect the water and direct it toward replenishing underground resources.

With this drainage-to-management shift in mind, it becomes more imperative for engineers and pipe-system installers to be skillfully intentional about pipe material selection, proper pipe sizing, flow rate and sloping for efficient water movement.

They'll also need to consider other management-system factors, including storage capacity—with studies suggesting on-farm reservoirs of six to eight percent of the field area—wetland restoration, and landscape features that slow water movement through watersheds.

### PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Water scarcity in the Midwest is unlikely to look like the dramatic shortages seen in the Southwest. There isn't talk of dry river gorges, emergency water trucking or desalination.

Instead, scarcity may appear in more subtle forms. Think crop stress during key growth stages, declining groundwater levels in localized areas, more frequent drought declarations or rising conflicts among agricultural, municipal and environmental water users.

Because the Midwest still has relatively abundant water compared with much of the world, it has an opportunity many regions no longer possess—the chance to adapt before crisis forces change.

That adaptation will require collaboration between farmers, drainage contractors, watershed managers and civil engineers. It will also require rethinking decades of infrastructure design assumptions.

The central question should no longer be how quickly water can be removed from the landscape. Instead, it should be how effectively the region can capture, store and manage the water it receives. And, at Fratco, we're honored and excited to be a part of the solution going forward. ■

# ADMC CORNER



WITH  
**KEEGAN KULT**

A recent conversation with Keegan Kult, executive director of the Agricultural Drainage Management Coalition (ADMC), provided several important updates for contractors and industry partners.

### EDUCATION & TRAINING

Several in-person events are scheduled this spring and early summer:

#### Modern Approaches to Conservation Drainage Design (May 6–7, 2026 | Danville, IL)

Hosted by ISAP, ADMC, and The Nature Conservancy, this training focuses on designing drainage water management systems, saturated buffers and denitrifying bioreactors, along with guidance on NRCS TSP certification. Registration is open through April 28, but space is limited.



SCAN HERE TO REGISTER FOR THE MODERN APPROACHES TO CONSERVATION DRAINAGE DESIGN TRAINING.

#### Iowa Contractor Workshops: Installing Drainage Water Quality Practices (June 16 – Fort Dodge | June 18 – Hiawatha)

Covers installation, bidding strategies and batch & build approaches. Registration will open soon.

#### Conservation Drainage Network (CDN) Annual Meeting (June 2–4, 2026 | East Lansing, MI)

Brings together industry leaders to discuss research, implementation, and policy. FRATCO is a sponsor of this year's event. Learn more at [conservationdrainage.net](https://conservationdrainage.net).



SCAN HERE TO REGISTER FOR THE CONSERVATION DRAINAGE NETWORK (CDN) ANNUAL MEETING.

Additional training programs and industry events are in development.

Contractors, suppliers and agribusiness professionals are encouraged to continue educating themselves and their customers on conservation drainage tools and practices.

If you have a project to highlight or are interested in getting involved, contact Keegan Kult at [kkult@admcoalition.com](mailto:kkult@admcoalition.com).



FOR MORE INFORMATION ON ADMC MEMBERSHIP, SCAN HERE.

ADMC continues to expand education through both virtual and in-person opportunities.

The new webinar series covers practical drainage topics, including:

- MSU drain spacing tools
- Contractor perspectives on niche markets
- Drainage water recycling systems

Live webinars are open to all, with recordings available to members.



SCAN HERE TO VIEW THE SCHEDULE.

# FIELD JOURNAL

TRIED & TRUE TRICKS OF THE TRADE

## SOFT GROUND, SMART DECISIONS GETTING AHEAD OF UNPREDICTABLE GROUND

Spring brings opportunity—but it also brings mud, moisture and unpredictable ground. You've seen it a hundred times. Frost leaves, rain settles in and the ground doesn't cooperate.

The young crews might want to push through it. This is where you step in.

### TEACH THEM TO READ THE SOIL FIRST

Before the first bucket breaks ground, remind them to take a minute. Saturated soil changes everything—trench stability, equipment placement, bedding performance. What worked last fall won't always work today. Show them how to read the ground instead of fighting it.

### SHOW THEM HOW TO PROTECT THE TRENCH

Soft conditions demand respect. Walk them through proper shoring. Make them look at the sidewalls. Keep spoil piles back where they belong. They need to understand that a rushed setup in wet ground doesn't just cost time. It risks safety. That lesson is better learned from you than from a collapse.

### SLOW THEM DOWN ON COMPACTION

You know moisture changes bedding and backfill. They may not, yet. Teach them why proper compaction now prevents settlement and callbacks later. This is the difference between a job that holds and one that haunts you.

### MAKE THEM WATCH THE FORECAST

Spring weather turns quickly. Show them how to plan for incoming rain, protect open trenches and safeguard materials. Anticipation is part of craftsmanship.

The next generation will work the ground long after we're gone. This spring, don't just install pipe, pass on the judgment that makes systems last.

*Wet ground demands wisdom*



## SETTING THE TONE EARLY BUILDING A RHYTHM FOR THE SEASON AHEAD

Spring isn't just the start of the busy season—it's the start of your team's rhythm for the year. The habits built now often carry through the months ahead.

### CLARIFY EXPECTATIONS

Before the rush hits full speed, take time to reset standards. Safety expectations, communication protocols, jobsite responsibilities—say them out loud. Alignment early prevents friction later.

### ESTABLISH COMMUNICATION

Encourage questions. Confirm roles. Make sure everyone understands the plan before the equipment starts moving. Clear direction reduces mistakes and builds confidence.

### BUILD MOMENTUM, NOT CHAOS

It's easy to let the first few busy weeks feel frantic. Stay organized. Set realistic daily goals. Create a steady pace rather than a scramble.

### LEAD BY EXAMPLE

Show up prepared. Stay calm when plans shift. Your crew will mirror what they see.

The start of the season is a culture reset. Set the tone now, and you won't spend the rest of the year trying to fix it.



# Howdy, Fratco Family!

WIN THIS LIMITED EDITION *TRIED & TRUE* CAP



Complete the crossword, snap a picture of it and email it to [tried-true@fratco.com](mailto:tried-true@fratco.com) by June 30<sup>th</sup>. 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: \_\_\_\_\_

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

# WORD SEARCH CLUES

- Great Basin is located in (5 LETTERS), a town in western Utah.
- A (6 LETTERS) is a pipe end inserted into a bell to form a joint.
- (10 LETTERS) is a manufacturing company known for engineering advanced pipe gasket systems.
- (8 LETTERS) is a major aquifer beneath the Great Plains experiencing declining water levels.
- In the spring, Shawn Peterson sometimes uncovers dens of (10 LETTERS).
- The 1930s drought disaster is referred to as the (8 LETTERS).
- Fratco is opening a new plant in Fort Payne, (7 LETTERS).
- Noah Johnston's hometown is (10 LETTERS), Indiana.
- Fratco was featured in the March 2026 issue of (16 LETTERS) magazine.
- (10 LETTERS) drainage is the practice of holding water in the soil using adjustable structures.
- Mark (5 LETTERS) is the founder and longtime gasket design innovator at SpringSeal.
- (4 LETTERS) is a partner organization that promotes agricultural drainage management and education, of which Keegan Kult is the executive director.
- The primary resin used to manufacture HDPE drainage pipe is called (12 LETTERS).
- Drainage water recycling systems called (10 LETTERS) may store water in these structures for later irrigation use.
- The conflict involving (4 LETTERS) is contributing to rising resin prices.
- The Measurement used to describe the hardness of gasket materials is a (9 LETTERS).
- (13 LETTERS), in Utah, has experienced a dramatic decline over the past two decades due to drought and upstream water use.
- Thermoplastic (11 LETTERS) (TPV) is the material used in modern multi-hardness gasket design.
- (8 LETTERS) is the process of refilling underground aquifers.
- SpringSeal identifies the gaskets it supplies to Fratco with a (3 LETTERS) stripe.



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

*“Coming together is  
a beginning. Keeping  
together is progress.  
Working together is  
success.”*

- HENRY FORD

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