

Wastewater Update

By Mike Lucas, Wastewater Technician

August 1st will mark the completion of my first year serving NeRWA as the Wastewater Technician. I will have logged 50,000+ miles crisscrossing the State of Nebraska. I will have held 13 training classes in 2012 for 213 operators with the intent of providing training opportunities to all geographic areas across the state of Nebraska.

By the time that you are reading this article the classes for my 2012-2013 program year will have been pretty much finalized. My goal for the 1 day classes is to provide variety, address current needs and provide new information to help you with your professional responsibilities. I appreciate very much the systems that without exception have agreed to host the training classes. During my next program year I plan to provide a total of 20 wastewater training classes at some different locations with new topics, in addition, of course, to the two state-wide conferences.

Judging by the number of registrations and the student evaluations the 4-day certification training classes have remained very popular. Gil Frey and I will conduct 5 of the certification training classes again next year at the Wahoo NeRWA office. We try to schedule them as closely as possible to the NDEQ certification test dates. The certification classes are intended to help new operators prepare for the State conducted test or provide certified operators the opportunity to review so they can take the test and move up a grade. The training consists of 4 days of pretty intensive classwork so even your brain may become tired. Lagoon operators have the option to register for only the last day of the classes for a reduced price. We recommend however that if possible you attend the full 4 days of training. You are tested over a lot of the same information with just 25 fewer test questions and with only 1 day of class preparation. It is however optional. We encourage those who register to order the mandatory resource books early. We utilize the resource manuals Volumes 1 and 2, Operation of Wastewater Treatment Plants, seventh edition from California University, Sacramento. The manuals are available for purchase through the NeRWA office. If you already have recent versions of the manuals you need not purchase new ones. Upon registration you will receive a study guide prior to the class. You will also be provided State test dates, locations and test registration requirements. There is a tremendous amount of material to cover in an incredibly short period of class time and your success will be determined by your own personal preparation. As the instructors, our success is directly related to your success. It is all about serving your needs. Your input is extremely valuable to us and to future classes.

I will continue to provide onsite assistance with sewer smoking, flow metering, composite sampling, locating, and sludge judge measurement while always looking for ways to expand our services to better meet your needs. At any one time I may have 15-20 systems on a waiting list. From the bottom of my

heart I thank all of you for your patience while for efficiency purposes I attempt to meet all of your needs, coordinate on-site visits within specific geographic areas and stay somewhat within the same budget constrictions that all of you deal with.

I want to take this opportunity to say “Thank You” to Carol Jasa for preparing all of my class materials so that I can pick them up to be better prepared for classes and doing all of the mailings, Salli Kemerling for fielding all of the phone calls, Randy Hellbusch and Barney Whatley for delivering class materials and equipment to me across the state so that I can continue on-site visits, Mike Stanzel and Russ Topp for helping with sewer smoking projects, Charles Bausch for helping with training classes, Gil Frey for his invaluable help with the certification training classes after Charles’ departure, Jim Heyen who always makes himself available as a resource and finally to all of the operators who have entrusted me with their training.

I have really enjoyed traveling across the state providing assistance to systems while meeting new and also long time (not old) friends. Sometimes just providing an understanding ear at a time when it is needed is beneficial. The appreciation expressed is the ultimate reward. I also want to take this opportunity to give a tip of the NeRWA camo cap to all of you operators across the state that have committed your lives and health and sacrificed family time to unselfishly serve your individual communities. You embody the institutional knowledge of your systems. You shoulder huge amounts of responsibility with ever increasing professional demands on you which is often times not understood by the system owners that you serve. Know that I appreciate you and what you do and I share that message in your communities every time I am given the opportunity.

Please work safe out there. I really want to see you the next time I stop by or have a training class in your area. See you all during my next program year.