

Fall Conference

By Pat Petersen, Training Specialist

Everyone knows the old saying “Time flies when you’re having fun.” I feel there is a lot of truth to those words. Planning a conference can be anything but fun, but I know after having the pleasure of planning 7 of these fall conferences, one word seems to come out of the operators in attendance at our fall conference....FUN! Don’t get me wrong. There is a lot of learning and networking that goes on in Gering but the relaxed atmosphere is a pleasant escape from the hustle and bustle of the summer grind. The staff at the Monument Inn and the Gering Civic Center once again provided the hospitality, the excellent accommodations, and, of course, great meals for all of us in attendance.

With changes being proposed in drinking water regulation and possible changes to unregulated contaminant monitoring, we felt it would be a good time to inform operators of these changes during the stand alone “Rules Update” Pre-Conference. The Pre-Conference was held on Tuesday, September 24 and included a lead and copper update that also touched on manganese proposals, O&M requirements, RTCR assessments and sampling procedures to help keep you out of the assessment process. Due to vacancies in the rule manager positions, Rich Koenig and Doug Woodbeck were the presenters for the pre-conference. Thanks for filling in guys!

Following the pre-conference was the annual trek out to the Riverview Golf Course. 44 golfers in all took part in the fun event. Several vendors also shared in the fun by sponsoring holes and pin prizes. Sponsors for the golf event were Barco, HOA Solutions, Iowa Pump Works, Johnson Service, MC Schaff and Associates, Municipal Supply, RFC Consulting, Sargent Drilling and Viking Industrial Painting. Elliott Sanitation Equipment provided refreshments for the golfers at the event. Thanks to all of you! Your generosity means a lot to not only the NeRWA but the operators as well! Next year we will have to see if Mother Nature will keep the lights on for us a little longer or we may have to play 9!

Wednesday morning kicked off with the annual trap shoot and poker run. 15-20 participated in the trap shoot which was sponsored by Municipal Automation. 6-7 men participated in the Poker Run which produced a winning hand of 4 deuces!! Thanks to Johnson Service and Area 7 Field Rep Tony Martinez for sponsoring the Poker Run. With all of the fun festivities for the day complete, it was time for a quick afternoon of learning. Andy Kahle and Justin Nelsen gave us a quick regulatory update, followed by a USDA update and a capacity development session. Wednesday finished with Area 6 Field Rep Dave Jundt and Area 3 Field Rep Rich Koenig discussing and showing pictures of the devastation left by the March 2019 floods that consumed their field areas. I may ask that this presentation be given at the annual conference.

Social hour, sponsored by the crew at Core and Main, kicked off the Wednesday night banquet and awards ceremony. Doug Woodbeck presented Steve Schanaman from the City of Scottsbluff with the Outstanding Operator Award. Congratulations, Steve, on a job well done!

After breakfast Thursday morning a full day of learning sat before us. Topics such as tank divers, locating, backflow, wastewater and water roundtables, board training and even source water planning made for a quick 6 hour day. Operators also enjoyed a wonderful lunch and several were lucky enough to win one of the many door prizes donated by vendors and the NeRWA. After lunch, the next two hours flew by and just like that.....the conference was complete!

After all was said and done, over 130 operators visited the conference and 27 (the most vendors since I have been planning this) were a part of this FUN conference. It is a long week for all of us who travel over 400 miles one way for this event but it really is beautiful in Western Nebraska. If you are ever given a chance to attend this conference, believe me, it is worth it! Next year's fall conference is scheduled to be a little earlier due to a conflict with our national organization. The dates will be September 1, 2, and 3 of 2020.

Finally, as I wrap up this long story I will never forget to thank all of those who make these conferences so great. After arriving back from our National Conference this year, we had 4 days to get everything ready to go. Well, when we walked into the office, Salli, Amy, and Carol had it in the boxes and ready! Thank you for all of your help. All of my co-workers, Mike, Randy, Scott, Charles, Barney, and Ken, thanks for all that you were able to do. Operating board members also attended. Thank you for all of your moral support and your presence. It's great to have you there! Mike Lucas was unable to make the trip but he will be there next year!

Hope to see you all at the Annual Conference in March!