

Highlights from the 2006 Gering Conference

10/12/06

The first cool weather of the autumn season set the stage for another successful NeRWA Western Nebraska Conference held at the Gering Civic Center on October 10 and 11, 2006.

Approximately 140 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 with the traditional annual golf competition held at the Monument Shadows Golf Course on Monday afternoon. However, cool, windy weather and rain caused the approximately 20 golfers to call it a day after nine holes of play. Special thanks Baker & Associates of Scottsbluff for providing prizes and refreshments who competed.

The weather cleared up on Tuesday morning as a group of almost 25 shooters competed in the Trap Shoot at the Mitchell Gun Club. Top shooters this year were Russell Topp and Bob West (????????)

Conference-goers were able to attend seventeen training sessions for water, wastewater and backflow re-certification credit during the course of the Conference. NeRWA Staff Members described how they work to provide technical assistance & training to Nebraska water systems. This was followed by a presentation by Sam Wade, Executive Director of the National Rural Water Association. Sam focused on the importance of the individual and the impact that over 25,000 individual water system members have in shaping the work of the association. NeRWA Board members Greg Bouc, Lyle Juracek and Larry Wennekamp led the *Small System Round Table Discussion*, followed by the *Nebraska Water System Regulatory Update* presented by Jack Daniel.

A social hour and banquet concluded the Conference activities on the evening of October 10. A delicious buffet supper was enjoyed, followed by a brief address by Sam Wade of NRWA. Special thanks to National Waterworks for providing the social hour.

Following the banquet, Doug Woodbeck and Tony Martinez of the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services Regulation and Licensure presented the Outstanding Water Operator Award. The 2006 award winner as Dave Houghtelling of the City of Cambridge. Dave was recognized for many years direct supervision of the Cambridge utilities, as well as his involvement regional and statewide organizations. Congratulations, Dave, for a job well done!

Following a breakfast buffet on October 11, 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. Bob Hessler, Safety Line Consultants, presented a very effective

presentation on the topic of *Avoiding Confined Space Hazards*. Rus Colby of Baker & Associates presented *Getting the Best Results From Your PER*, followed by a two-hour block entitled *Maximizing Chemical Feed System Performance*, presented by Al Hansen of Hawkins Water Treatment Group. Frank Strong of M.C. Schaff & Associates, Robert Repschleger of Badger Meters, Marda Fickes of Willco, Bob Jedlicka of Mack McClain Associates, and Jim Heyen and Fred Baumert of NeRWA gave other presentations.

A total of twenty-one 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 Simmerman Electric and Baker & Associates for sponsoring refreshments during the afternoon breaks.

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. NeRWA looks forward to seeing old friends and making new ones at the 2007 Western Conference!