

Issue 2/2012

Nebraska Rural Water Association



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Nebraska Good Water News

Issue 2/2012

“Keeping Our Water Safe”

Board of Directors

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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.

Website: www.nerwa.org

On the cover:

The City of Valley Water Tower

“This Institution is an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer.”

How'd We Do and Letters From...



VILLAGE OF ARLINGTON
Washington County, Nebraska

Tom Brown
Chairman, Board of Trustees
245 North 2nd Street
P.O. Box 370
Arlington, NE 68002-0170
Phone/Fax (402) 478-4212
Email: arlington@futuretk.com


February 14, 2012

Nebraska Rural Water Association
3390 Ponderosa Drive
Wahoo, NE 68066

Dear NE Rural Water Assoc.,

On behalf of the Village of Arlington and the Arlington Village Board of Trustees, please accept the enclosed donation in the amount of \$250.00 to the NE Rural Water Association. We appreciate all of the assistance your organization has provided Arlington and other area municipalities in the form of information and equipment.

Sincerely,


Tom Brown
Village Board Chairman

NRWA Staff,
Enclosed is a
donation for your
equipment fund.
You are a valuable
resource to us in
so many ways.
Thank you for all
that you do!

Sincerely,
Cindy Sanders
& the Village
Board of
Trustees
in Guide
Rock

Village of Bancroft
Box 267
Bancroft, Nebraska 68004

March 7, 2012

Nebraska Rural Water Association
3390 Ponderosa Drive
Wahoo NE 68066

Dear NeRWA,

The Village Board of Bancroft, Nebraska wishes to extend their sincere appreciation to Russ Topp and Mike Stanzal for their recent visit to help locate a water leak and sanitary sewer line break. They put in a long day to oversee the repairs.

The services that the Nebraska Rural Water Association provides to the municipalities are phenomenal, and it is such a help to be able to make a phone call and there is always someone available to assist them with any water or wastewater issues that arise.


Enclosed is a donation for you to use for your equipment fund.

Again, Thank you for everything you do to help, words could never express how much we appreciate your help.

Sincerely,



Michael Wegner, Chairman
Village Board of Bancroft


The City of Pawnee City appreciated Russ Topp, assisting us in locating the water leak out to our City Pond. We enclose a donation toward the services Nebraska Rural Water has provided us!

Sincerely,
The City of Pawnee City

VILLAGE OF BROADWATER

PO Box 70
Broadwater, Nebraska 69125
308.489.5671/FAX 308.489.0123
broadwater@embarqmail.com

March 7, 2012

Dear NeRWA Staff:

Just a note to say "THANK YOU" for all the services that you have provided to the Village of Broadwater over the years. It is truly refreshing to know that you are just a phone call away for any compliance, water, or wastewater concern that we may have. Your assistance is greatly appreciated.

Please accept the enclosed donation for your equipment fund in appreciation for all the work that you do.

P.S. Thanks Mike S. for coming out and doing a leak detection test on our system (twice!).

Sincerely,
Village of Broadwater

Rex L. Leisy
Rex L. Leisy, Chair

Bruce McKibben
Bruce McKibben, Pro Tem

Ron Mitchell
Ron Mitchell, Trustee

Michelle Hoerler
Michelle Hoerler, Trustee

Brad Roch
Brad Roch, Trustee

Brandi Livingston
Brandi Livingston
Clerk, Treas, Water Operator

**WOODCLIFF
Lakes, Inc.**

Lot T - 1018 - Suite A 980 Co Rd W Fremont, NE 68025-7910 (402) 753-0247

March 12, 2012

Barney Whatley
Nebraska Rural Water Association
3390 Ponderosa St.
Wahoo, NE 68066

Dear Barney,

The Woodcliff Lakes Board of Directors would like to thank you for all the time you put into the Woodcliff Water System Assessment. This packet will be very helpful in guiding current and future Woodcliff Boards in determining the needs and improvements of the System and ensuring an efficient way of providing residents with safe and pure drinking water.

Enclosed is a donation to the Nebraska Rural Water Association in appreciation of your services and continued help.

Sincerely,

Chris Johannesen
Chris Johannesen
Office Administrator

Village of Diller

Box 157
Diller, NE 68342

January 11, 2012

Nebraska Rural Water Association
3390 Ponderosa Street
Wahoo NE 68066

Dear Sirs,

At the regular meeting of the Diller Village Board held on January 9, 2012 the Village Board approved the \$100 fee for dues for the Nebraska Rural Water Association. At this time consideration was given to include a donation for the services that your organization provides, and a motion was made to include a donation for \$50.00.

The Village of Diller appreciates the services that you provide whether it be use of equipment or expertise in solving a particular problem. With budget cuts being made every year we certainly recognize the value of your services.

Thanks for your continued support!!

Sincerely,

Leatha Christ
Leatha Christ
Village Clerk

Village of Waterbury

P.O. Box 123

Waterbury, Ne. 68785

NE. RURAL WATER ASSOCIATION

3390 Ponderosa

Wahoo, Ne. 68066

April 13, 2012

The Village of Waterbury would like to thank you for the support and help in checking for leaks in our water system. We are enclosing a donation for you to use for anything you may need. Thanks again.

Sincerely,

Ruth Greenough
Ruth Greenough
Village of Waterbury

Village Clerk



Village of Bruning

Established 1887

February 10, 2012

Nebraska Rural Water Association
3390 Ponderosa Street
Wahoo, NE 68066

To Whom It May Concern:

The Village of Bruning, Board of Trustees & Staff, would like to thank you for your support and excellent resources (often times at the drop of a hat), you are always there for any water/wastewater issue that may arise. Please accept the donation of \$300.00 on our behalf. We truly appreciate your efforts!

Thank You.

Sharon Holtzen
Water/Village Clerk

Tom Houser
Water/Wastewater

& Village Board of Trustees

City of Laurel

101 W. 2nd St.
PO Box 248
Laurel, NE 68745-0248



Office (402) 256-3112
Fax (402) 256-9120

February 20, 2012

Nebraska Rural Water Association
3390 Ponderosa Street
Wahoo, NE 68066

TO: Tom Goulette, President
NeRWA Board of Directors

Dear Mr. Goulette,

The City of Laurel had requested NWRA staff to assist with an emergency leak detection of a 2 1/2" water line on February 10th. The suspect line at the Laurel Concord High School was located under a parking lot and a classroom. The leak had been discovered early Friday morning in the boiler room of the school. The leak was intensifying to the point that a decision was made to close school at noon and shutdown the main water source. City crews and a contractor developed a plan to remove the old line and install a new line. During the process of getting the water line replaced and water service back on, we neglected to contact NWRA to cancel the leak detection. On Monday February 13th two NWRA employees arrived to perform the leak detection. We apologize for any inconvenience and lack of planning in cancelling the leak detect and greatly appreciate the efforts of NWRA.

Sincerely,

Duane Lammers
City Administrator, Laurel

VILLAGE OF SHICKLEY

P.O. Box 25
Phone 402-627-2055 • Fax 402-627-4435
Shickley, NE 68436

February 13, 2012

Nebraska Rural Water Association
3390 Ponderosa Drive
Wahoo, Ne 68066

Dear Mike Lucas,

The Village of Shickley Board of Trustees would like to thank you and the Nebraska Rural Water Association for your assistance with our wastewater treatment facility this month. The use of the camera was a very valuable resource to our water and sewer operators. Enclosed is a donation to your equipment fund. We look forward to working with you again in the future.

Sincerely,

Richard Walter
Chairman of the Board

City of Chappell

P.O. Box 487 - 757 2nd Street
Chappell, Nebraska 69129

(308) 874-2401
Fax (308) 874-2508

January 30, 2012

Nebraska Rural Water Association
390 Ponderosa St.
Wahoo, NE 68066

Dear NeRWA:

The City of Chappell, mayor and council members would like to thank you for your help in reviewing our sewer rates. You are always there to help answer questions whenever we need it. We appreciate your help and expertise!

Please accept the enclosed donation for all the great work you do.

Respectfully,

Joan Hansen
City Administrator/Clerk
City of Chappell

Village of Firth
PO Box 38
Firth, NE 68358

Village of Firth

February 24, 2012

Nebraska Rural Water Association
3390 Ponderosa St.
Wahoo, NE 68066

Dear NeRWA,

The Firth Village Board of Trustees and staff would like to extend a big thank you for all of the assistance you have provided to the Village of Firth over the past years. Your staff, resources, and generosity have helped the Village of Firth to become what it is today.

Please accept the enclosed donation to put towards your equipment fund. Thank you so much for your support!

Sincerely,

David L. Holzman
Chairman

Firth Board of Trustees



ADRIAN SMITH
MEMBER OF CONGRESS
THIRD DISTRICT, NEBRASKA

March 21, 2012

Nebraska Rural Water Association
% Mr. Charles Bausch
3390 Ponderosa Drive
Wahoo, NE 68066-5553

Dear Friends:

I commend the Nebraska Rural Water Association and its members for their continued dedication to water quality. Your ongoing efforts to manage and promote safe water in rural Nebraska contribute to your many successes in 2011.

Despite limited resources, small communities are dedicated to providing safe, sustainable and affordable public drinking water and wastewater services. Rest assured, as co-chairman of the Congressional Rural Caucus, I am committed to advancing water initiatives to ensure the quality of life and economic strength of our rural communities.

While I regret I am unable to join you at today's event, please know I have the greatest appreciation for all of your hard work. I applaud you all on your successes and look forward to hearing about your goals for 2012.

Again, thank you and congratulations!

Sincerely,

Adrian
ADRIAN SMITH
Member of Congress

Association Update – Spring 2012

The NeRWA Annual Conference was held March 19-21 at the Heartland Event Center in Grand Island. We had a total attendance of 529. The new venue provided plenty of room for the vendors and training classes.

As with every conference, Operator of the Year awards were presented. The operators that were honored were Bill Bischoff, Village of Wauneta; Mike Tomlin, City of Cambridge; and Dan Henry, City of Louisville. The awards were presented by the Department of Health field staff for each system's area.

The recipients of the NeRWA scholarships were also announced. The first one was Gregory Christen, Village of Anselmo, and the second one was Jaslyn Livingston, Village of Broadwater. They will each receive a \$500 scholarship. The alternates were Nathan Weatherby, Beaver Lake Association, and Montaya Anderson, City of Stromsburg. In the event one of the winners cannot meet the requirements, one of the alternates will be awarded the scholarship. We were fortunate to receive many applications for the scholarships this year.

Bragging rights for the "Best Drinking Water" in the state were on the line Tuesday at the conference. The Village of Trenton took home the top award for the second year in a row. Trenton is now set to compete in the National Rural Water Association's Great American Water Taste Test in Washington, D.C. This event is part of the Rural Water Rally held each year. Congratulations to Joe Cole and the village for earning the title again and good luck in the national contest.

Thanks to all who supported NeRWA and attended the conference this year. We had the highest number of vendors ever at this conference. Special thanks to all our Diamond, Platinum, Gold, Silver, and Bronze exhibitors. Their generosity really helps with the

conference cost. We hope to see all of you back next year.

With the Spring Conference wrapped up, we now look ahead to the Fall Conference in Gering September 18-20. Watch in our magazine and on our website for more complete details.

As many of you know, Charles Bausch is no longer with NeRWA. We currently do not have a training specialist. The training classes will be handled by the other field staff. Charles also did the GPS work. The Nebraska Rural Water Association is committed to the GPS mapping program, and existing staff will continue to provide this service. There are several systems that are currently in various stages of having their maps completed. These projects will be completed in the order they were committed to. We ask for your patience while we finish these projects.

Funding for several field staff positions at NeRWA is uncertain at this time, and until this situation becomes stabilized the training specialist position will be vacant. The scheduled water classes that are scheduled for the remainder of the year will be conducted by the current NeRWA staff.

We are getting ready to begin the process of updating our "Water and Sewer Rate Comparison Study." Be watching the mail for a letter from us in the near future. If your system fills out the information and returns it to us, you will be eligible for a free copy of the study when it is completed. Non-members will be able to get one at a reduced rate for participating. We hope that even more systems will send in information which will make the next study even more useful.

A new membership directory will be published for distribution in 2013. Watch for mailings requesting

Continued on page 7

the necessary information for the directory. The first mailing will be in July followed by a reminder for those who do not get their information in. If we do not receive your information, it will be taken off the current membership renewal forms. Depending on your renewal date, that information might not be current, so please return your forms by the deadline.

Just a reminder - if you haven't been to the NeRWA website, check it out. It has contact information for the NeRWA office such as address, phone and fax numbers. Cell phone numbers and emails for the field staff are also listed. It is an invaluable site that should be in your "Favorites List". There are various links to other sites, such as DHHS, DEQ, USDA and many more.

Also, our website lists all the training classes for the entire year, including water operator classes, wastewater classes, backflow classes, and the conferences. You can even register for all classes on line. We do not accept credit cards, but payment can be made through PayPal. When you register with

PayPal, your credit card is entered as the method of payment. Payment is that simple. Backflow informational brochures and the survey can also be downloaded for printing.



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Sample Stations

By Russ Topp, Circuit Rider

Access into private homes for coliform sampling seems to be becoming more difficult. It seems a lot of residents work out of town and the days of not locking your house when you're not home are long gone. Recently several operators have asked my opinion about sample stations. The questions range from "Where should I install the stations?" to "Can they be properly disinfected once I have them in?"

If you decide to utilize sample stations I would like to offer a couple of suggestions to consider. First thing you will want to do is find representative sites in your distribution system. A good site would be a site that has easy access to the water main. Under a paved street would be cost prohibitive. Perhaps a water main in the right of way would be more cost effective. Never tap a sampling station to a fire hydrant lead, because you will be sampling a dead end. This is never a good idea. Once you have found good sites you will want to submit a map to the Health Department for approval. There is no use installing a sampling station only to find out you can't use it for routine samples.

Disinfecting a sample station once it's installed shouldn't be a problem. The best way to disinfect any sample tap is to insure all internal surfaces have been in contact with chlorine. An easy way to accomplish this is with the use of a new two gallon garden

sprayer. Adapt the wand end of the sprayer to fit the 1/4 inch tube on the sample station. Fill the sprayer with chlorine bleach and attach the wand end to the 1/4 inch tube. Fill the entire tap with the chlorine until the chlorine comes out of the tap. Finish off the process by using a baggie with chlorine to disinfect the outside of the tap. After three to five minutes of contact or until you are sure there has been sufficient contact time, you will be ready to flush the hydrant. Flush until you are sure you have fresh water from the water main. Shut the stream down to a pencil-sized stream and collect the sample. Be sure to wash all brass fixtures with clear water as chlorine is very aggressive on brass.

The main disadvantage to sampling outdoors is you are subject to the elements. You will have to watch the forecast for a good, calm day or at least have a pop up tent available to break the wind.

The Auburn Board of Public Works has for sale two Better Water Aerators by General Filter Company. One unit is rated for 400 gpm and was new in 1990. The other unit is rated for 535-625 gpm and was new in 1993. Both units are an induced draft air aerator. Both units are fully operational. For additional information contact the Board of Public Works at 402-274-4981 and ask for Dave Hunter or Ken Swanson.



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Towns Helping Towns

By Mike Stanzel, Deputy Circuit Rider

Another conference is now behind us and, as always, it provided very valuable training. One interesting fact that I learned is that an AWWA study was done in 2009 at a conference regarding the age and estimated retirement age of operators in all 8 regions of our state. The results were scary to say the least.

The average age of all operators surveyed was 51.9 years old. 21% were over the age of 60. Only 5% were between the ages of 25 to 34 and only 33% of the operators surveyed were between the ages of 35-49 years.

Now the shocking numbers! 45% of all operators surveyed said they anticipated retirement within 10 years. Take note that this survey was completed 3 years ago, so my math tells me that in 7 years the state is going to be seeing a shortage of water operators.

So the million dollar question is: Who is going to come into this industry and take their place? This is especially true in the smaller towns and villages that maybe can't afford to pay someone fulltime, or provide them with benefits. This is a major factor contributing to why young men and women are not pursuing careers as operators and/or maintenance personnel.

There is something that we are seeing more and more throughout the state, and that is, villages going to their neighboring towns and asking for assistance. One village in particular was faced with this issue in January when they did not take their operator of 30 plus years seriously when he told the board that he was retiring and was not going to renew his license which expired on December 31st. Now they faced a serious problem.

This is when the board chairman took his problem to the neighboring town board meeting and asked if they could work out a deal. Well, the town did have 2

certified water operators and the board unanimously agreed that this was the right thing to do.

This type of agreement is a "Win Win" situation for both towns involved. The town in need is paying only for services rendered and the town providing the services are making money to help offset their own expenses.

So if you are on a town board, do not wait until your operator leaves and then decide what to do. You have to be proactive. And for operators who may be planning to retire, let your board or council know as early as possible. Then keep reminding them, or better yet put your retirement plans in writing and give it to them.

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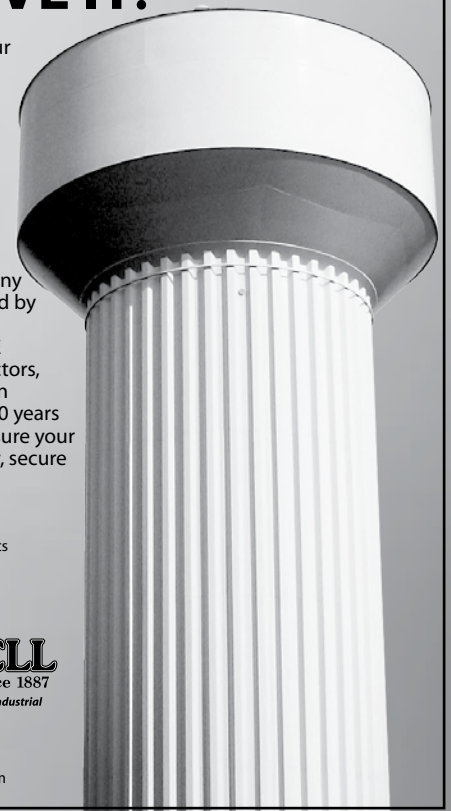
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Utility Management Certification

By Mike Lucas, Wastewater Technician

Today water and wastewater operators are required to be better trained and more knowledgeable than ever before. No one is more aware of that than you as operators. As the industry changes it will only become more demanding.

There is now available online a nationally recognized utility management course through the National Rural Water Association and Water University. The mission of the program is: to provide recognition for experience and educational achievements in the field of utility management. This compliments state certifications for utility managers. As graduates you are entered into a national online Utility Management Certification registry.

This course takes into consideration your past experience and course work. The Utility Management Certification is a significant achievement. Applicants must show high qualifications before taking the test. There is a study guide available that you are not required to purchase but I would highly recommend that you do. It is very helpful. You do not have to be currently employed by a system to take the exam. It is a 3-year certification and is renewable with 40 hours of continuing education during the three years. You will be informed immediately following the exam whether you passed. Upon successfully passing the exam you will receive notification from Water University and a

really nice plaque.

The certification is recognized nationally and within each state. You will be recognized for your knowledge in areas including financial accounting, rate setting, asset management, management of resources/operations and public relations. There are fees involved for the course.

For more information contact me at 402-443-6157, or go to the Nebraska Rural Water Association website at www.nerwa.org. Click on the National Rural Water link, and you will find the Water University on-line class information.

Water Treatment is our Business



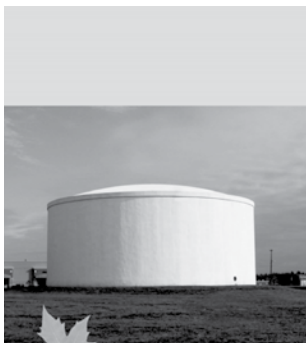


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Water University



UTILITY MANAGEMENT CERTIFICATION

Today, the water and wastewater industry is more complex than ever before. Economics, increased complexity in regulatory requirements and a changing society are crafting the water and wastewater systems of tomorrow.

As our industry changes, there is a strong need to recognize the individuals who provide management leadership to the industry and create a standard for the future manager to strive for, thus meeting the demands of the future.

The "Utility Management Certification" program is designed to recognize the professional educational achievements of individuals and to market their achievements and skills to increase the value of today's utility manager.

SUCCEED IN YOUR CAREER

Whether you are currently a manager or in an entry level position, the "UMC" designation will enhance your career opportunities and document your field of study as the demand for qualified management personnel increase.



Mission: To provide recognition and certification for experience and educational achievements in the field of water and wastewater management.

For information on application, exams, and costs, go to:
www.wateruniversity.org



VALUE AND RECOGNITION

The Water University and the UMC program are supported by the National Rural Water Association and your state rural water association. This unique foundation provides national and state recognition of those achieving this valuable certification.

This designation will be valued by boards and councils in the hiring process as systems become more complex and available qualified candidates become more scarce due to retirements and the changing workforce.

SECURE YOUR FUTURE

Operator certification alone is not enough for tomorrow's manager. The future will demand different skill sets that far exceed operations.

The UMC designation will document fields of study in public relations, financial planning, ethics, human resources and others skills not covered in today's operator certification programs.

We invite you to achieve the recognition of **Utility Management Certification** for your future and the future of your water and wastewater industry.



UMC Graduates are entered into the National UMC Registry.

UMC Certification opens doors and connections.

UMC eligibility takes into consideration past experience and course work.

UMC certification is designed to elevate professional standards.

UMC certification is a career investment to raise the bar of management excellence.

UMC certification documents advanced knowledge and skills.

2012 NeRW3



A Conference



2012 NeRWA Conference (continued)





The Value of Water and The Water Operator

By Doug Buresh, Circuit Rider #3

It's great to be back as a circuit rider for Nebraska Rural Water. Although only a temporary position, I look forward to working with many of you in the coming months. I had the privilege of meeting several of you while I served as an ARRA circuit rider in 2009 and 2010, and while teaching the chemical feed pump classes last year. I will mainly be working with our valve exerciser this year. I will also be available to assist with your ARRA reporting, vulnerability assessments and emergency response plans.

The name of this article is "The Value of Water and the Water Operator." What would your community do if it lost its water system? Everyone knows how essential water is. In fact, we can't survive without it. Everyone desires a dependable supply of safe, clean drinking water and they want it cheap. But the problem is it's not cheap to produce a dependable supply of safe, clean drinking water. We are required to meet high water quality standards. We all sample our water on a routine basis, and many systems need to disinfect and/or treat their water to ensure it is safe to drink. Much of our infrastructure has reached the end of its useful life and needs to be replaced. This also needs to be included in the cost to produce your water. I recently read an article that stated the average infrastructure replacement cost for large water systems is estimated to be \$100 per household per year. What really caught my attention is that for smaller water systems, these same costs are \$400 to \$800 or more per year, for each connection, just to replace the aging infrastructure.

Let's not forget the people needed to operate these systems. What would your community do without your water operator? Water and wastewater operators are professionals. We are required to hold professional licenses to practice our professions. In many small systems, operators do not receive the compensation, or the respect, that they deserve in

relation to the scope of the responsibilities they carry out every day. An article which recently appeared in Reader's Digest named "10 Jobs Americans Can't Live Without," ranked water/wastewater treatment plant and system operators second behind registered nurses. Operators; this is a two-way street. We need to project a professional image if we want to be treated as professionals.

As asked earlier, what would your community do if it lost its water system? What would it do if it lost its operator? What is the real value of water and the water operator to your community? To get started finding out, contact the Nebraska Rural Water Association for assistance with an in-depth rate study.

The following is a related blog written by Steve Wilson, Project Manager for SmallWaterSupply.org. For those who haven't heard about it, I encourage you to check them out at www.smallwatersupply.org. This website was developed in 2009 by the Illinois State Water Survey at the University of Illinois. They provide water and wastewater operators with a free online resource tool. The plan is to link every free document, computer program and webpage on the internet that might be useful to operators. It offers a wealth of free resources without advertising or subscription fees.

WORKFORCE AND THE REALLY SMALL SYSTEM

I was at a meeting last week with an operator who has 35+ years of experience. He was talking about the trouble some of the really small communities in Illinois were having finding someone to take over as their water operator. We all know there are workforce issues, the average operator is in his 50's, there aren't

continued on Page 16

a lot of young people getting into the profession, guys leave for better jobs, etc. But from his perspective, what he said was something I hadn't really thought about.

IT'S A DIFFERENT WORLD

I'm not quoting word for word, but he basically said that 40 years ago, a man was glad to have a job at all, and proud to have a job where he worked hard, helped the public good, earned an honest wage, all of those things. But today, a kid can get a job at a fast food restaurant, make as much or more money as a small town pays their operator, and get benefits on top of that. It's so true. I know of communities that pay a contract operator a few hundred dollars a month to be the operator in charge, and pay an assistant another couple hundred dollars a month to be there every day, flipping switches and taking chlorine residuals. No benefits and pay isn't close to providing a livable income.

IT ALWAYS COMES BACK TO THIS

Rural America has it ingrained in their heads that water is a right. They don't want to pay for it. They don't really care about the process of getting it. They just expect it. That's the problem. The public, in general, but especially in small towns, has little understanding of how things have changed with water supplies in the past 40 years, before there was an EPA or a Safe Drinking Water Act. Rural America generally wants the government to just leave them alone. I know. I grew up there, too. Pipes have been in the ground since before they were born, so they have no idea of the manpower and costs associated with putting water or wastewater infrastructure in place. They only care that their water rates don't go up. Some people say they can't afford their water rates, but they can afford cell phones with data plans and cable television with premium channels. The problem is really one of public understanding of the value of their water. They have always had it. Nothing has changed for them, so why should it cost more.


THE PUBLIC NEEDS A DOSE OF REALITY

I have jokingly said to several colleagues around the country that what we really need to do is have

a national turn off the pump day. Every water plant in the country should shut down for a day. Let's see what people think of their water then. Of course, I don't really think this would be a good idea, but the point is how do we get the general public, especially in communities where the operator and the value of water are totally undervalued, to realize how much safe water means to them? That's where we need to focus our efforts. Instead of being frustrated when someone complains about their \$20 water bill, give them the example of Walkerton where 7 people died and hundreds got sick because the operator chose not to follow the rules. Here in Illinois, a community chose to lie to the state about using an emergency well, which they were using illegally because they were trying to save money, only to find out later that the well was contaminated with a carcinogen. The operator and mayor are in jail; the potential liability for the community is staggering.

THE SOLUTION IS NOT SO SIMPLE

Water and wastewater services are undervalued in many small communities. That has to change. That's not news. We all know that's the case. The hard part is how to go about it. Rural communities are close knit and they resist change. They are also fiercely independent, which many times eliminates the one good solution some small communities have, consolidating resources with their neighbors. The bottom line is that times have already changed, and small communities can either change with the times, or find themselves without a viable water system or operator. Our job is to get through to them and help them realize how valuable their water and wastewater services are.

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Conference Evaluations in a Nutshell

Very few evaluations were turned in compared to the number of people attending this year's conference in Grand Island. Can we assume that the majority of the attendees were basically satisfied with the conference since only 39 turned in evaluations?

There were lots of positive responses directly related to our new location. The meeting rooms were quieter and bigger with nicer chairs. The facility provided more space and parking. There were more vendors and nicer motels. The ability to have outdoor hands-on sessions was enjoyed.

The training sessions were well received. Attendees liked the variety of topics, the topic choices

themselves, the length of the sessions and the speakers with some that even stood out as being very good and even entertaining.

The concerns will be looked at before next year's conference. Some we have no control over but others can be addressed. People commented on the temperature being cold, having to stand in line for meals, the motels being separate from the facility, not being able to hear the speaker in the large banquet area and the bathrooms needing attention. Meals were mentioned with about half liking them and the other half not as well.

Of the 33 people who commented on comparing this conference to those in the past the responses ranged from OK to 100% improvement. That is a pretty positive reaction to the move to Grand Island. I like the one comment that probably sums up people's general feeling about the change. It is not bad – just different!



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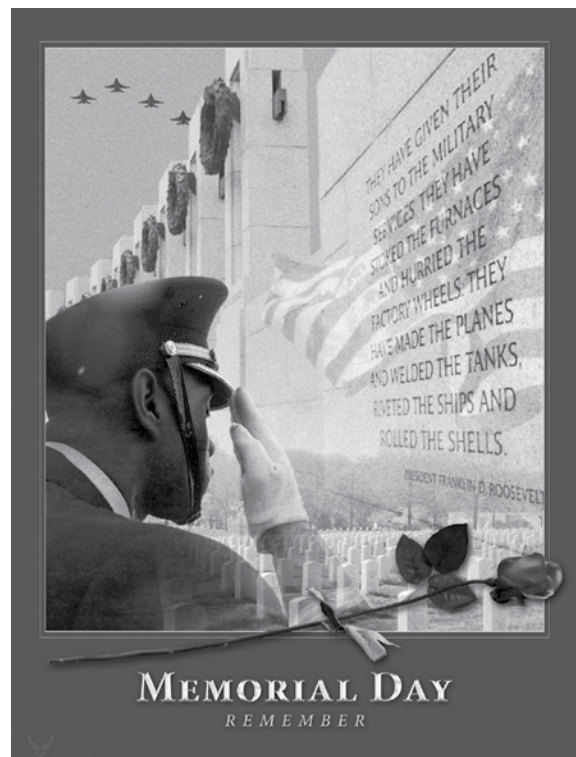
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2012 Annual Conference Report

By Barney Whatley, Capacity Development Specialist

The 2012 Annual Conference is now in the books, and it looks as though it was very successful. There were 64 exhibitors present at the conference even though one exhibitor was forced to cancel due to an unexpected scheduling conflict. This was a record number of exhibitors, and NeRWA is expecting that number to grow in future years. In talking to the exhibitors, it seemed as though they all were pleased with the larger booth areas and the overall setup of the exhibit hall. There were some suggestions for improvements, and these will all be seriously considered when setting up the conference in 2013.

There were 529 registered attendees at the conference, including operators, exhibitors and speakers. In addition to these, there were also a few spouses and children. 332 of these attendees applied for continuing education hours for at least one session. There were 40 separate sessions in as many as five concurrent tracks during the conference, which allowed a variety of subjects for participants to choose from. There were sessions targeted at water operators, wastewater operators, backflow license holders and even onsite wastewater license holders. Well driller hours for well drillers were applied for, but we had not received any word on what was approved prior to the conference.

The evaluations that were turned in at the conference have been summarized and included in this magazine. NeRWA staff will review all of these responses and recommendations as we begin the lengthy process of preparing for next year's conference. Because this was our first year at the new location, there were a few things that were just plain forgotten, and notes have been taken to insure they are not forgotten again next year. We are always open to suggestions from water operators, board members and other attendees on ways we can improve the conference, from session topics to meal choices to entertainment, etc. You can email or send any suggestions to the office, and they will be considered as we plan the 2013 annual

conference.

One concern that was voiced at the conference was the lack of coffee, tea, cookies and rolls, etc. in the mornings and during all of the breaks. It is important to keep in mind that all food and beverages have to be provided by or through the Events Center at higher cost. NeRWA did not have snacks at all of the breaks in order to try to keep costs down.

Another concern of many operators and system managers has been the increase in the registration cost for the conference. The membership voted to move the conference to Grand Island in part due to the crowding that was experienced in Columbus and in part to be located closer to the center of the state. One of the drawbacks of the move is the expense. In Columbus, the New World Inn provided meeting rooms, the exhibit hall and the dining area at no additional cost. All of these things have to be paid for at the Events Center. In addition to this, all the meals have to be catered at the Events Center, which means that it is prepared off site and then transported to the Events Center where it is served.

Overall, the 2012 Annual Conference was a resounding success, and we look forward to improving it in future years. We hope to see all of you again next year, and we hope to have even more exhibitors and a large variety of session topics for attendees.

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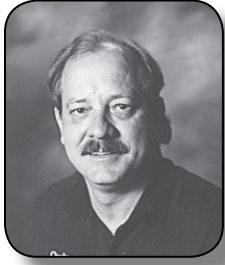
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An Effective Rate Increase Option

By Randy Hellbusch, Circuit Rider

Often times when I conduct rate studies and provide the results to the decision makers I hear: We can't raise our rates. The people in this town just can't afford that. Believe me; I understand the situation many people face financially. Rate increases aren't popular and can be hard on families and individuals with fixed or limited income. The question is: Can the people in town afford to be without it? Maybe a better question is: Can the town survive without a clean, safe, dependable water system. I have heard the comment: "Nobody will move to town if our rates increase." I would argue that no one is definitely going to move to a town that does not have a clean, safe, dependable water supply. The hard truth is that it takes a certain amount of revenue to keep

water systems functioning and viable. Repair and maintenance costs are constantly increasing as well as the price of electricity to pump and deliver water. Testing costs are also constantly increasing. It is important to keep up with these rising costs.

One tool that works well to keep water systems viable is to have a minimal annual increase. Many times as little as \$1.00 or so per month can help a system keep up with the rising costs of operation. A multi-year rate ordinance can be enacted and the rates increase annually without the board or council having to revisit the issue. This not only helps the water system bring in the required revenue, but also assists the consumers with being able to budget for their utility bills without getting sticker shock from a huge increase every few years. Nobody enjoys rate increases, but smaller increases more frequently are much easier for the consumer to accept and budget for. If taking a look at rates is something you think your water system needs to do and you would like some assistance give us at NeRWA a call. We are here to assist you.

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Thoughts for the Day

1. Always remember you're unique. Just like everyone else.
2. Never test the depth of the water with both feet.
3. If you think nobody cares whether you're alive or dead, try missing a couple of payments.
4. Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day. Teach him how to fish, and he will sit in a boat and drink beer all day.
5. If you tell the truth, you don't have to remember anything.
6. Some days you are the dog, some days you are the tree.
7. Good judgment comes from bad experience...and most of that comes from bad judgment.
8. There are 2 excellent theories for arguing with women. Neither one works.
9. Generally speaking, you aren't learning much when your lips are moving.
10. Experience is something you don't get until just after you need it.

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February 15	Albion/NDEQ
March 14	Omaha/NDEQ
April 18	Falls City/NDEQ
April 24	McCook/NDEQ
May 15	Arnold/NDEQ
May 16	Bridgeport/ NDEQ
June 20	Hickman/NDEQ
July 17	Ainsworth/NDEQ
July 18	Laurel/NDEQ

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<u>Wastewater Certification Course</u>	
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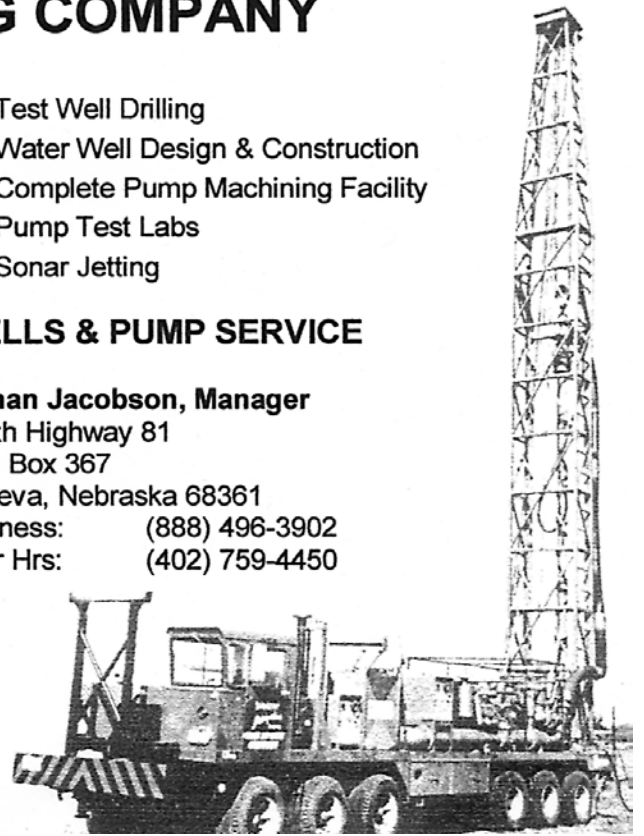
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