

Cortec's Corrosion-Inhibiting Products for the Water Market



EcoLine AL-Corr is Cortec's first product made specifically for corrosion protection in irrigation pipes.

Cortec is a major global manufacturer of corrosion-inhibiting products, with solutions for the water treatment, irrigation water, and civil construction industries, among others. In this interview, Scott Bryan, Cortec's technical sales manager for water treatment and coatings additives, and Julie Holmquist, its marketing content writer, tell Irrigation Leader more about the company's products of interest for the potable water and wastewater markets.

Irrigation Leader: Please tell us about your backgrounds and how you came to be in your current positions.

Scott Bryan: I joined Cortec in January 2019 as our technical sales manager for the water treatment and coatings additives lines, bringing more than 25 years of industrial water treatment experience with me. Even before joining Cortec, I championed Cortec technology in the different water treatment companies where I worked. As a product manager, I am responsible for developing new products to expand opportunities throughout the different markets that use our technology.

Julie Holmquist: I have been the marketing content writer at Cortec Corporation since November 2015. Before that, I spent some time doing freelance writing and was looking for a technical writing-related position. Interest in the technical aspect brought me to Cortec. I had a very faint idea of what Cortec did when I took the job but have since received an extensive education in corrosion prevention and asset preservation in a wide range of industries—water treatment, construction, automotive, oil and gas, and much more.

Irrigation Leader: Please tell us more about Cortec.

Julie Holmquist: Cortec is the largest privately held corrosion-inhibitor company in the world, with representation in more than 100 countries around the globe. The story of the company reads like the story of the American Dream. Our founder, Boris Miksic, immigrated from Croatia with limited resources and started a home business that grew into a global organization with plants in the United States, Canada, and Croatia. As a private company with a high level of vertical integration, Cortec is able to respond flexibly to specific customer needs and has been extremely resilient amid the recent supply chain crisis. Cortec serves clients around the world in any industry that involves metal. The company is headquartered in St. Paul, Minnesota. Our network of distributors and field offices allows us to respond relatively quickly to orders domestically and internationally.

Irrigation Leader: What are the company's major product lines for the municipal water market?

Scott Bryan: We have many products, all designed for a variety of markets and industries with the objective of asset protection—whether those assets are in operation or whether they're idled.

Julie Holmquist: Most of our water treatments deal with corrosion protection in boilers, cooling water systems, and hydrotesting applications. We also have a subsidiary called Bionetix International that produces bioaugmentation

products (think probiotics) for agricultural enhancement, wastewater treatment, cleaning, and aquaculture. EcoLine AL-Corr is our first product made specifically for corrosion protection in irrigation pipes.

Scott Bryan: The motivation behind the development of EcoLine AL-Corr was that two distributors of ours that are very active in the irrigation market on the West Coast approached us separately, asking if we had a product that could be used to address aluminum irrigation pipes, since replacing corroded aluminum pipes was one of the highest cost factors for farmers. The most daunting parts of the task were dealing with the high volume of water that is used in irrigation systems and developing a chemistry that would be allowed to go directly on food crops from an environmental standpoint.

Irrigation Leader: How do your products fit into the civil construction industry?

Julie Holmquist: One of our key product lines is migrating corrosion inhibitors (MCI). MCI technology is designed to extend the service life of reinforced concrete structures. It has been used in everything from bridges and parking ramps to desalination plants, potable water reservoirs, and the foundation of the world's tallest building. It addresses a serious issue that has been a source of increasing concern—the toll corrosion can take on concrete structures. Of special interest to the municipal and irrigation communities is the fact that several of our MCI products are certified to meet ANSI/NSF Standard 61 for use in large potable water structures.

Irrigation Leader: What are your company's other top issues today?

Julie Holmquist: We are looking for ways to address these corrosion problems in ways that create a lower environmental impact. For us, that means finding raw materials that are biodegradable and biobased wherever possible. This initiative is reflected in our growing number of U.S. Department of Agriculture-certified biobased products, one of which is EcoLine AL-Corr.

Irrigation Leader: Has your company experienced difficulty over the past year or two with access to raw materials or labor?

Julie Holmquist: Yes, we seem to be facing some of the same challenges related to the supply chain and workforce that others are up against. While we have had to work around huge lead times in some areas, one thing that has made us stand out from other companies is our vertical integration, which has helped us keep our supply chain stronger because we are less dependent on outsourced contractors.


Irrigation Leader: How are federal and state regulations affecting the company?



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Julie Holmquist: Fortunately, they are not affecting our ability to operate effectively, but at the same time, it is not always easy to keep up with changes in regulation. As a chemical company, we must comply with an above-average number of regulations related to environmental and safety concerns. Those regulations are multiplied when you think of all the countries we ship to. We have a full-time environmental specialist and a full-time compliance specialist who focus on these requirements. Dealing with all these regulations naturally puts more obstacles in our way, but we have done a great job moving forward anyway. While it takes extensive time and energy to maintain, we are ISO 14001 Environmental Management System certified, and our Wisconsin plants have the distinction of having been voluntary participants in the Wisconsin Green Tier program since 2010.

Irrigation Leader: What is your company's vision for the future?

Scott Bryan: For the water treatment product line, we want to develop the products that are needed by our customers and by their customers with an eye to more environmentally friendly products. We're looking to increase the areas of applications, whether canning, irrigation, or preservation—anything we can to protect our customers' assets and equipment. Our vision is to continue to bring products and solutions to market to address the challenges those end-user customers face. 



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