



Getting the Word Out

By: Frank Dunmire, Executive Director

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Conservation was the word of the day at this year's Farm Progress Show (FPS) held in Decatur, Illinois September 1 – 3. IRWA exhibits in the Partners in Conservation (PIC) area when the FPS show is held in Decatur during odd numbered years. This year IRWA joined about 20 other entities in the PIC area in showcasing what each does in conserving or protecting the precious resources of not only Illinois, but the world. Some of the more notable groups in the PIC area included: USDA, IEPA, NRCS, Conservation Police, Illinois Department of Agriculture, Soil and Water Conservation and Rural Development. Each of the exhibitors created exhibits that not only captured your attention but informed the visitors as well.

As I write this article there is still one more day left of the FPS and it is estimated that there will be approximately 150,000 – 200,000 visitors to the show from more than 55 countries throughout the world. It was also reported that, with the expanded exhibit area this year, the

FPS has become the largest trade show in the country with over 2.7 MILLION square feet of exhibits.

"Conservation Around the World- How are You Making a Difference?" was the theme of this year's PIC exhibit area, and it seemed to be well received by the constant flow of traffic that passed through the grounds and tent.

This year a unique opportunity was offered to the guests as two panel discussions were held on each of the three days of the show at 10:00 AM and 1:00 PM. Topics for the discussions ranged from conservation systems to wildlife, new and beginning farmers, women in agriculture and cover crops. At the conclusion of each panel discussion, a drawing was held for a Tablet.

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New this year, the IRWA sponsored a local talk radio show (Busboom and Wolfe) to broadcast from the PIC area during their morning show. Each of the participating exhibitors was invited to be interviewed on-air during the three-day event. In addition to the participating exhibitors, we also tried to "drag" any passing State Senators and Representatives to sit them in the "hot seat" to be interviewed as well. Those interviewed during the morning show included Senator Andy Manar and Senator Chapin Rose. In addition to the Senators we were also pleased to have Colleen Callahan, Illinois Director of USDA Rural Development on hand to do an on-air interview as well.



Colleen Callahan being interviewed from the IRWA area at the 2015 Farm Progress Show

IRWA'S MISSION STATEMENT

"Protecting and preserving the water and wastewater resources of Rural Illinois through education, representation and on-site technical assistance"

By: John Bell, Wastewater Technician

 Many years ago, I taught water and waste water classes at Lake Land College in Mattoon, IL.

The normal class period was 10-12 weeks long, meeting one night per week from 6 pm to 10 pm. The basic class structure was to present information that would be encountered on the state certification exam ie: lab, math and operational information. Normal class size ranged from 12 to 15 operators. One year the class size enrollment jumped to over 20. I guess the word had finally gotten out about how great an instructor was teaching at Lake Land. Nope, that wasn't what happened.

That particular year I was offering the basic waste water course starting in the fall. I normally sent out mailing information to the local communities that a class was to be offered. Usually a week prior to the start of the program, operators would register for the class and I would get a list of who would be attending. I knew most of the operators in the area, but this class roster had a few names from towns that were unfamiliar to me. I never gave it much attention at the time. Even back then turnover in operators was a fact of life and new faces and names were not uncommon.

The class started as scheduled. All the operators were in their places with bright sunny faces and eager to learn how to "kick-butt" on the IEPA exam at the end of the term. Some of the faces looked very young. Also, they looked too "perky" for someone who had worked all day, gone home for a quick meal, and changed a mindset from work to school work, if you know what I mean? I was to learn this observation was spot-on.

Class started with a math review and homework hand outs for math the following week. Then I jumped into a little history of EPA, the law and what it meant regarding operators. Then a quick break, on to treatment plant operations, a shorter break, and on to basic waste water lab tests (lab ware set up and all). Then I scooted into a quick quiz. I mentioned that the home work and the weekly quiz would be graded. The final grade for the class would be based on these scores and a final exam consisting of one hundred questions. See you next week, same time, same place and this routine would be repeated each and every week, until the end of the semester. Their heads were spinning with all this information. Time for these guys and gals to go home, rest up, and hit the work cycle for the next week.

I had noticed the "perky" ones sitting in a group and this information "set the hens to clucking!" Class dismissed and most everyone headed out the door. The "perky" group met outside the door and I heard quite a discussion going

on while I was gathering up my gear to go home. The group had selected a spokesman and he was sent in to talk to me. Very politely, I was informed that the "perky" group was dropping the class. That was fine with me, but I was somewhat curious about the group. So I asked, "Why did you enroll in this class in the first place?" Unknown to me, the information about the class had been listed in the general student population agenda of classes. They thought this would be an easy class to take and get four credit hours toward graduation. They had quickly decided that was not going to be the case and wanted dropped from the class ASAP.

The following week the class met and the population was thinner, if you know what I mean. One of the operators wanted to know why the "perky" group was not in attendance. I guess they had noticed this group and during break time had talked with them. I informed the class about what had happened the previous week. One of "perky group" met with me to inform me that the group wanted to drop the class. Then an unusual question, "Just about what time did this discussion take place?" As I remembered, about five minutes after class. I asked, "Why do you want to know the exact time?" Seems that the operators attending the class had made a bet on how long it would take the "perky" group to drop the class.

I relay this story to my fellow operators, as the saying goes "preaching to the choir". It is meant to inform others who may read this article about the work and time that must be invested to meet the profession's requirements. We know it is not a walk in the park as some would think. Operators who participated in the classes at Lake Land College will certainly testify to that fact.

One last point - a lot of the operators I am speaking about are retired or about to retire. To them I say, good job on protecting the environment all these years. To those just getting into the profession may you greet each morning eager to go to work. What a life, loving what you do and it meaning so much to your fellow man!





11th Annual Northern Conference

October 27 & 28, 2015

Held at :

Giovanni's Restaurant and
Convention Center
610 N. Bell School Road
Rockford, IL

Host Hotel:

Holiday Inn
(across the street from Giovanni's)
7550 East State St.
800-383-7829
\$89.95 + tax



Topics Include:

- GIS/GPS
- Update on Phosphate Technologies
- Power Loss Emergency
- Water Line Leaks & Recouping Revenue
- Automatic Hydraulic Leak Detection
- RFID Tags for Marking Infrastructure Assets
- IEPA Updates
- Identity Theft
- Bad Sampling Leads to Bad Results
- Stage 2
- Lagoon Ammonia Removal
- Lab Certification
- Filamentous Bacteria ID & Troubleshooting
- Manually Checking Lift Station Capacity

go to www.ilrwa.org for registration information

IRWA's 12th Annual Golf Outing took place at Piper Glen Golf Course in Springfield, Illinois on Friday, August 21, 2015. It was another great year with 116 golfers. Thanks to everyone who participated and to the following golf outing sponsors:

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Staff Members

Executive Director Frank Dunmire (dunmire@ilrwa.org)
Deputy Director Don Craig (craig@ilrwa.org)
Membership Services Assistant Heather McLeod (ilrwahm@ilrwa.org)
Administrative/Program Assistant Denise Burke (ilrwadb@ilrwa.org)
Circuit Rider #1 Gale Moore (moore@ilrwa.org)
Circuit Rider #2 Roger Noe (noe@ilrwa.org)
Circuit Rider #3 Chuck Woodworth (ilrwacw@ilrwa.org)
Wastewater Technician #1 Evan Jones (jones@ilrwa.org)
Wastewater Technician #2 John Bell (ilrwajb@ilrwa.org)
USDA Source Water Protection Specialist Mark Mitchell (mitchell@ilrwa.org)
Training & Marketing Phil Donelson (donelson@ilrwa.org)

Website: www.ilrwa.org

GPS/GIS MAPPING SERVICES

Through the implementation of GPS & GIS technology, IRWA can effectively produce hard copy and digital maps. With this new service available from IRWA, utilities can attain new and accurate maps to better manage their infrastructure assets.

The printed maps can be large-scale wall maps up to 36"x48" showing major water and wastewater features with the desired layers (aerial photos, streets, topography, etc.). The printed maps can also be generated into a map book format. The map book is a bound 11"x17" book of high-detail maps printed at the best available scale.

The digital map file on a CD, can be viewed and printed with free software that IRWA will provide. The software allows you to click on a waterline with a leak and highlight which valves need to be closed to isolate the line. There are also tracing features to show the direction of water flow, and other useful features.

Payment for services is determined by a charge per each system feature located. The amount charged for a Map Book will be \$50 plus \$5 per page; and a wall map is billed at \$100 per map. More information is also posted on our website at www.ilrwa.org or you may call our office at 217-287-2115.

