



Building a Culture of Conservation ~ Farmer to Farmer: Iowan to Iowan

June 5, 2015

Des Moines Business Record's Emerging Women of Influence Award Selection Committee:

Please accept my letter of support for the nomination of Jennifer Terry for the *Des Moines Business Record's* Emerging Women of Influence Award. As the director of the Iowa Learning Farms and Water Rocks! programs at Iowa State University, I have had the pleasure of collaborating with Jennifer as our organizations work to improve water quality and conservation initiatives in the state.

Since joining the Iowa Environmental Council only a year and half ago, Jen's leadership has helped to build diverse stakeholder support for strategies to reduce agricultural nutrient pollution from our state's waterways. Jen is a fantastic listener and has the capacity to synthesize the concerns of many without compromising their voices. Navigating the issue of water quality in Iowa is not an easy task, making Jen's early accomplishments even more impressive.

For example, Jen now serves as co-chair of the state's Watershed Planning Advisory Council (WPAC). Legislatively created to help advise Iowa's Water Resources Coordinating Council (headed by Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Bill Northey), WPAC is comprised of conservation leaders, agricultural groups, and wastewater and drinking water utilities. Prior to Jennifer's leadership, WPAC had lost focus and was unable to accomplish its objectives. Upon beginning her position at the Council, Jen quickly realized the potential for WPAC to serve as an important vehicle for effecting change on nutrient pollution in Iowa. Jen thoughtfully began cultivating relationships with all members of WPAC and met with members of the WRCC to advocate for the implementation of time lines, goals, and monitoring to reduce nutrient water pollution from Iowa's agricultural sector. Jen's leadership and professional integrity not only helped to bring WPAC stakeholders back to the table, but also resulted in increased stakeholder support to strengthen Iowa's Nutrient Reduction Strategy.

Jen started her position with IEC listening to the various stakeholders across Iowa. Those interviews helped her create credibility with a diverse group of stakeholders. Most everyone who has encountered Jen respect her candidness and approach to her work, whether they agree with her position or not. In such a short amount of time, Jen's passion and persistence has helped to raise public visibility of water quality issues in Iowa. In 2014 alone, her outreach and powerful communication skills helped to generate over 20 stories in major news outlets across the state on Iowa's nutrient pollution problem.

I know of no one who better exemplifies the talent and civic involvement that you seek in a recipient of the Emerging Women of Influence Award. Jen's ability to quickly advance in her field and thoughtfully handle leadership positions on one of Iowa's most complex and sensitive issues makes her a perfect candidate for your award. Indeed, with Jen, the best is yet to come!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jacqueline Comito".

Jacqueline Comito, PhD
Director of Iowa Learning Farms & Water Rocks!
Iowa State University

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