

Learning Some of the Things NeRWA Does

By Adam German, Wastewater Technician

I mentioned in my first article how I was looking forward to working with the NeRWA. After being a part of the team for a few months now, the job has proven to be very rewarding. I have traveled extensively throughout our great state of Nebraska, teaming up with Buck, Mike, Randy and Pat to help operators. I have really enjoyed providing guidance to some of Nebraska's newer operators. I am finding that when I visit with our experienced operators I am usually the guy walking away with more knowledge than I showed up with. I enjoy getting people talking, asking about their experiences in the field and using those conversations as another tool in the toolbox to help other operators that may be having the same issues in their communities. I probably shouldn't describe 'work' as 'fun' but I have to tell you...I've been having fun.

The NeRWA team has recently loaded up the sewer smoker and taken it to several different communities. The sewer smoker is a great tool to find your infiltration issues. During the smoking process you can find main line/service line failures and broken clean-outs. You may also discover a contractor hooked sump pump and gutter drains directly to the customer's sewer lines. At one site we discovered a home with smoke coming from the middle of their yard and directly out of the drainage pipe. It happened! Without the sewer smoker this would have most likely never been discovered. With it we were able to find several of that community's infiltration issues.

Another useful infiltration tool the NeRWA has in its box is a sewer camera. Actually they have two. Buck and I have been to several of our towns checking lines and manholes for water in places water shouldn't be. We have found manholes that are broken down with water seeping in through the walls, 2 x 4 chunks of wood in the lines and, of course, plenty of tree roots. With the use of the camera the operators know exactly where their problem sits and are able to get it fixed at a lower cost to the town.

I have also been able to help out with sludge testing. One nice sunny day Buck and I were treated to a ride in a rowboat on a lagoon. That may sound a little more romantic than it was. It was the first time I have been in a boat without a beer in my hand in decades. Rowing a boat to 9-12 different spots through a moss/algae filled lagoon turned into quite a bit of work. We both learned that although wind makes the lagoons work, the wind is certainly not your friend during sludge testing. It was quite the day, but when it was all said and done the system was satisfied that their lagoons were in good condition.

Another perk of this gig is learning where all the great restaurants and taverns are. Buck knows them all. The Burrito King in Madison, the BBQ joints in Clay Center and David City, the Tumbleweed in Broken Bow all the way to the Peppermill in Valentine. Those are just a few. I can't wait to try all of them.

I would like to thank the NeRWA crew for showing me the ropes the last few months and allowing me to tag along. I feel like I have successfully helped a few systems and have learned quite a bit in just a short time. I can't wait to hit the road again and learn some more. Stay safe out there.