

Grant Monies Available from DEQ by *Mary Beth Budz, Source Water Protection Specialist*

Nebraskans get approximately 90% of their drinking water from the ground. Many Nebraska communities are villages and towns of less than 5000...not a very big economic base to support new drinking water supplies if it is deemed necessary and yet this is a harsh reality in some communities. Protection of this resource is critical and the least expensive option to finding a new water source. Through the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality's Source Water Protection Grant Program, there is financial assistance for communities to fund preventative measures.

In 1996, when the Safe Drinking Water Act was amended and source water assessments were required for every community in every state, Section 1452 provides for funding of both the assessment and PROTECTION. These funds are an active source of support for drinking water protection projects in Nebraska.

Beginning in 2003, \$200,000 per year is being made available to units and sub-units of government, educational institutions, and non-profit organizations for source water protection projects. The goal is to protect current and potential drinking water sources and the health and economy of communities that rely on these sources. There are four categories of protection that are relevant: **Quality, Quantity, Security and Education**. For FFY 2005, 18 proposals were received requesting approximately \$600,000. Of these, 10 projects were funded for \$217,000.

Some examples of Quality grant projects are a decommissioning of an inactive public well supply in Nelson, lawn sampling kits and fertilizer recommendation materials, nitrate soil sampling, and a storm water drainage project in Western.

Quantity examples are an infiltration gallery volumetric weir and recorder in Crawford, installation of irrigation flow meters in Bayard, drop-in transducers and water conservation rebates for low-pressure showerheads and water-saving toilets in Nelson, and developing a process for treating wastewater for irrigation of city property and agricultural land in David City.

Security grant examples include window grates and motion lights for all municipal wells in Albion, security fencing and motion lights for both Nemaha Co. RWD #2 wells, and an infiltration gallery and supplemental well field alarm dialer in Crawford.

Education examples are water quality sampling equipment for a high school biology class in Albion, develop a high school class to educate students on soil and water management practices in Bayard, groundwater festivals, newspaper articles, web site development, public meetings and seminars in David City.

Projects must focus on protection of drinking water sources, not treatment or the operation and maintenance of the water system. Grants may not be used for land

acquisition. There is no match requirement. Most applicants match funds through in-kind services.

Your community does not have to have an approved wellhead protection plan, although this certainly increases your chances for funding, as does being a Groundwater Guardian community. Make sure your grant incorporates variety, diversity and comprehensiveness and bring in as many stakeholders as possible. Projects that address all four categories of protection will be given preference.

So, get those juices flowing ...BE CREATIVE AND THINK BIG!!!!

Requests for proposals for FY2006 will be available late spring and due approximately July 1, 2005. To obtain an application or to discuss ideas, contact Deana Barger, Source Water Coordinator, DEQ, (402) 471-6988 or Mary Beth Budz, Source Water Specialist, Nebraska Rural Water Association for more information.

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