

ONE-STOP SHOPPING AT WWAC

Doug Buresh, ARRA 1 Circuit Rider

The Nebraska Water Wastewater Advisory Committee (WWAC) was created in 1997. It was one of the first undertakings of its kind in the country where state and federal agencies combined to work together to address water and sewer projects jointly. The idea was to find the best funding source for each community in Nebraska. At times the best funding source is a collaborative effort between two or more of the participating agencies. Other times only one of the agencies involved is best suited to fund a particular project.

Stakeholders in WWAC include the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development (USDA RD) with their water and wastewater loan and grant programs, Nebraska Health and Human Services System Regulation & Licensure (NHHS R&L) responsible for the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF), Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality (NDEQ) responsible for the Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund (CWSRF) and the Nebraska Environmental Partnerships Program (NEP), and the Nebraska Department of Economic Development (DED) for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. WWAC activities are coordinated by a steering committee with no specific agency in charge. The purpose of WWAC is to optimize sources and uses of funding for water and wastewater projects, to provide the best funding package to each community, to work with communities as a team to help them build a project, and to provide one-stop shopping for communities looking to finance their projects. The committee meets monthly in Lincoln to identify the best funding options for new projects and to discuss the progress of projects funded jointly.

In order to be eligible for consideration for project funding from WWAC you need to submit a Water Wastewater Common Pre-application form along with a Preliminary Engineering Report or Facility Plan. It is important to complete and submit your annual Intended Use Plan for any planned water and sewer projects. Each project is ranked using priority points. The higher the priority points, the more likely you are to get your project financed.

During my travels across Nebraska as an ARRA Circuit Rider, I have been asked many times about grants available to fund water and wastewater projects. Barring a second stimulus package, ARRA funds for water and sewer projects in Nebraska have all been used up. The good news is, the agencies involved with WWAC aren't going away. They are still in the business of providing funding for these projects. Unfortunately there isn't a lot of opportunity to have a project one hundred percent grant funded. However, grants are available for those that qualify. These grants may or may not be available in the future. In my humble opinion, most likely there will be less government grant funding available, not more, for the smaller communities in Nebraska. If you have a need to upgrade your water or wastewater infrastructure, now might be the time to look into grant funding through WWAC.

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