

## **Source Water Training for Operators**

Barney Whatley  
Source Water Protection Specialist

The Nebraska Rural Water Association is working on offering some different training for water operators this coming fall. As part of the EPA grant received for source water education, there are two training sessions being planned for water operators that cover source water protection. The two sessions will be based on the “Project WET” manual and the “Healthy Water, Healthy People” manual.

The “Project WET” manual was designed for educators of students from Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade, and consists of a large number of activities related to water issues. It covers the physical and chemical characteristics of water, its importance to all life forms and its interrelationships with all of the systems of the planet earth. Water is defined as a natural resource that must be managed, and offers activities for students to understand its importance. It also discusses the cultural and social importance and interconnection of water.

The “Healthy Water, Healthy People” program is designed for the educators of middle school and high school students. It covers water as a manageable resource and covers the definition of water quality and its importance to the vitality of local communities. It discusses how plants and animals are affected by changes in water quality and new management strategies and technologies that will assist us in protecting our water sources for future use.

Although the programs are primarily designed for professional educators, the classes will be organized to assist water operators who have occasion to meet with school children to discuss local water issues. Both of the programs are activity oriented, and the classes will give the operator the opportunity to perform various activities that illustrate different principles in source water pollution and protection. Many operators are asked to visit with local school children during Drinking Water Week, and the information covered in these sessions will assist those operators in connecting with the students.

An agenda for these sessions is currently being created, and when that is completed it will be forwarded to the state to get continuing education hours approved. The classes will be held on two separate days, and are expected to last five or six hours apiece. Hopefully the classes will be held in our office in Wahoo during the second or third week in September. Information will be mailed to operators when the details have been worked out. Any water operator who has occasion to visit with school children concerning their water system and the necessity of protecting our drinking water sources is urged to attend one or both of these sessions to learn activities you can complete with the students to impress them with the importance of clean water and the need for everyone to participate in its protection.