

Hello Again
by Barney Whatley
Capacity Development Specialist

Sometimes it seems as though I spend an awful lot of time introducing myself. I do not have the best memory in the world, so I often end up introducing myself to people I have already met. This is somewhat embarrassing, but I am used to it by now. In the eight years I have worked for NeRWA, I have held six positions with five different titles. Whew---that is a lot. I started out as the Deputy Circuit Rider, and I held that position for a little over six months until the position of Training Specialist was vacated, and I changed to that position. A year and a half later I was lucky enough to have the opportunity to be placed back in the Deputy Circuit Rider position, a position which I held for 4 years until the contract with the State of Nebraska was not renewed. At that time I was placed in the position of Source Water Protection Specialist until EPA decided to discontinue funding for that contract for the current fiscal year. I then became one of two source water protection implementation specialists funded through a grant from the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality (NDEQ). I held this position for approximately one and a half months, until NeRWA successfully bid on a contract from the State of Nebraska Health and Human Services System for supplying financial and managerial assistance to water systems within the state. This contract is one of the positions that make up the “2 % team” as was the Deputy Circuit Rider position I started out in, so essentially I am back where I started.

The main difference in this position compared to the Deputy Circuit Rider position is in the type of technical assistance I will be providing to Nebraska water systems. I will be working closely with Village Boards and City Councils to assist them in budget preparation, setting up and reviewing personnel policies, working with water rate structures to insure that the level of income for water systems is adequate for both the short and long-term stability of the system and assisting with income surveys, when needed. I will also be available to assist water systems in completing the required processes to become eligible for funding for water system improvement projects. I look forward to working with the systems around the state with the goal of improving service to their customers and increasing the viability of the system.

In order to assist systems in achieving and maintaining financial stability, I will be helping system personnel complete system assessments both prior to and after receiving State Revolving Fund (SRF) loans for system improvements. The first assessment will help set a benchmark for the viability of the water system prior to the improvement project. The second assessment, which will be done several years after the project is completed, will be used to determine the impact of the improvement project on the system’s capacity to function as a viable business. It is hoped that the improvement projects will look at the long-term viability of the system as opposed to just short term fixes for system problems. Again, I look forward to working with the water systems in the state and if anyone has any questions, I invite you to call me at (402) 480-4297.