

Moving Forward  
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I was going through some photos on my phone and I came across a picture of this saying, IF YOU DON'T GO AFTER WHAT YOU WANT, YOU'LL NEVER HAVE IT. IF YOU DON'T ASK, THE ANSWER IS ALWAYS NO. IF YOU DON'T STEP FORWARD, YOU'RE ALWAYS IN THE SAME PLACE." Cautiously and safely, our organization plans to take that step and continue planning and hopefully providing the needed training for water and waste water operators by having our annual conference. The conference is set for March 15-17, 2021, in Kearney once again. The conference may have a different look and even a little different feel this year but most of all, it will provide operators in the great State of Nebraska the education and the recertification hours they really need.

The first thing operators may see differently will be the agenda. Monday will remain the same with the general session and a chance to grab four hours toward your water license. Tuesday will change slightly. Instead of having four concurrent sessions at once, we will be having three and we will be using two ballrooms at the Younes center and one at the Holiday Inn. This will provide that social distance guidelines will be met. Tuesday will be worth six hours. Wednesday will look just like last year. There will be three concurrent sessions and four hours will be available toward your recertification. If more presenters become available as we get closer to the conference, there may be a chance that we can create a 4<sup>th</sup> concurrent session on Tuesday. Some loyal presenters that have always given presentations at the conference have not been given clearance to travel or do a conference such as this due to COVID. Some others are waiting on getting vaccinated before they attend such events. We completely understand and we are hoping that in 2022 we will see those awesome presenters again!

We have had several discussions in our office about how we can handle entertainment and the extra-curricular activities for all of those in attendance. We finally decided that there may not be a safe way to do any of that this year. This does not mean that vendors and operators can't do the things they've done in the past, it will just mean that we are not going to sponsor any thing like that. With that being said, it makes me think about the 2022 conference and if we can pull it off, we will put two years of entertainment into one! Our association takes pride in how we treat our members and conference attendees. You are all in it for us, and we will always be here for you, but we just need to think about the safety of everyone. Maybe if things change by March, we will be able to throw something together but as for now, these things will be pushed off until next year.

The chow line will look different this year as well. This year we will not be allowed to have the big buffets that everyone has learned to love. The food will still be fantastic as always, it will just be served to you by the Younes Conference Center staff. Our initial plan is to have a supper on Monday night, lunch and an evening meal on Tuesday, and lunch on Wednesday. There will not be a breakfast on Wednesday but we hope to have the annual meeting with the board. Please remember when you register to complete how many meals you will be eating. This will help us order the amount of meals necessary and not pay for meals that we estimated we would need.

With the use of the Holiday Inn ballroom along with the two large ballrooms at the Younes Center we should meet the DHM for social distancing, and I would imagine there will be a mask

requirement or recommendation for us to follow. We will follow the rules put before us by the State of Nebraska and the Two Rivers Health Department.

We hope everyone understands why we can't have the "fun night" or banquet. Like I mentioned earlier, if restrictions do become less, we can always throw something together for all of you in a moment's notice! When you work with a team like I get to here at Nebraska Rural Water, I am optimistic and excited that we will be able to pull this conference off! Hopefully we can all look at this as a new start to the way things used to be! Let's focus on "MOVING FORWARD"!