

# corn talk

Official Publication of the Minnesota Corn Growers Association • March 2019



## Inside:

- ▣ Action on state issues, USMCA and E15 ramps up
- ▣ Minnesota farmers win national stewardship awards
- ▣ Research reducing nitrogen loss returns

# Minnesota's legislative session picks up steam

The following was current at the time of publication:

The Minnesota Department of Management and Budget (MMB) released a revised budget forecast in early March that shrunk the budget surplus by nearly a third to a little over \$1 billion. With a revised

budget forecast, work to finalize a two-year budget will now kick into high gear before session adjourns in May.

Prior to the latest surplus forecast, Governor Tim Walz released a budget proposal for \$49.4 billion over the next two-year budget cycle—approximately a \$2 billion increase over the current budget.

Walz' budget proposal is a mix of base funding for existing programs, new spending proposals and increased revenues. A first step in the state budgeting cycle, the Governor's budget proposal includes several items discussed during his campaign, and similar to initial budget proposals by his predecessors, is often a reflection of his priorities.

Included in the Governor's budget proposal is buffer property tax relief for \$15 million, which is based on a \$50 per acre credit for land in compliance with the buffer law. The Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) was pleased to see this priority included in the Governor's budget proposal, which gives it a significant lift in the push to address this issue.

Rep. Paul Torkelson and Sen. Gary Dahms have also come forward with a buffer property tax credit proposal (HF 1430/SF 1937).

The proposed legislation reduces property taxes on acres in compliance with the buffer law to zero, with the state annually reimbursing local taxing jurisdictions for lost property tax revenue from buffer acres.



After a brief period for onboarding of newly elected legislators, important bills became a focus at the Capitol.

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corntalk 

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## Corn priorities at Minnesota legislature

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MCGA looks forward to working with the administration and legislators towards a buffer property tax relief package that will fairly address the financial penalty of farmers paying ag land rates on buffer acres no longer in production.

The Governor's budget proposal also contains funding for the state of Minnesota to fully conform to section 179 expensing and depreciation limits. House and Senate legislators have also been considering bills for section 179 conformity, and MCGA hopes to see a final tax bill that includes this important priority.

Another important policy priority for MCGA is to increase funding for the Agricultural Research, Education, Extension and Technology Transfer (AGREETT) Program at the University of Minnesota. A bill introduced by Rep. Rod Hamilton and Sen. Gary Dahms would increase funding for AGREETT by \$5.7 million per year and would bolster agriculture research activities at the University of Minnesota. ■

## Corn growers welcome Petersen as Ag Commissioner

Governor Tim Walz announced the appointment of Thom Petersen as the next commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture in January. Following the announcement, Minnesota Corn Growers Association President Brian Thalmann released the following statement:



Thom Petersen

"The state's corn growers would like to congratulate Thom Petersen on his appointment to commissioner of agriculture. Having had the opportunity to work with Thom during his time at Minnesota Farmers Union, we know he brings the experience necessary to advocate for Minnesota farmers at the Capitol, both within the administration and with legislators, as well as outside the Capitol with those who might be unfamiliar with agriculture. The Minnesota Corn Growers Association looks forward to serving as a resource for Thom as he works to elevate Minnesota's ag sector." ■

## USMCA, year-round E15 become focus on federal level

The following was current at the time of publication:

While Minnesota's legislative session continues, corn growers nationwide have turned their attention to two major federal issues: Ratification of the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) and year-round sales of E15.

While the USMCA was signed by leaders of the United States, Mexico and Canada, a complex ratification process will need to take place before the agreement becomes official. Mexico and Canada are the largest and most reliable market for U.S. corn farmers, making the completion of this process a top legislative priority for both the Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) and the National Corn Growers Association (NCGA).

In early March, NCGA joined the American Soybean Association, National Association of Wheat Growers and National Sorghum Producers in endorsing the USMCA and calling for its ratification. In addition to supporting the agreement, the group also called for the Trump Administration to keep NAFTA intact until the USMCA is ratified.

MCGA grower leaders traveled to Washington D.C. earlier this month to meet with Minnesota members of the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate to discuss the importance of USMCA ratification. MCGA will

also continue to work with NCGA and other national partners to help ensure ratification in 2019.

Also during the March fly-in to the nation's capital, MCGA grower leaders discussed the importance of year-round E15 sales with the Minnesota congressional delegation.

President Trump announced his support for year-round access to E15 in October. But in order for retailers to be able to offer E15 during the summer months, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will need to finalize a regulation. Earlier this month, the EPA sent a draft rule to the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for review—an important first step.

While the progress is encouraging, the contents of the rule were not public at the time of publication. NCGA will be providing input to the OMB stating the need for a strong, clear rule that would allow for E15 sales during the summer driving months. But with many opposing the rule change, legal challenges are also expected after the EPA publishes a final rule, which would further delay year-round E15 sales.

Finally, while in Washington MCGA grower leaders also discussed important aspects of 2018 farm bill implementation with members of Minnesota's congressional delegation and key federal agencies. Leaders emphasized the need for quick implementation and clear communication about changes to programs that influence grower decisions related to their farm operations. Grower leaders highlighted specific programs that are important to Minnesota corn farmers. ■



Rulemaking will need to move quickly to ensure E15 availability during the summer driving season.

## Welcome to the newly designed Corn Talk

By now, you probably noticed a new look to Corn Talk. Much like the state's corn farmers, we embrace a forward-thinking approach, which includes the evolution of our bimonthly publication.

The redesigned Corn Talk will continue to bring you the news you need to know from our rural communities, the Capitol and beyond. We hope you enjoy the new look, and we would love to hear any feedback you may have. Please send comments to [brenneke@mncorn.org](mailto:brenneke@mncorn.org).

# Minnesota ethanol sales reach all-time high in 2018

The Minnesota Department of Commerce released its year-end station report detailing a record-breaking year for 88 Octane (also known as E15) fuel sales, and building momentum for E85.

More than 59 million gallons of 88 Octane fuel were sold to Minnesota consumers last year, nearly tripling sales from 2017. Sales of E85 reached 16.4 million gallons last year, surpassing 14.8 million gallons sold in 2017.



MDA Deputy Commissioner Andrea Vaubel addressed the crowd.

The remarkable growth of 88 Octane fuel coincides with a rise in ethanol infrastructure. Stations selling 88 Octane went from 14 retailers in 2014 to more than 300 last year. Retailers offering E85 also reached an important milestone last year when it surpassed 400 locations across the state.

The increase in retailers offering the lower-priced, high-octane fuel was spurred by a \$14 million investment in biofuel infrastructure in 2015.

Through the Biofuel Infrastructure Partnership (BIP), the U.S. Department of Agriculture awarded Minnesota \$8 million for ethanol infrastructure development to make cleaner-burning ethanol fuels more accessible. A coalition that included the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, American Lung Association in Minnesota, Minnesota Biofuels Association, Ethanol Producers, Prime the Pump, and the Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) brought the total investment to \$14 million.

In addition to its investment in infrastructure, MCGA revamped MNFuels.com last year to make it easier than ever for consumers to find 88 Octane fuel and flex fuels. Nearly 2,500 users have visited the website each month to learn more about ethanol-blended fuels and use the station locator or flex fuel vehicle identifier.

MNFuels.com has been promoted to consumers via billboards, hit radio stations, and through popular apps.

Passenger buses throughout Minneapolis and St. Paul have also served as moving billboards to promote ethanol-blended fuels. Commuters have seen wrapped buses throughout the metro touting the benefits of 88 Octane and directing consumers to MNFuels.com. ■



# Nitrogen Smart builds on nitrogen management offerings

University of Minnesota Extension's Nitrogen Smart program returned in January with seminars scheduled across Minnesota farm country focused on the fundamentals of nitrogen management. Now in its fourth year, the program has expanded on its acclaimed curriculum to offer online and advanced education options.

Nearly 1,000 farmers have attended Nitrogen Smart sessions to date, with 95 percent of attendees stating they would recommend the course to a fellow farmer. The curriculum again focused on the sources of nitrogen for crops, how to manage nitrogen in drainage systems, an update on regulations and how they impact farmers, and practices to refine nitrogen management.

"We aren't going to tell you what is right and wrong in terms of nitrogen management on your farm," said Extension Educator Brad Carlson, who helps lead the program. "We are going to talk about sources of nitrogen and how it behaves on the farm. Then farmers are able to figure out how to best use that information with their operation."

To date, the curriculum has helped attending farmers save, on average, more than \$3,200 from either increased yields or reduced fertilizer costs. In addition to savings, farmers also receive Nitrogen Smart certification upon completion of the seminar.

Farmers who are unable to attend an in-person seminar can now become "Nitrogen Smart" online. The new and interactive training program creates a unique experience for producers based on their own operation and region. The online course is nearly identical to the in-person seminars, with participants receiving the same certification after completing the course.

Also for the first time, farmers who have already attended the base Nitrogen Smart seminar can attend an Advanced Nitrogen Smart course. The topic of this year's advanced seminar was manure management. Carlson said the curriculum focused on the timing and limitations of manure use and its impact on yield. Next year, Advanced Nitrogen Smart will add a course focused on the 4R's of nutrient management— Right fertilizer source at the Right rate at the Right time and in the Right place.

Carlson said Extension will also be scheduling more sessions in 2019, targeting areas with above-normal nitrate concentrations in drinking water. Farmers can learn about additional dates or complete the online Nitrogen Smart course at [z.umn.edu/nitrogensmart](http://z.umn.edu/nitrogensmart).

The Minnesota Corn Growers Association supports the Nitrogen Smart program as part of its mission to become the most sustainable and environmentally responsible corn farmers in the country. ■



Extension Educator Brad Carlson has led Nitrogen Smart since its inception.



# Local farmer receives national recognition for soil health efforts

**B**uffalo Lake farmer Brian Ryberg was honored with a “Seeds of Change” award at the Soil Health Partnership’s 2019 Soil Health Summit in St. Louis. Ryberg received the “Super Sprout” award for his tremendous contributions as a first-year member of the Soil Health Partnership.



Brian Ryberg with Soil Health Partnership Executive Director Shefali Mehta (left) and Field Manager Tricia Verville.

Ryberg dove headfirst into the SHP program, quickly contributing to its mission to better analyze the benefits of soil health practices. His willingness to host a field day to discuss his soil management strategy last year and his ability to collaborate were cited as examples of his impact.

Ryberg’s farm is one of 140 farms across 14 states that are considered full SHP program sites, which requires following certain testing and agronomic protocols. SHP’s goal is to acquire data from each location to measure and communicate the economic and environmental benefits of different soil management strategies.

A past Minnesota Corn Innovation Grant recipient, Ryberg’s success as a year-one SHP member was aided by his farming philosophy being

a natural fit for the program. Many of the soil health practices being analyzed by SHP were already incorporated into his farm, including cover crops and reduced tillage.

“We thought it made sense to take what we are doing and put it together with what [SHP] is doing through their organization because it only meant we could learn about the benefits of these practices that much faster,” Ryberg said.

Ryberg has an 80-acre plot on his farm where he plants cover crops on half the acres and no cover crops on the other half. SHP will test both groups over three years to measure the impact of cover crops on soil health.

The anecdotal benefits of both cover crops and reduced tillage have been evident to Ryberg. For example, reduced tillage has helped Ryberg better weather increasingly heavy rain falls over the last couple of years.

“We have had some wet falls, and what you are seeing on a lot of farms are these deep tracks that farmers have to go back and fill in due to the state of the soil,” Ryberg said. “We are in our fifth year of reduced or strip tillage, and we don’t have any of those issues.”

While Ryberg has noticed a shift in the mindsets of farmers when it comes to soil management strategy, he believes SHP’s mission to better quantify the benefits of practices like cover crops and reduced tillage will bring the biggest change. For example, having data to show the return on an investment in cover crops would be useful to farmers as they begin conversations with their bankers.

“If I am showing an entry for cover crop seed, how do I show something on the income side to offset that,” Ryberg said. “There are hidden numbers there, and I hope someday we can quantify that.”

An initiative of the National Corn Growers Association, with support from the Minnesota Corn Growers Association, the Soil Health Partnership is a data-driven program working to quantify the benefits of practices that support soil health. Learn more about this effort at [www.soilhealthpartnership.org](http://www.soilhealthpartnership.org). ■

## Minnesota farm family receives national stewardship award

**A** Minnesota farm family’s fourth-generation conservation initiative garnered national attention at Commodity Classic in Orlando. The National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) presented Rick Schlichting of Rice, Minn., with its 2019 Good Steward Recognition.

The Schlichtings farm 6,600 acres of cropland, and the operation reflects their commitment to the concept of regenerative agriculture. They employ cover crops, crop rotation, extreme nutrient management techniques and low-pressure irrigation as staples of their farm management. They also own a farrow-to-finish hog operation that finished 30,000 hogs last year.

In addition to state-of-the-art best management practices, the Schlichtings are involved in prairie restoration, native tree planting, wildlife food plots and growing rye which is used to plant cover crops in many of their fields. To ensure the farm remains productive into the future, they employ a hands-on approach of testing new management techniques and technologies in the field while relying heavily on using the best technical experts and assistance available.



Rick Schlichting

“NCGA defines sustainability as the pursuit of constant improvement and the Schlichting family personifies this description,” said NCGA President Lynn Chrisp. “Their progressive farming practices and contributions to healthier soils, cleaner water and sustainable crop production are nothing short of extraordinary.” ■

# Gov. Walz named to Governors' Biofuels Coalition

**G**overnor Tim Walz was named 2019 chair of the Governors' Biofuels Coalition. In the role, Walz will work with governors from 22 states on advocacy efforts supporting regional and national biofuel policy development.

A longtime supporter of ethanol-blended fuels, Walz will serve as chair during what will be a crucial year for the future of ethanol. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will soon begin rulemaking for year-round sales of E15, and strong advocacy from groups like the Governors' Biofuel Coalition will be crucial during this process.

Minnesota Corn Growers Association President Brian Thalmann expressed support for Walz as chair of the coalition: "The power of collaboration between state officials, federal officials, and biofuels supporters like Minnesota Corn has made our state a national leader in ethanol infrastructure with sales of ethanol-blended fuels at an all-time high," Thalmann said. "We look forward to Governor Walz continuing this tradition on a national level to promote higher ethanol blends and a future of cleaner-burning fuels." ■



Walz succeeds Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds as chair of the Biofuels Coalition.

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## Resources available for farmers dealing with financial, emotional stress

**T**he Minnesota Department of Agriculture launched MinnesotaFarmStress.com to provide farmers with resources that will help them navigate the unique challenges on the farm.

At MinnesotaFarmStress.com, visitors can access the various resources available to help with financial, emotional, legal, family and other challenges on the farm.

Resources include the Minnesota Farm & Rural Helpline at 833-600-2670, which is answered 24/7 by staff who are trained to help farmers who are struggling with stress or depression.

Farmers can also learn what resources are available to assist with daily living needs, including electricity, health care, childcare and senior programs.

And for financial issues, a number of resources are listed at MinnesotaFarmStress.com, including free, confidential financial counseling for farmers through University of Minnesota Extension. ■

**Farm & Rural Helpline:  
833-600-2670**

**Free Financial Counseling:  
800-232-9077**





## MCGA Research investments build a more sustainable future for corn growers

**T**he Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) invests \$4 million annually in research that identifies opportunities and addresses issues for corn growers. In 2019, the state's corn growers supported projects that will improve best management practices on the farm and identify new markets that will increase corn demand.

For example, researchers at the University of Minnesota will lead a project to better understand how potassium behaves in Minnesota soils and how that impacts fertility management. By better understanding the nutrient's behavior in a variety of soils, farmers will have improved site-specific guidance on how much potassium needs to be applied, providing an economic benefit.

Another project supported by the state's corn growers will take an in-depth look at irrigation management strategies. Researchers at the University of Minnesota will test four irrigation management schedules for their water use efficiency, as well as their ability to minimize nitrate leaching and maximize crop utilization of soil nitrogen.

To potentially increase corn demand, MCGA will support a project out of South Dakota State University that will take a deep dive into ethanol co-products that have a hidden value for human consumption. For

example, Minnesota's 21 ethanol plants produce about 3 million metric tons of DDGs, which have applications in functional foods and products with disease prevention properties. The project will better identify potential markets for DDGs and other co-products that could increase corn demand.

MCGA is also supporting research that identifies future ethanol opportunities. A project at the University of Minnesota will test the role E85 could play in future engines of electrified vehicles. Car manufacturers like Nissan and BMW are testing a full electric motor drive where a gas engine is only used to recharge the battery. By optimizing that engine for E85, the eco-friendly car's battery life and range would be greatly extended using cleaner-burning fuel. As more vehicle fleets move to electric, the research could create a new role for E85 as the fuel choice for environmentally conscious consumers.

Learn more about research funded by the state's corn growers at [mncorn.org/research](http://mncorn.org/research). ■



## Innovation Grant Program funds 12 new projects in 2019

**T**he Minnesota Corn Innovation Grant Program returns for its fourth year in 2019, funding farmer-led, conservation-minded research projects. Each project will test a novel solution that prevents nitrogen and phosphorous loss on the farm.

Farmers had until Dec. 31 to submit their Innovation Grant proposal. The Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) and Minnesota Corn Research & Promotion Council funded 12 proposals for the 2019 growing season.

Participants in 2019 include both new recipients of grants and farmers who are continuing projects initially funded in past years of the program.

Examples of projects funded in 2019 include the impact of cover crops on reducing nutrient loss and soil erosion, as well as cover crop strategies that could potentially replace post-emergence herbicide. New tools for farmers are also being evaluated, like the use of soil probes to measure nutrients in the soil and overall soil health. The impact of strip-till on overall soil quality and profitability will also be tested in projects funded through the program.

In the first three years of the program, projects have included novel approaches to cover crop systems, state-of-the-art drip irrigation for spoon-feeding nitrogen, evaluating variable-rate nitrogen programs, and more.

MCGA will feature updates on each project on our blog this spring, summer and fall. Be sure to follow along at [mncorn.org/blog](http://mncorn.org/blog). Read an initial summary of each project at [mncorn.org/research](http://mncorn.org/research). ■



Matt Alford from Faribault County returns to the program to test the ability of cover crops to suppress weeds and reduce chemical outputs.

# MCGA elects three, re-elects one to board

The Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) welcomed three new board members to its joint meeting with the Minnesota Corn Research & Promotion Council in February. The three were elected by delegates to January's MCGA annual meeting at MN Ag EXPO.

Dana Allen-Tully, who lives in Eyota, was elected to represent farmers in District 3. Allen-Tully owns and manages a dairy farm where they also grow corn, alfalfa, sweet peas and sweet corn.

David (D.J.) VanKlombenburgh and Jim Kanten were elected to At-Large positions. VanKlombenburgh resides in Montevideo where he grows corn and soybeans and raises cattle with his family. Kanten grows corn, soybeans and sugarbeets on his farm located in Milan.

"We welcome Dana, D.J. and Jim to the board and look forward to their contributions during their terms," MCGA President Brian Thalmann said. "All three bring unique ag experience and insight that will be invaluable as we continue to build a more sustainable future for corn farmers and their families."

In addition to the election of new board members, John Swanson was also re-elected to represent farmers in District 6 during the annual meeting at MN Ag EXPO. Swanson farms in Mentor, located in northwest Minnesota.

MCGA would like to thank board retirees Ryan Buck, Gerald Mulder and Bruce Peterson for their tremendous years of service on the MCGA board and their work on behalf of Minnesota's corn farmers. ■



David (D.J.)  
VanKlombenburgh



Jim Kanten



Dana Allen-Tully

# MCGA welcomes new district field managers

The Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) recently welcomed three new district field managers to its team. Nicole Frank, Kennedy Janssen and Macy Petrowiak will serve as the on-the-ground resource for county organizations and corn farmers in their efforts to promote our state's ag sector.

Frank serves as district field manager for District 2, which is located in south-central Minnesota. She previously worked at the Minnesota Turkey Growers Association and was a past MCGA intern.

Janssen works with farmers in District 3, which includes counties surrounding the Twin Cities metro. Janssen is a recent graduate of the University of Minnesota, where she majored in Agricultural Communication and Marketing. Janssen grew up surrounded by agriculture in Sherburn.

A Fairmont native, Petrowiak joined MCGA as a recent graduate of South Dakota State University with a degree in Consumer Affairs. Petrowiak will work with county organizations in District 4, which is located in southwest Minnesota.

For more information or to contact the District Field Manager for your area, visit [mncorn.org/staff](http://mncorn.org/staff). ■



Nicole Frank



Kennedy Janssen



Macy Petrowiak

# MCGA launches first-ever statewide scholarship for future ag leaders

The Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) recently revealed its first-ever statewide scholarship for college students aspiring to become future agricultural leaders.

MCGA offered two \$5,000 scholarships to college students who will be enrolled as a full-time undergraduate student during the fall 2019 semester. Students had through March 8 to apply, with winners notified in April.

The statewide scholarship supplements scholarships long offered through local county corn organizations. It also gives students who may not have access to a local county scholarship the opportunity to apply.

"Our county organizations are excellent at helping students in their backyard achieve their dream of attending college so they can make an impact in our state's ag sector," MCGA President Brian Thalmann said. "This is another opportunity for students to receive a scholarship that will help them grow as future leaders."

MCGA scholarship applicants are required to be a Young Adult member of MCGA who is working toward a degree in an agriculture-related field. The Young Adult Membership, available to ages 16-24, was launched last year for future agricultural leaders who would like to participate in grassroots advocacy today. Along with reduced member dues, Young

Adult members stay up to date on the latest in Minnesota's corn sector, as well as have access to great networking and leadership opportunities. County scholarship applicant requirements vary from county to county.

Both the MCGA scholarships and scholarships offered by local county organizations are listed at [mncorn.org/scholarships](http://mncorn.org/scholarships). At the website, users select their home county and have the option to then apply for available county, state, and national corn grower association scholarships.



MCGA Young Adult members had exclusive access to the \$5,000 Scholarships.

By launching [mncorn.org/scholarships](http://mncorn.org/scholarships), MCGA strives to more effectively promote scholarships offered at the county level and streamline the application process for students. County organizations are encouraged to contact their district field manager to have their scholarship featured on the website. ■

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## Future ag leaders in spotlight as Gopher athletes

The Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) has long partnered with University of Minnesota athletics to share the impact of the state's corn growers with fans. For 2018-2019, that partnership expanded to shine a light on current student-athletes who aspire to be agricultural leaders.

Seven current student-athletes from the University's College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences (CFANS) were interviewed about their agricultural background and ag career ambitions. Each video was played during Gophers' basketball, football and hockey games to highlight CFANS students who are also making an impact in athletics.

The videos were also shared on Gopher Sports social channels and with Gopher newsletter subscribers, reaching hundreds of thousands of fans. Each interview can be viewed at [gophersports.com/mncorn](http://gophersports.com/mncorn).

The student-athletes featured participate in a variety of sports and exemplify the many different careers available in agriculture. For CFANS Associate Dean for Academic Programs and Faculty Affairs Michael White, each video is an opportunity to highlight the importance of both.

"The relationships you build within the classroom and within a sport are priceless and can last a lifetime. I'm proud of these CFANS students, and we're committed to providing the setting and culture that encourages being involved in both," White said.

For the state's corn growers, the unique partnership shines a light on agriculture in our state by introducing fans to students who have either grown up or taken an interest in agriculture and chose it as a career.

Follow the Minnesota Gophers on Twitter (@GopherSports) and Facebook (@GopherAthletics) to see each video as it is shared. ■



CFANS student-athletes were featured on Gopher social media and at sporting events throughout the fall and winter sports seasons.

# Another successful MN Ag EXPO comes to a close

**M**N Ag EXPO returned to Mankato in January, once again featuring great exhibitors, unique learning opportunities and a productive Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) annual meeting.

In the MCGA booth, a seven-foot-tall video board shared the many ways the state's corn growers are building a more sustainable future for fellow farmers and all Minnesotans. MCGA staff and grower leaders had a great time hosting attendees in the booth to discuss research, policy, ethanol infrastructure and more.

The MCGA PAC Breakfast kicked off day one of MN Ag EXPO. Minnesota House Speaker Melissa Hortman made the trip down to Mankato to speak with attendees. The DFL representative from Brooklyn Park discussed the current legislative session and fielded questions around issues impacting corn farmers and rural communities. Funds raised at the breakfast will help advance legislative issues important to the state's corn farmers.

The MCGA resolutions session and annual meeting followed the PAC Breakfast. The resolutions session was standing-room only as grassroots efforts were at work setting MCGA policy. During the annual meeting, MCGA President Brian Thalman, Minnesota Corn Research & Promotion Council (MCR&PC) Chair Gary Prescher, and Executive Director Adam Birr provided updates and an outlook on the year ahead.

Also at the annual meeting, MCGA farmer leaders had the opportunity to honor outstanding individuals who helped build a more sustainable future for our state's corn growers.

The Friend of Agriculture Award was presented to Ron and Valerie Jerich, who have served as longtime advocates of corn farming at the State Capitol. Ron and Valerie helped pass crucial legislation laying the foundation for ethanol-blended fuels.

Longtime Minnesota Corn farmer leader Jerry Ploehn received the Golden Kernel Award for his work advancing Minnesota Corn. During his time



MCGA grower leaders and staff chatted with attendees at the booth throughout the two-day show.

on the MCR&PC and MCGA boards, Ploehn played a key role in helping Minnesota Corn grow into the strong organization that it is today.

On Wednesday evening, farmers representing MCGA's 52 county organizations gathered to celebrate their successes over the prior year. From hosting local outreach events to contributing to statewide policy goals, the reception was a great opportunity to honor grassroots efforts at the county level.

Leading researchers also returned to MN Ag EXPO to showcase their projects bringing new levels of innovation to modern farm practices and expanding markets for corn. A variety of researchers from the University of Minnesota presented their research, including representatives from the Center for Sustainable Polymers and the College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences.

MN Ag EXPO is jointly hosted by MCGA and the Minnesota Soybean Growers Association. ■



Speaker Hortman discussed priorities during the legislative session with PAC Breakfast attendees.



The room was packed for the MCGA resolutions session, featuring great discussion on policy priorities.



Researchers with the Center for Sustainable Polymers discussed their work using corn as a feedstock for polymers, a potentially exciting new market for corn.



The County Reception was an opportunity to honor the many accomplishments by MCGA's 52 county organizations over the prior year.

# county highlights

**T**he Minnesota Corn Growers Association's 52 county corn organizations fuel our grassroots advocacy efforts while helping promote the importance of corn farming in Minnesota. Throughout the year, they host events that raise awareness of agriculture in their local communities, engage area youth with educational and scholarship opportunities, meet local legislators to discuss issues important to corn farming, and much more.

To shine a light on these initiatives throughout the year, we are highlighting their many successes in each issue of Corn Talk:



More than 150 members participated in the Lincoln County Corn and Soybean Growers scholarship auction.

## Lincoln County Corn and Soybean Growers

Lincoln County had their annual meeting in February. To give back to the community, the organization holds a scholarship auction while attendees are enjoying their dinner. To encourage bidding, scholarship recipients attend the auction and are tasked to hold up items.

This year the auction raised more than \$20,000 for local scholarships with over 70 items auctioned off.

## Lyon and Murray County Corn and Soybean Growers

The two county organizations come together each year to help organize the Ag Bowl at Southwest Minnesota State University. The annual event brings in more than 800 FFA students to participate in competitions that test a wide variety of ag-related skills.

With Lyon County and Murray County sponsoring the event, members from both counties help find judges and set up activities for students to learn about agriculture. This year the group brought a farm safety trailer to the event.



FFA Students learn about the importance of grain bin safety with farm safety experts from Murray County.

## Winona County Corn Growers

The eighth annual Promoting Modern Agriculture event took place on March 19 this year. During the event, local farmers come together to share information with their community about the importance of farming and the evolution of farming practices to become more environmentally responsible.

Each year at Promoting Modern Agriculture, the county organization awards scholarships to students pursuing a career in agriculture. This year's keynote speaker was Jerry Carrol, who is a nationally known comedian. ■

Have an event that you would like featured in County Highlights? Contact your local district field manager at [mncorn.org/staff](http://mncorn.org/staff).

# Become a member of MCGA



The MCGA Young Adult membership is now available for future agricultural leaders.

**A**s a grassroots organization, the strength of the Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) stems from its members. Members are pivotal in our work advocating for the interests of corn farmers and their families, and building connections that create opportunity for growers. In short, we need your help to be at our best.

Thankfully, it's easier than ever to join MCGA. Visit [mncorn.org/join](http://mncorn.org/join) and become a member of MCGA using the partial refund program or credit card, check or cash. One and three-year memberships are available.

And for future agricultural leaders, MCGA launched its first-ever Young Adult Membership for individuals aged 16 to 24 who want to participate in grassroots advocacy today. Along with reduced member dues, Young Adult members will stay up to date on the latest in Minnesota's corn sector, and gain exclusive access to MCGA scholarships and leadership opportunities.

Visit [mncorn.org/join](http://mncorn.org/join) and become a member today! 

## New e-book details the rise of ethanol in Minnesota

**M**innesota's ethanol industry had a banner year in 2018, surpassing ethanol infrastructure milestones and obliterating previous sales records of ethanol-blended fuels.

The "Rise of ethanol in Minnesota" shares how the Minnesota Corn Growers Association worked with biofuel supporters on all levels to ignite the momentum we are seeing at the pump. These efforts have not only made Minnesota a national leader in ethanol, it has also built a more sustainable future for ethanol-blended fuels.

Visit [info.mncorn.org/ethanol](http://info.mncorn.org/ethanol) to learn more about the multi-faceted approach that spurred this growth, including:

- Key investments in ethanol infrastructure
- Marketing of ethanol-blended fuels
- Efforts to battle ethanol misconceptions
- Grassroots advocacy to preserve the Renewable Fuel Standard

Learn the full story at [info.mncorn.org/ethanol](http://info.mncorn.org/ethanol). 



Minnesota's ethanol industry has benefitted from the record-breaking growth in 2018.

thanks to our allied partners



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\*NCGA Corn Board member



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## calendar of events

april  
**3**

MCGA/MCR&PC Joint Board Meeting  
Shakopee

april  
**5**

MCR&PC elections ballot  
postmark date

april  
**10**

Women's Ag Leadership Conference  
Chaska

april  
**19**

MCGA office closed for Good Friday

april  
**25**

MCR&PC election results available

### Don't toss it out – pass it along!

When you're finished reading Corn Talk, why not pass it along to a friend, colleague or neighbor. This publication is one of the best ways to stay up to date with the news that is important to the state's corn growers, whether it is related to policy, research or outreach to all Minnesotans.

Know someone who should be on the Corn Talk mailing list or notice an error with your subscription? Please contact us at 952-233-0333.