

Issue 2/2008

Nebraska Rural Water Association



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“Nebraska Good Water News” is a quarterly publication of the NEBRASKA RURAL WATER ASSOCIATION, 3390 Ponderosa, Wahoo, Nebraska 68066. Phone 1-800-842-8039 or (402) 443-5216 or FAX (402) 443-5274. Copies are mailed to all member rural and municipal water operators, Federal and State Legislators, associates and individual members.

The NEBRASKA RURAL WATER ASSOCIATION is dedicated to the improvement and assistance of all public water systems in the State of Nebraska.

NOTICE: Nebraska Rural Water Association does not endorse any particular product or company in this publication. Membership and advertising should not be taken as an endorsement.

On the cover:

Amherst Water Tower.

How'd We Do and Letters From...

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FAX: 402-759-3432
WWW.CI.GENEVA.NE.US

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BARBARA J. WHITLEY
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BWHITLEY@CITYOFGENEVA.ORG

JOSEPH N. BIXBY
ATTORNEY

January 23, 2008

Nebraska Rural Water Association
3390 Ponderosa
Wahoo, NE 68066

Please find enclosed a check for a donation to your organization as a HUGE THANK YOU for all of the assistance that we have received finding water mains and cleaning out the sewer mains. Your promptness is greatly appreciated. Our community would have a huge expense with out your help and equipment. Thank you again!

Sincerely,

Barbara J. Whitley
City Clerk-Treasurer
City of Geneva

VILLAGE OF WYNOT
P.O. BOX 61
WYNOT, NE 68792-0061

February 14, 2008

Nebraska Rural Water Association
3390 Ponderosa
Wahoo, NE 68066

Dear NeRWA,

Winter - what a time of year to look for a water leak. We are very fortunate to have the Nebraska Rural Water Association available to help us.

The Village Board of Trustees and employees would like to thank Russ Topp and Randy Hellbusch for helping find that water leak.

Please find enclosed a donation to your Equipment Fund. Thanks again!

Sincerely,

Sally L. Snowe
Village Clerk/Treasurer

VILLAGE OF PANAMA
PO BOX 117
PANAMA NE 68419

February 15, 2008

Nebraska Rural Water Association
3390 Ponderosa
Wahoo NE 68066

We sincerely thank you for all the assistance you have given our Village during the past year and always. Kevin Mathis really appreciates your help and guidance.

Please accept this donation as our way of letting you know how much you are appreciated.

Sincerely,

Dee Harris
Village Clerk/Treasurer
On behalf of the Village Board of Trustees



Gordy Fleming
Mayor

Julie A Buescher
City Clerk

THE CITY OF DESHLER

305 E. BRYSON / DESHLER, NE. 68340 / 402-365-4260

April 2, 2008

Nebraska Rural Water Association
ATTN: Randy Hellbusch
3390 Ponderosa Drive
Wahoo, NE 68066

Dear Randy:

We would like to thank you for the water and sewer rate studies you did for us. So, we have enclosed a donation. We truly appreciate all your help.

Sincerely,

Julie A Buescher
City of Deshler
City Clerk/Treasurer



P.O. Box 191
557 4th Street
David City, NE 68632

Nebraska
Phone - (402)367-3135
Fax - (402)367-3126
Email - dcwatersup@windstream.net

February 6, 2008

Pay to: Nebraska Rural Water Association
3390 Ponderosa
Wahoo, NE 68066

Donation to NeRWA For the Equipment Fund
For Assistance to the City of David City

The City of David City, Water/Wastewater Dept. would like to thank the NeRWA staff for all the assistance that they given to the City of David City.

Sincerely,

Jim Kruse
David City Water/Wastewater Supervisor
City of David City, NE



PO Box 27 • Bee, NE 68314
Phone/Fax: 402-643-6247

Dave Niebrugge, Chairman
Joni Belew, Village Clerk/Treasurer
February 22, 2008

Nebraska Rural Water Association
3390 Ponderosa
Wahoo, NE 68066

Dear NeRWA,

Please accept this donation on behalf of the Village of Bee Board of Trustees. Recently Russ Topp spent some valuable time helping the Village's water operator. The board members truly appreciate all that your organization does. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Joni Belew
Village Clerk/Treasurer

RURAL WATER DISTRICT NO. 1

LANCASTER COUNTY, NEBRASKA
P.O. BOX 58 • 310 FIR STREET
BENNET, NEBRASKA 68317
PHONE 782-3455



City of Neligh
202 Main Street P.O. Box 87
Neligh, NE 68756-0087
Ph. 402-887-4066 Fax 402-887-5343

February 15, 2008

Nebraska Rural Water Association
3390 Ponderosa
Wahoo, NE 68066

The City of Neligh is sending a donation to the equipment fund.

We really appreciate the assistance the association provides to us when we have a problem. Jim Heyen has assisted us by smoking the sewer line in the Catholic Church locating a broken sewer pipe. The broken line was letting sewer gasses into the basement.

Keep up the good work. I am planning to budget this amount every year so the association can purchase additional equipment for use by all communities.

Sincerely,

Lyle Juracek
Lyle Juracek
City Supt., City of Neligh

To: All Employees, NRWA

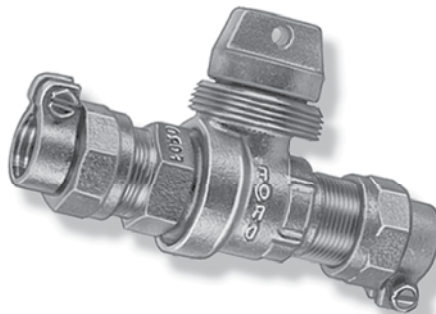
Our office would like to Thank you all for your knowledgeable assistance over the years. Your technical advice has been very helpful and much appreciated! Keep up the great work!

Enclosed is a donation for the equipment fund.

Thank You!

*From: All Employees, Rural Water District #1
Lancaster County*

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Association News and Updates - Spring 2008

By Clancy Dempsey, Executive Director

The NeRWA Annual Conference was held March 17th, 18th, and 19th in Columbus. Despite heavy snow in the panhandle that prevented some from attending, we had a great turnout. We received a lot of feedback from attendees during and after the conference. I am happy to report that the comments were 99.9% positive; with quite a few people expressing it was the best one yet! We will work hard to make it even better next year. As always, feel free to share your ideas and opinions with us.

Quite a few people mentioned that they enjoyed the food and meals at the conference. Layne Western sponsored steaks on Monday evening and I hope you had the chance to stop by their booth and say thanks. HD Supply sponsored the Monday evening social hour and many thanks to them. Numerous exhibitors made donations to offset conference expenses – Bartlett and West, Municipal Pipe Services, Sargent Drilling, Utility Service Co., Maguire Iron, Miller and Associates, Mongan Painting, and Lincoln Winwater Works Co. The generosity of these exhibitors helps NeRWA to keep the conference more affordable for small systems.

There were 57 conference sessions to choose from with topics good for water, wastewater and backflow CEU's. Hopefully you found some new subjects to enjoy and had the chance to refresh your memory about familiar topics too. Many thanks to all of the speakers who shared their knowledge with us. I want to offer a special thanks to the Department of Health and Human Services, who had close to 20 staff participating in conference presentations. On Tuesday evening, Operator of the Year Awards were presented to Craig Potter, City of Valentine, and Dennis Hoback of Cass County Rural Water #1. Congratulations to Craig and Dennis for this accomplishment! The winner of the Water Contest was announced as the Village of Trenton, and a plaque was presented to Joe Cole, Utility Superintendent. Trenton will now provide a water sample for the National Best Tasting

Water Contest on April 22nd to be held in Washington, DC. Congratulations to Trenton and best of luck in the National Contest!

During the conference, the New World Inn presented the NeRWA board of directors a proposal to keep the conference in Columbus for three more years. We have accepted their proposal and look forward to next year's conference, which will be held March 16th, 17th and 18th of 2009. We hope that you will join us!

Future NeRWA Training and Events

We have scheduled some one-day classes that are in addition to those listed in the training coalition calendar you received at the beginning of 2008. For instance, we added eight "Rule Manager Workshops" to the training schedule. These workshops are designed to give operators an opportunity to learn more about Lead and Copper, Public Notification and CCR's, Coliform, and Disinfection By-Products. A workshop has been scheduled for each Public Water Supply Field Area. The first of these was held in January at the NeRWA office in Wahoo. Afterwards, several operators expressed that the class was very worthwhile. I hope that you will be able to join us for the workshop in your area. A brochure will be sent out several weeks in advance of each class. Be sure to visit the NeRWA website for a complete listing of our classes and events.

Another training idea we are exploring is the possibility of conducting one-day computer based training sessions for operators. Computer based records and data are much easier to preserve and share with others, including rural water field staff, the health department, and the new generation of operators we are beginning to welcome to the industry as baby boomers retire. Many operators who plan to retire in the next few years possess a wealth of information that was gained through years of experience. I hope that you will take the time to make this information available for the next guy or gal, and make their job as operator a little easier,


continued on page 6

by creating a system of computer based records. As you can attest, they will have their hands full as new operators, and any advantage you can give them will benefit your entire community.


With the Spring Conference wrapped up, we now look ahead to the Fall Conference in Gering (September 16th and 17th) and the Utility Expo in Fremont. I want to mention that the Expo has been moved to October 1st this year (instead of July). It will still be held in Fremont at Christensen Field. The reason for the move is simple; we are trying to escape the blistering summer heat. I hope that Mother Nature cooperates and grants us a beautiful fall day for some hands-on learning and live technology demonstrations at the Utility Expo. Keep watch in our next magazine for more complete details and agendas of these events.

Thanks for your time.

Clancy Dempsey
800-842-8039 office
402-480-3596 cell
Clancy@nerwa.org



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2008 Training

Water Operator Training

April 15	Ainsworth (NIMS)
April 16	Cairo
April 17	Franklin (NIMS)
May 13	Elwood
May 15	Gordon (NIMS)
June 6	Sutton
June 10	Oakland
June 12	Chambers
July 8	Crawford
July 9	Sutherland (NIMS)
July 10	Trenton (NIMS)
August 12	Greeley
August 13	Hartington
August 14	Hallam
September 24	Papillion
October 21	Stapleton
October 23	Kimball
November 13	Oshkosh
November 19	Fairbury
December 9	Wakefield (NIMS)
December 10	Waterloo
December 11	Syracuse

NIMS Training will also be available at the Fall Conference.

Backflow Re-Certification Training

November 18 Seward
November 20 Tecumseh
November 25 Wahoo
December 16 Mitchell
December 17 Ogallala
December 18 Wahoo

TRENCH CLASS **Hands-on Activity**

May 28
NeRWA Office
Wahoo

Wastewater Training

October 21 Wahoo
November 12 Ewing

FALL CONFERENCE

September 16-17
Gering, Nebraska

Rule Manager Workshops

May 20 Gering
May 21 North Platte
August 26 Gibbon
August 27 Ord
September 9 Wayne

UTILITY EXPO

October 1
Christensen Field
Fremont, Nebraska

Grade VI Backflow Prevention Cross-Connection Control Course - 5 Day

October 27-31, Wahoo

Trenching & Excavation

October 15 Wahoo

Confined Space Entry

October 16 Wahoo



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CITY UTILITIES - FLOODPLAIN & CODES DIRECTOR

The City of Hickman Nebraska, in South Lancaster County/Lincoln, has an opening due to organizational restructuring, for a City Utilities-Floodplain & Codes Director, to co-direct the policies, compliance, floodplain administration, code enforcement, strategic and long term planning of this growing Public Works Department & City. This position will ensure compliance with regulatory agency and city standards in the Electrical, Water, Water Distribution, Wastewater, Streets and Parks Divisions within the City Scope. Educational requirements: Degree in environmental science, engineering, public administration, or related field, Certifications in water, wastewater and floodplain and 10 years related experience may be considered. Applicants must possess valid Nebraska driver's license and completion of full employee background checks. Salary is DOQ.

To obtain "Full Position Profile" contact citymanger@ckt.net. For Application Package contact: City of Hickman - 115 Locust Street - Hickman, NE 68372 - 402.792.2212. Deadlines: Open Until Filled - Interviews begin March 26th, 2008. E.O.E.

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Announcement closes when filled. Applications at City Offices, 135 W 4th St., Superior NE 68978, phone (402) 879-4711. Submit application to Utility Manager, P.O. Box 160, Superior NE 68978 or fa (402) 879-4907. City of Superior is an equal opportunity employer.



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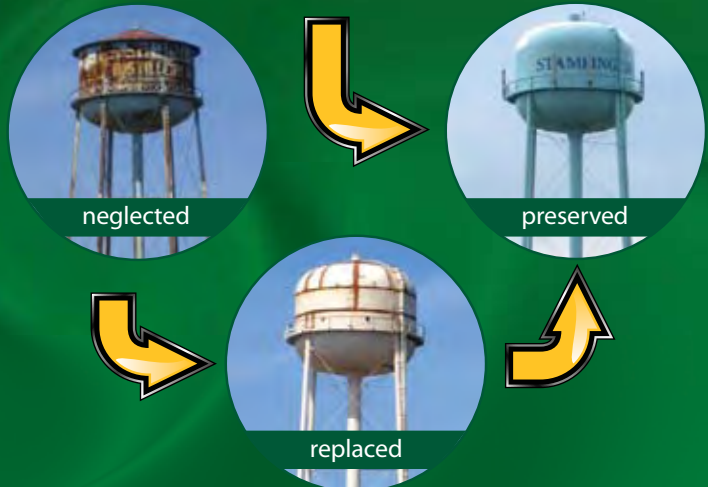
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DEQ's...Mission Organization

By Jim Heyen, Wastewater Technician

The DEQ must be watching some of the same TV programs my wife watches on HG and that is not such a bad thing. By now, each community should have received a 3-ring binder from The Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality. This binder contains all the information a community would need for their wastewater facility permit information and DMRs. I have received several calls about this 3-ring binder (mainly the CD), so I thought I would walk you through it by tabs.

- 1) Permit – As the operator you should familiarize yourself on the content of this section. Please pay close attention to the parameters you need to sample and when you need to sample them. If you have received a new permit your limits and your sample requirements may have changed.
- 2) Fact Sheets -This information is basically how your parameters were derived. Some of the content of the fact sheet is hard to understand. The DEQ permit writers use guidance from EPA, along with various information, specific to each individual plant to figure limits.
- 3) Signatory Authorization Forms (SAF) – This form is to be used to communicate changes in address and personnel for your city or village to DEQ. For instance, if the mayor (Cognizant official) changes, you will need complete a SAF, have the Cognizant official sign it and send to DEQ noting the changes.
- 4) Non-Compliance Forms – The forms are used as it

states, if the community is out of compliance on a parameter, you have sampled, you must complete a Non-Compliance form and send to DEQ. It looks very similar to a DMR. Please remember you still must verbally notify DEQ, in the event of non-compliance within 24 hours. I would suggest that if DEQ does not answer, leave a message and log the time you called.

- 5) DMRs - A CD is included in the next tab. This contains files of your DMRs through your permit cycle. To print your DMRs, you must have a computer that has “Adobe Acrobat” because the files are in pdf. form. The file names are separated in quarters (i.e. 01-08 would include January, February, and March).
- 6) The rest of the tabs are separated into quarters and years, creating a place for completed DMRs. Please note when sending your DMRs, only one copy with original signature needs to be mailed to DEQ and make one copy to be placed in your 3-ring binder.

I believe this binder will save time and space. I know that many of you already have an organized way of filing/storing your reports. This binder just creates a unified statewide effort for DEQ to make reference to a permit manual and records. This way if you get a visit from DEQ you can just pull out your white binder and everything will be there.

As always, you can give me a call at (402) 443-5216 to help you with this booklet, be it explaining the permit, help downloading the CD, or whatever it might be.

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Community Management Planning

By Charles Bausch, Groundwater Specialist

Where does the time go? It is hard to believe it has been a year since I started with Nebraska Rural Water Association! This years Spring Rural Water Conference was only my second. No longer did I get away with saying “I’m not sure about that.... this is my first conference.” This year I actually had some responsibility (scary I know).

I was glad to see so many operators able to attend the conference. The variety of classes kept the agenda very interesting. We offered the normal backflow classes and a new computer class. The class I thought I would write about is **“When and How of Wellhead Protection in Nebraska”**. This class was on Wednesday of the Conference and Ms. Rachael Herpel, from The Groundwater Foundation, facilitated this class. The Groundwater Foundation encourages a community based approach to management planning for source water protection. Since I have been working on a similar program for the past year, I was asked to speak on a panel and discuss some of the issues a town may face when doing a Wellhead Protection project. For those of you that could not make it to the Conference, I thought I would go over some questions asked during the session and their answers. Remember, there is more than one right answer; this is the approach I took.

When is the best time for communities to plan and implement wellhead protection activities?

The best time to start a plan is usually in the winter months. This is a good time to get people together. For instance, farming activities have usually slowed down, and farmers will be able to attend meetings. Also, you usually do not have to compete with nice weather, the extra daylight, and all the other exciting things about spring and summer. When planning meetings, evenings usually work the best. By planning in the winter you can get started thinking about management projects for the coming year. Since some of the grants for funding potential projects come up during the late spring and fall, starting in the winter leaves plenty of time to get grant proposals written and information submitted after the planning process is finished. Ideally planning should be completed sometime in March or before the planting season starts. Otherwise you might find yourself waiting another whole year before

implementation can take place.

What is the best approach to wellhead protection?

I believe the best approach to wellhead protection is for efforts to be community-based. The citizens of a community must understand that it is their water and no one has greater incentive to protect it. Even if a community-based effort is started and you are small in numbers, one thing to remember is not how many people you have, but what you get accomplished. Persistence of the group will pay off in the long run, large or small. It is surprising how many people will join in after they start to see progress. So take that group, no matter how small, and start planning for the protection of your source water.

What makes a wellhead protection program successful?

A successful program has a strong emphasis on the future – getting projects implemented and completed, and having new goals set each year of the project. Another necessity is usually funding. This can often be obtained through grants to implement your project. There are many different ways to measure success. But it is difficult to measure success without goals. Community-planning groups should set goals early in the process. If every community set goals to complete a local wellhead protection plan after reading this article, then I would say this was a successful article! If you have any questions about starting a community-based management program for your source water, I would be glad to answer them to the best of my ability.

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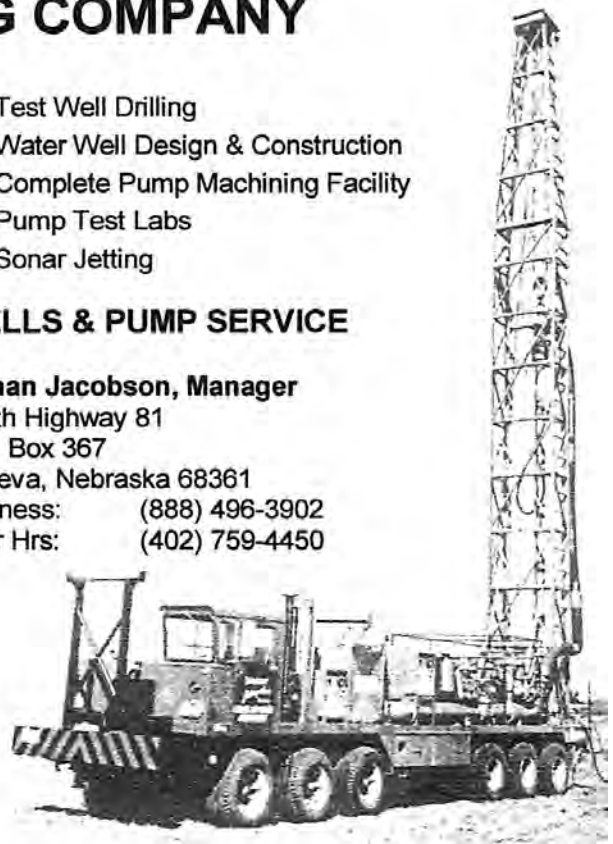
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PICTURES!!!**

We would like to put the water towers of Nebraska on our cover. We want to feature a different tower on each issue.

So far we have had Cass County RWD 1, Louisville, Bloomfield, Litchfield, Columbus, Logan East RW, Papio-MO Dakota County, Wahoo, O'Neill and Dunbar.

Let us add your name to our list and see how long it gets. Either send a photo to our office or email a picture to our website.





Damaged Lab Equipment

By Russ Topp, Circuit Rider

If you were able to attend the Spring Conference this year in Columbus, you have probably already heard this sermon; those of you who were unable to attend, please be aware; lab equipment at the State Laboratory has been damaged because of chlorinated water samples.

Howard Isaacs, Program Manager, with the Department of Health and Human Services, has informed us that occasionally, VOC and SOC water samples arrive at the State Laboratory for chemical analyses that contain chlorine residual from systems that do not normally chlorinate. When the lab analyzes these samples it causes extensive damage to the analyzing equipment. Repairing and recalibrating the equipment can cost as much as \$2,000 or more. Systems that use continuous chlorination receive VOC and SOC sample kits that are marked with a colored sticker. For VOC samples, these systems have been issued and trained on how to use hydrochloric acid to neutralize the chlorine. Once the water sample has been neutralized it is safe for the lab to analyze. SOC samples kits have the proper neutralizing agents already in the sample bottle.

As always, before collecting samples for coliform bacteria run the tap for several minutes and disinfect the tap prior to filling the bacti bottle.

If you are sampling for any other contaminants such as VOC's, SOC's, IOC's or any other chemical samples, do not chlorinate the tap. Water samples sent in for chemical analyses are not tested for bacteria.

If you are chlorinating for emergency or maintenance purposes and receive a sample kit for a chemical analyses, please call your State Field Representative or Nebraska Rural Water before collecting the sample. If the sample must be collected before you are finished chlorinating we can advise you on how to collect the sample or come out to assist you. We can also contact the Health Department and see if the sample may be postponed until you are finished chlorinating or order a chlorinated sample kit for you.

Pump installers routinely chlorinate wells after well work has been done. If you have had well work done prior to receiving a sample kit for chemical analyses, be sure all the chlorine has been flushed to waste.

We have been informed that water systems may be charged for damaged lab equipment. I know every water system has better things to spend \$2,000 on than repairing lab equipment.

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*Dennis Hoback, Cass County RWD 1
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WATER CONTEST WINNER

Village of Trenton, received by Joe Cole





Legislative Update

By Clancy Dempsey, Executive Director

On February 13th, a group of four NeRWA representatives traveled to Washington DC to meet with Nebraska's elected federal officials. Tom Goulette, NeRWA Board President, Duane Grashorn of People Service, Jim Green of McCool Junction, and myself traveled to DC to request that the Nebraska delegation support the funding of rural water programs. The trip was very successful – Congressman Adrian Smith, Jeff Fortenberry, Lee Terry and Senator Chuck Hagel pledged their support by signing a Dear Colleague letter sent to the Appropriations subcommittees that are responsible for rural water program funding. To garner the support of Senator Nelson, it was necessary to ask our membership for help by writing to the Senator. This extra measure was needed because of the Senator's position on the Interior Appropriations Subcommittee. In short, it was imperative to demonstrate that the rural water programs were important to Nebraska. On behalf of the NeRWA board and staff, I would like to thank everyone who took the time to write a letter to Senator Ben Nelson.

I am excited to report that your efforts, our efforts, paid off! Senator Nelson took notice of the letters he received from many operators, mayors, board/council members, and administrators across Nebraska. We received word this week that Senator Nelson included rural water funding in his request to the Chair of the Interior Appropriations Subcommittee. While this does not provide any guarantees, this was our goal and the best outcome we could have hoped for. It is fitting that we offer thanks to the Senator and his staff. I encourage you to reach out to Senator Nelson one more time and let him know that Nebraska's small communities are appreciative of his efforts. Perhaps the easiest way to say thanks is to visit the Senator's website - www.bennelson.senate.gov - and send an email by clicking on the link at the bottom of the page. Let Senator Nelson know that his support of the rural water programs is important and didn't go unnoticed by the people who benefit from rural water and have the most to lose if rural water programs are not funded. I sincerely hope that you will take the time to do this.

I kept a list of the letters we received that I would eventually forward to the Senator's office. Some

systems sent more than one letter, as indicated by parentheses (#). I apologize if I inadvertently left anyone off of the list.

Abie, Ainsworth, Alexandria, Allen, Alliance, Arapahoe, Arlington, Arnold, Atkinson (3), Bancroft, Barneston, Beaver Crossing, Bee, Bellwood, Bertrand, Bristow, Broadwater, Bruning (2), Bruno, Brunswick, Burwell, Bushnell, Cambridge, Cass County RW #1, Cass County RW #2 (2), Cedar Bluffs, Cedar Knox RW, Cedar Rapids, Ceresco, Chappell (3), Clarkson, Concord, Cozad, Crawford, Dakota City (3), Dalton, Davey, Decatur, Denton, Deshler, Dodge, Doniphan, Douglas, Dwight, Elgin, Emerson, Endicott, Eustis, Exeter, Fairbury, Fairfield (2), Falls City (3), Farnam, Farwell, Franklin, Garland, Genoa, Greeley, Gresham, Gibbon, Guide Rock (2), Haigler, Hampton, Harrison, Hayes Center, Henry, Howells, Hyannis, Juniata, Kenesaw, Kimball, Lancaster RW #1, Laurel, Lebanon (2), Lodgepole, Logan East RW, Loup City (2), Lower Republican NRD,

Lyman, Lyons, Madrid, Magnet, Malcolm, Malmo, Martinsburg, Maxwell, Maywood, McCool Junction, Meadow Grove (2), Merna, Anselmo, Milligan, Minatare, Monroe, Moorefield (2), Morrill, Murray, Neligh, Nelson, Nemaha, Nemaha County RW #2, Oakdale, Oakland, Orcahrd, Orleans, Papillion, Pawnee County RW #1, Paxton (2), Petersburg, Pierce, Ponca, Primrose, Randolph, Ravenna, Raymond, Red Cloud, Richardson County RW #2, Riverdale, Royal, Rulo, Seward, Schuyler, Shelby, Sherman Lakes Homes Association, Spalding, Springview, Stanton County SID #1, Stella, Shubert, Stromsburg, Stuart, Superior, Sutton, Talmage, Tecumseh, Tekamah (6), Tobias, Ulysses, Urban Utilities, Valentine (Go Bid Red!), Valparaiso, Verdigre, Virginia, Waco, Wahoo, Walthill, Wausa, West Knox Rural Water, West Point, Western, Wood Lake, Woodcliff Lakes, Yutan!

There were 171 letters sent to Senator Nelson from the systems listed above and there were a total of 251 signatures on those letters. In addition, 191 individuals signed a group letter to Senator Nelson at the conference. This brings the total number of signatures to 442! NeRWA is grateful to you. For our organization it really comes down to this: NeRWA's strength is in its membership. Thank you.

Clancy Dempsey
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Clancy@nerwa.org

Should I or Shouldn't I? The Answer Is –

*By Howard P. Isaacs, Program Manager,
Monitoring and Compliance, NE Drinking Water Program*

There's that old saying, "It's as clear as mud", and apparently there is a bit of confusion as to how the Total Coliform Rule (TCR) is to be implemented and when disinfection is appropriate or when it is not for a system that does not continually add disinfectant. Actually, the TCR is pretty straightforward for an EPA regulation.

One could quote both the Federal and State regulation language, but that would take up about all the room in this publication. So, while we will indeed reference the regulations, let's try to relay the basics more simply.

The interpretation of the detection of coliform bacteria in distribution systems has undergone change in the evolution of the TCR. Prior to 1991, a presence of up to four (4) Total coliform bacteria colonies was acceptable, a count of five (5) or more was not acceptable. After 1991, the TCR changed to simply the presence of Total coliform bacteria not being acceptable and an added feature of when Total coliform bacteria were detected, a confirmation of whether this presence was also a fecal coliform or E. coli bacteria came into being.

All Public Water Systems (PWS) are required to collect **Routine** Total coliform samples from their distribution systems. The number of Routine samples and the schedule (monthly or quarterly) are dependent upon system population and system classification.

The base number of Routine samples and sample frequency remain constant as long as there are no coliform detected in these Routine samples. However, the picture changes dramatically if coliform presence is detected in this Routine sample.

If a Routine sample has Total coliform presence, a set of **Repeat** samples must be collected by the PWS within 24-hours of being notified of the positive result. The State may, and does, extend this 24-hour limit to accommodate weekends and holidays. However, the Repeat samples must be collected as soon as possible

after that weekend or holiday. Repeat samples received by the PWS on a Tuesday or Wednesday are to be collected yet that same week.

If a PWS is collecting one (1) Routine sample per monitoring period, the PWS will collect four (4) Repeat samples. One (1) Repeat sample is collected from the Original site, one (1) Repeat sample is collected within 5 service connections Upstream, one (1) Repeat sample is collected within 5 service connections Downstream, and one (1) Repeat sample is collected anywhere within this 10 service connection area (5 connections on both sides of the original positive site). PWSs collecting two (2) or more samples per monitoring period would collect only three (3) Repeat samples (Original, Up & Down stream sites).

If one (1) or more Repeat samples in the set have a Total coliform presence, it is then that a Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) violation occurs. This can be Non-acute (Total coliform presence only) or Acute (E. coli in either the Routine or Repeat samples).

The TCR requires that coliform samples be **representative of the water routinely delivered to customers**. Coliform bacteria are indicator organisms that tell us something may be wrong in the system.

It is not appropriate to disinfect just prior to the collection of a Routine or Repeat sample. If a true source of contamination exists in your drinking water system, then you want to know about it.

Disinfecting the water system just prior to any Routine or Repeat sample event masks a true problem, putting the public health of your consumers at risk.

Adding a disinfectant and then taking a Routine or Repeat sample shortly afterward indicates the intent to manipulate water system data creating a liability for those involved.

So, when is it appropriate to add a disinfectant to the water system? If you would like to add disinfectant **after** a set of Repeat samples are collected, no problem. To disinfect your system as part of an annual or scheduled flushing program (biofilm issues), following pipe repair, replacement or other work in the distribution system **is appropriate**. Samples submitted after such disinfection events are viewed as **“Special purpose samples”** taken to determine the effectiveness of the disinfection process.

The Program has not changed anything nor are we interpreting the TCR differently. The primary concept of the TCR has been the same from the beginning of this Rule.

While there are other components to the TCR, such as additional Routine samples the following month after a Total coliform detection, this article addresses just the fundamentals of coliform monitoring and when it is or isn't appropriate to add disinfectant to the system. Please do not hesitate to contact the Sherry Wirth, Total Coliform Rule Manager (402) 471-0932 or Howard P. Isaacs, Program Manager, (402) 471-0930 if further

clarification is needed.

While the Program must deal with what is now the criteria set forth in the Total Coliform Rule, this also gives support to how the Program here and in other State Programs are trying to change components of the Rule. One in which E. coli would be viewed as the trigger organism to an MCL violation and then utilizing Total coliform bacteria presence as an operational or maintenance component. But until then.....

References:

40 Code of Federal Regulations, Parts 136 to 149, § 141.21(a) Routine monitoring, (b) Repeat monitoring.

Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, Regulations Governing Public Water Supply Systems Title 179, Chapter 3 Monitoring and Analytical Requirements, 3-004 Coliform Sampling, 3-004.01 Routine Monitoring, 3-004.02 Repeat Monitoring.






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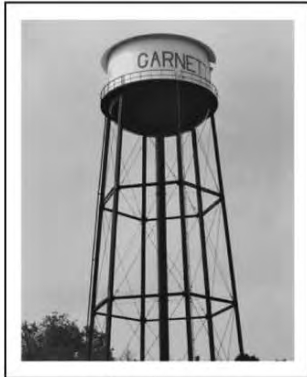
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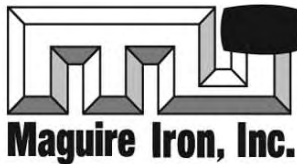
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Water Rates and Capacity Development

By Barney Whatley, Capacity Development Specialist

Capacity development has been heralded by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) as the main goal in their dealings with the water systems in the State of Nebraska. Capacity development has three main components, namely technical, managerial and financial, and all three of these play an important part in the overall “health” of a public water system.

The State of Nebraska has been ahead of the curve in regards to technical capacity. The state had an operator certification program long before it was mandated by the federal government, and operators have been required to attend continuing education to keep abreast of changes in the industry. This emphasis on education and increasing the skills and knowledge of water system operators has gone a long way in improving the technical capacity of water systems within the state. Technical assistance providers, such as The Nebraska Rural Water Association, The League of Nebraska Municipalities, Midwest Assistance Program, the Nebraska Section of the American Water Works Association, offer water system operators useful information on the operation and maintenance of their water system, as well as updates on the continually changing regulations under which the water systems must operate. All of this works to the benefit of the state’s water systems in increasing their technical capacity.

Managerial capacity has also been increased in the state’s water systems. Since the DHHS started using the enhanced sanitary survey, many areas of management have been addressed. Many management policies are reviewed as a part of the sanitary survey, and deficiencies are noted and reported to the owner of the water system. Cross connection control policies, emergency planning, short and long term planning and operation and maintenance procedures are among some of the management areas that are considered. The Check Up Program for Small Systems (CUPPS) is a new tool that will soon be ready for systems to use to improve asset management capabilities. This tool will allow systems to maintain a certain desired level of service at the best appropriate cost. Systems that use the CUPPS software will gain an understanding of the

condition of the infrastructure and other components of their system and the steps that will be necessary in the future to maintain the system in a manner that will assure their ability to deliver safe water to their customers. This will result in an even greater increase in the managerial capacity of the water system.

Having trained our water operators how to operate the water system efficiently, and giving water operators and system owners and managers the tools to determine the steps that will allow the system to continue to operate smoothly into the future, we now come to part three in capacity development. “How are we going to pay for this?” There are two schools of thought on the answer to this question. The first one is that the current users should maintain the system and pay as they go. This would include having reserve funds set aside to replace all components of the system in a timely manner as they wear out. The second school states that the future users of the system should pay for the improvements that they will be utilizing. This would lead to borrowing money for improvements and having the users of those improvements pay back the load over the life of the improvements. Both of these methods have valid points to them, but they also both require a rate structure to accomplish their goals.

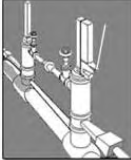
Rates for the first method must be set high enough to cover all current operation and maintenance costs, and also fund a reserve that will be capable of paying replacement costs of system components as they reach the end of their useful life. This goal might be practical for a system if it has been in place from the time the system was built, but to try to implement it at a time when a large portion of the system infrastructure is nearing the end of its useful life is nearly impossible. A lot of small systems are reaching the point where major replacement of infrastructure is becoming necessary, and they are finding out just how expensive that is.

On the other hand, setting rates just high enough to cover operation and maintenance costs, and expecting future users to cover all replacement costs will put a

continued on page 22

heavy burden on those future users. Many systems that have used this practice, whether on purpose or by accident, are finding that their water rates are doubling, tripling or even worse when the time comes for major system improvements. This can have an adverse effect on the system as a whole, from the customer on a fixed income to the youth of the system deciding if they want to stay in the area or move away.

A water rate that looks at both of these options and plans for a gradual increase in the cost of water over time while still building reserve funds for replacement costs of system infrastructure is a good compromise. System owners need to realize that they will not be able to fully fund infrastructure replacement with income derived from current water rates, but they do have the opportunity to reduce the impact of that replacement on future users by striving to build up a fund that can be used to partially pay those costs and reduce the indebtedness of the system. Determining what amount the system can afford to start saving and what average water bill the customers can afford is one way to begin the process of setting rates in an equitable and fair way for the system and its customers.




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Investing In A Future – Western Completes Water System Improvements

By Clancy Dempsey, Executive Director

While recently traveling as part of my Training Specialist duties, I had the opportunity to stop in the Village of Western and visit with Dwight “Butch” Nickel, the Utility Superintendent. This Saline County village, population 287, had undergone quite a project to improve their water system. Here are some of the highlights.

Before the project, the village relied upon two wells on the edge of town to supply drinking water. They began to experience serious water quantity issues five years ago during the drought. With the cooperation of local residents the village successfully implemented water conservation practices that allowed the system to



get by. But it was clear that the only long-term solution was to locate a new water source. To find adequate water quantity and good quality, it was necessary to drill a new well two miles from town and install a new 8-inch transmission main that was tied into the village system. The new well is equipped with a right angle drive for emergency situations. This was just the start for Western. The village also built a new 75,000 gallon elevated storage tank. This replaced the old pressure tank that was located in the village shop building. The old pressure tank was 8 feet in diameter, 38 feet long, had a capacity of around 15,000 gallons, and was installed in 1938. As you can imagine, limited water storage capacity and the limited pumping capacity of the village’s two old wells could cause an operator some sleepless nights. Needless to say, Butch is resting much better at night with the new well and tower in operation.

The improvements to the system didn’t stop there. Fourteen blocks of old 4-inch cast iron main was replaced with six-inch plastic. Thirty new valves were replaced

or installed around town. Fourteen hydrants were replaced or installed new. And 182 meters were installed in residences and businesses. This had a significant impact on water usage, which is down 30-35%. As you might guess, this was probably water that was being wasted prior to meter installation.



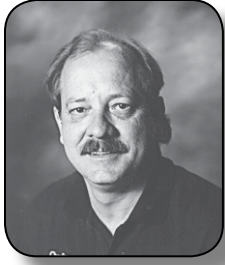
Residents have adjusted to meters pretty well. Water rates were restructured to insure the village could pay off the debt they incurred from investing in the project. The new rate structure was the result of a rate study performed by Randy Hellbusch of Nebraska Rural Water. The new rates are \$22 per month for service and \$2 per thousand. This was not a dramatic increase over the previous rates and has gone over well with residents.

The Village of Western’s project began in September of 2006 and officially concluded in December of 2007



when the new water tower was put into service. Butch expressed that the project was very time consuming, required a lot of attention and long hours, but the

end result was well worth the effort. Financing was provided by a combination grant and loan from USDA Rural Development. Total project expenses were about \$1.1 million. But the cost to make a community attractive to families and businesses cannot be counted in dollars and cents. This was an investment that will yield returns to the village for a very long time.



Reflections of a Water Operator

By Randy Hellbusch, Circuit Rider

Nebraska Rural Water has published several articles recently about the aging workforce and the need to recruit qualified people into the water profession. One of the realizations we have come to is that people outside of the profession have little or no idea about what being a water operator entails. We have decided to get some information first hand from some water operators around the state to hopefully educate others on what running a water system is all about.

I had an opportunity recently to sit down with Clint Johnson from the City of Pawnee City. Clint also is the certified water and sewer operator for the Village of Burchard and sewer operator for the Village of Steinauer. Clint has worked for the City of Pawnee City for 14 years. When asked for his official title, Clint chuckled and said whatever is required on any certain day. He is actually the City Zoning Administrator and Maintenance Superintendent. Clint also added that the City of Pawnee City isn't real big on titles. Everyone just pitches in where they are needed.



Clint doing some of the paperwork that he so enjoys!! His 3-year-old son is eager to help as well.

Most days start with phone calls and paper work. After mid-morning, every day varies from water shut offs or turning water on to a new residence to

hydrant flushing, etc. Normal work days begin at 8 a.m. and end at 4:30 p.m. When an emergency arises or during times of snow, these times can vary a great deal.

Clint is a Grade 3 water operator certified by the State of Nebraska. This enables him to be in responsible charge of a community water system with a population of up to 15,000, or a water system of up to 2,000 population

that treats water to remove harmful materials or to improve the aesthetic quality of the delivered water.

To obtain a Grade 3 license, an individual must complete a validated exam recommended by the State Advisory Council on Public Water Supply and approved by the Director, possess a high school diploma and have a minimum of two years responsible charge of a community water supply system or three years operation of a system under the supervision of a person possessing a Grade 3 license. Clint stated that three years of college isn't for everyone, and being a water operator is one way to have a good paying job in your local community that can be very rewarding.

Clint says that dealing with the people and the challenges each day brings are very enjoyable to him. He enjoys being outdoors and doing something different each day. Each day brings a different challenge. Clint at one time held an assembly line position and says he hopes to never have to return to that again. The changes in day-to-day operations and flexibility of the water operator job are much more rewarding.



Clint heading out to do his daily routine.

The downside of the job is repairing a water main in minus 10-degree weather. You have no choice though - it must be done. Some town's people also sometimes will try to take advantage of you and expect the city of solve every problem they have. Those cases are rare however. Another part of the job that Clint says is getting more demanding is the paper work aspect. He much more enjoys the hands-on aspect of the job as well as working with the public.

Clint would advise any young person that would like to remain in their community and be a huge part of

the community's future, to visit with their current city staff. It is a very rewarding job and it does not require a 4-year college education; yet you work with science, biology, public relations, as well as all of the hands on duties.

One of the major challenges Clint sees for small systems in the future is consolidation. Many towns will not have a choice. The cost of meeting future regulations will be prohibitive. EPA regulations are getting to the point that systems are almost required to provide sterilized water. More and more mandates will require small systems to work cooperatively.

Some of the major changes Clint has seen in his last 14 years are the testing requirements and paper work required to do the job successfully. A water operator has the ability to affect thousands of people's lives on a daily basis. The job doesn't necessarily carry a lot of prestige, but when people don't realize you exist is when you are doing your job the best. It is a job where you must care about more than just a paycheck. You are not only responsible for supplying safe drinking water to all of the residents in town, but that also includes your own family and friends.

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