

Highlights from the 2005 Gering Conference

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Beautiful late summer weather set the stage for another successful NeRWA Western Nebraska Conference held at the Gering Civic Center on September 13 and 14, 2005.

Approximately 130 attended the conference, including water and wastewater operators, administrative personnel, board and council members, and exhibitors. A schedule of top-notch presentations was well attended, the food was great and old friendships renewed during the two-day event.

The conference was kicked off early with the annual golf competition held at the picturesque Monument Shadows Golf Course on Monday afternoon. Approximately 20 persons competed for top honors and flag prizes in a relaxed atmosphere. Special thanks Baker & Associates of Scottsbluff for providing prizes, refreshments and supper for those who competed. Posting the best scores of the afternoon were John Snodgrass and Marc Rosso.

Early the following morning a group of 25 shooters competed in the Trap Shoot at the Mitchell Gun Club. Top shooter this year was Bob West of Cass County RWD 2.

Conference-goers were able to attend twelve training sessions for water and wastewater backflow re-certification credit during the course of the Conference. Jack Daniel and Andy Kahle, NDHHS, presented a *Nebraska Water System Regulatory Update* on Tuesday, followed *National Perspectives on Backflow Prevention* by ABPA President Rich Koenig. *The first afternoon of general sessions featured Tina Kurtz and Ron Cacek speaking on The Impact of LB 962 on Western Nebraska Water Systems and the ever popular Small System Round Table, which was led by NeRWA Board and Staff Members.*

A social hour and banquet concluded the Conference activities on the evening of September 13. A delicious buffet supper was enjoyed and door prize drawings were held. Special thanks to exhibitors National Waterworks and Energy Laboratories for providing donations that "got us into the spirit" of the evening.

Mike Winter was presented the **Outstanding Water Operator Award** by Mike Wentink and Doug Allen of the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services Regulation and Licensure at the evening banquet. Mike, who is the Utility Superintendent at the City of Gordon, NE, was recognized for meritorious service as head of the water department and for organizing a volunteer senior citizen organization to assist with municipal functions at Gordon. A nice contingent of friends and associates from Gordon were present to witness the presentation of the award. Congratulations, Mike, for a job well done!

Following a breakfast buffet on September 14, a full day of training session presentations was on tap. Backflow topics and hands-on testing were available for those interested in obtaining

Grade 6 re-certification hours, as Rich Koenig, Barney Whatley and other NeRWA staff shared their backflow expertise. HHSS personnel led the session on *Emergency Preparedness and Facility Security*, and an interesting tabletop exercise involved key personnel from the City of Scottsbluff. Al Hansen of Hawkins Chemical presented on the topic of *Chlorine Safety and Chlorinator Repair and Maintenance*, followed by an *Automatic Meter Reading Technology* presentation and demonstration by Steve Brush and Dave Dunning of National Waterworks. Marc Rosso, Baker & Associates, compared the pros and cons of drilling new wells, forming regional water systems, building a treatment plant or using point-of-use devices in his presentation entitled *What is Your Best Option?* Finally, *Operator Certification Guidelines and NeRWA Office SOP's* provided operators with much helpful information to conclude the training sessions. Presenters were Diane Hansmeyer of NDHHS, John Flint of NDEQ, and Eldean Cook and Salli Kemerling of NeRWA.

A total of eighteen exhibit booths, sponsored and manned by NeRWA associate members, provided exhibits and information to water, backflow and wastewater personnel at the conference. Special thanks to exhibitors Maguire Iron, Simmerman Electric and Layne Western for their monetary donations toward the Western Conference.

NeRWA is grateful everyone who helped make the conference a success: training session presenters; the exhibitors; and most important, to all those who attended the Western Conference this year. It is not uncommon for participants to travel all the way from eastern Nebraska just to experience the beauty of the Gering area and enjoy the laid-back atmosphere of this conference. NeRWA looks forward to seeing old friends and making new ones at the 2006 Western Conference!

