

NeRWA Offers GPS/GIS Mapping for Utility Systems By Charles Bausch

Just in case you have not heard, Nebraska Rural Water Association now offers GIS/GPS mapping for utility systems in Nebraska. NeRWA has purchased the equipment necessary to collect GPS data, draw and print maps for utility systems.

What do you get when NeRWA performs this mapping service for you? NeRWA is able to provide color maps of your utility system in the form of a large wall map and colored map books. But wait there's more, not only do you get paper maps we can set you up an interactive map on your computer by downloading Arc Reader (free software) so you are able to view your maps we produce.

What are the benefits to electronic map files? Arc Reader gives utility systems another tool that paper maps do not. With Arc Reader you are able to zoom into specific areas of your map and get a detailed look at the specific features of that area of your utility system. Also, you are able to look at all your utilities at once or just one of them if you choose. This will help when you start your planning for upgrades to your system or when you need to do utility locates for diggers hotline. Arc Reader also gives you the ability to query the data in the map. This is like asking your map questions about your system. Example: You receive a recall notice on some fire hydrants that had a cast date of 2001. You can ask the map to find the fire hydrants with that cast date and it will give you a list and locations of those hydrants in your system. Arc Reader allows you to have all this information from your GIS/GPS maps right at your finger tips. With Arc Reader there is always a backup copy of your information just in case something happens to your paper copies and if the worst case scenario happens and you lose both your computer map and paper maps, NeRWA will also have a back up copy of your data if needed.

What is the cost of this service? Many systems think this technology is out of their price range. You will be surprised at how affordable this service is offered to you through NeRWA. We can provide you with a free estimate of the cost to complete the mapping process for your utility system. Once the estimate is accepted by your system, we can start the data collection. The data collection works best if collection features such as valves, curb stops, and manholes are located before our GIS/GPS Specialist comes to collect the data. If you have a problem finding these features give Russ Topp or Randy Hellbusch from our office a call and they will come out and help you locate these features at no cost. Once the data is collected our GIS/GPS Specialist begins drawing your new maps. We use information from your "as built" plans or information your Utility Superintendent has from the construction process to get these maps as accurate as possible. Once the maps are drawn we have the Utility Superintendent review and make any corrections to the map. Next, we print your final wall maps and map books. Finally, we set up your system with the Arc Reader software to view your maps on the computer.

If you would like more information about the mapping process or would like to see examples of utility maps that NeRWA has produced please contact **Charles 402-480-2982**.