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Volume VI – Fall 2010



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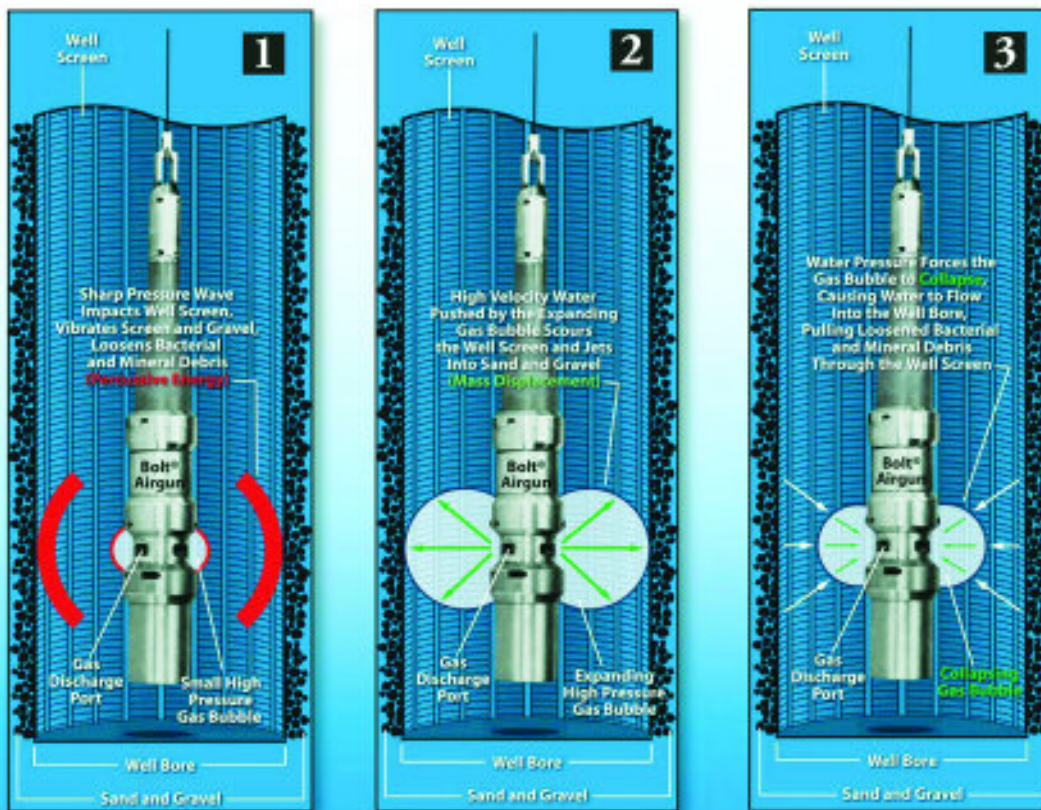
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MISSION STATEMENT

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

ON THE COVER

Pictured (R-L) Steve Fletcher, manager of Washington County Water Company; Congressman Shimkus; Greg Bates, manager of Jersey County Rural Water; and Bill Teichmiller, CEO of EJ Water Cooperative presenting the NRWA "Friend of Rural Water" award to Congressman Shimkus.

Water Ways is the official publication of the Illinois Rural Water Association, P.O. Box 49, Taylorville, Illinois 62568, and is published quarterly for distribution to members as well as other industry associations and friends. Our website is www.ilrwa.org. Articles and photographs are encouraged. Advertising and submissions should be mailed to the above address or e-mail us at ilrwadb@ilrwa.org.

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GPS/GIS Program is a "GO"

by Don Craig, Deputy Director

As you may remember, in one of our recent Technical Assistance Bulletin newsletters, I wrote an article in reference to the Illinois Rural Water Association looking into the possibility and feasibility of initiating a GPS / GIS mapping program. I appreciate the response and the very positive comments from systems across the state, in regard to the need and want for such an endeavor.

Executive Director, Frank Dunmire and myself, have been working on a Business Plan for over a year, in regard to such a program to present to the full IRWA Board of Directors. Also, we have met with personnel from other state rural water associations, which have already implemented such programs, to get their needed input and expertise. And too, we

met with representatives of MapSync which is headquartered in Lexington, KY. MapSync is an integrated mapping and information solutions company, working as a business partner with ESRI (makers of ArcView GIS mapping programs), and a dealer for Trimble, which designs and produces GPS locating equipment. After meeting and communicating with them, to get a good, but affordable proposal for equipment, programs, and service... we were able to take that on to the Board meeting in August. At that meeting, we made a presentation of the completed Business Plan, for a GPS/GIS mapping program. And, the IRWA Board members in attendance, voted unanimously to go ahead with the project.



We have recently received our new Trimble Geo-XH handheld GPS locating unit; as well as, software for GPS data retrieval, manipulation, and storage. And also, we have gotten the ESRI ArcView software, with additional mapping software to utilize as well. We also have a new top of the line laptop to utilize in the

continued on page 9

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Illinois State Water Survey Interns Ride Along

by Chuck Woodworth, Circuit Rider #3

During this past summer the three Water Circuit Riders for the Association had the privilege of taking a few College students on the road in order to introduce them to some of the best people in the world, Illinois Water Operators. Wayne Nelson, IRWA's Training Specialist invited them come to a couple of his training sessions as well. The intention was to also show them first hand at what a Circuit Rider and IRWA can offer to an operator on a daily basis, how we assist operators, and what our average day is. The students work very hard at maintaining a web site that has information about training sessions not only here in Illinois but in every state. So if you go on vacation with the wife and kids and find that you are missing work related discussions, just go to www.smallwatersupply.org

click on the state that you are in, pull up the dates, pick what training session you would like to attend, it's that easy. The information they provide is from sources such as IEPA, USEPA, ISAWWA, IDPH and of course some of the best training from IRWA. They also provide topic information from many other groups that provide training.

Here is some information about Small Water Supply website.

Company Overview:

Housed at the Illinois State Water Survey on the campus of the University of Illinois, this website provides water and wastewater operators with access to thousands for free resources on the web. Events and documents from nearly 800

organizations around the country can be found through the site, eliminating the hours of searching the web for specific information and can be difficult to find and cause a lot of frustration.

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The following is an overview of my 4 days on the road with interns.

Day 1, I picked up one of the students at the ISWS office, drove to a small community north of Champaign in Ford County and located a service line shut off valve. We then drove to a community in Livingston County to do a recheck on a leak that had been fixed to make sure no other leaks were in the same area. Then we traveled to a McLean County Community to locate a leak that the operator had found a wet spot. Just as we got there it started to rain pretty hard and you can't locate a small leak in the rain because of the noise that rain drops make when they hit the road or ground. We left there and went to Morgan County where we stayed overnight so that we could start the next day early.

continued on page 8



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Illinois State Water Survey Interns Ride Along

continued from page 6

Day 2, up the road a bit to Cass County to locate a possible leak on a new section of PVC pipe. Found no leaks but did find a tile running with a good flow of water which had no traces of CL2 in the water. Left there and stopped at new treatment plant being built. Drove into Sangamon County and stopped at a system installing new water mains, valves and a hydrant. The student could see how things looked underground and how it is installed. Our next stop was on the East side of Sangamon County at a water treatment plant that was built by the Government for an ammunition plant. Next stop was in Macon County to locate 2 serv-

ice lines. Then back to Champaign to the ISWS office.

Day 3, picked up a different student at the ISWS office and went to McLean County to locate the leak that we had been rained out on. Found a service tap leaking under the sidewalk. Left there and went to a new water system installing new water mains. The student was impressed at how quickly the new main was being installed. We stopped for a couple of quick plant tours on the way back to the ISWS office.

Day 4, picked up a student at ISWS office and continued north to LaSalle County for a possible water leak, the operator had found

an area where water was discharging from the ground. I could not find any leak sounds on the nearest water main and the running water had no traces of CL2 or Fluoride in it. Left there to travel to Kankakee County to pick up some loaned out equipment. Then we headed back to the ISWS office.

That was just 4 days in one month, which is about the normal. For those operators who remember us stopping by, thanks for the plant tours and sharing your knowledge of your system with the interns. They really enjoyed learning about your job and the operations of different types of treatment plants. Be sure to check out this site www.smallwater-supply.org if you need CEU's.



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field, especially for GPS data to be manipulated using Pathfinder Office software. And, we have readied a specific desktop computer with additional memory, to utilize strictly for GIS mapping purposes. Finally, another new piece of equipment will be the purchase of a large scale printer/plotter to produce hardcopy maps for systems that utilize the service.

It should be understood, that we are implementing this program in a relatively 'slow' pace, to try to get fully up and running to a point of making it a viable and resourceful tool for the rural water and wastewater systems in Illinois....and, basically, "to do it right".

This will be a fee based service, but one IRWA believes will be affordable and very useful for the systems looking to have GPS/GIS mapping completed for their community, district, etc. Those fees will become available in the near future, to everyone, through our program marketing. We are presently looking at starting the program on November 1st, and are going to start promoting it through our conferences, magazine, newsletter, field personnel, and other avenues that will help get the word out about the new GPS/GIS mapping service provided through IRWA.

Taking GPS location readings of primary features such as water system gate valves, hydrants, wells, pump stations, treatment facilities, lines, etc., and wastewater system manholes, lift stations, lines, and treatment facilities will be the initial 'core' of the GPS service, and then using software for differential correction, documenting, and mapping those features will be covered under the GIS part of the service. As time goes on, we fully expect to continue to expand the service

to include shut-off valves, meters, and other pertinent feature locations. That's the 'beauty' of this program, the equipment, and the software...we can always 'do more' for the system, as warranted.

Initially, to recoup initial costs and keep travel expense to a minimum, we are likely to target systems in the central part of the state, relatively close to our office. But, as the program grows, we of course will be serving requests for the service to rural water and wastewater systems throughout the state. Also, as a way to save expenses until the program gets fully in gear, I will be doing the initial duties of field locating and mapping. But, our hope and our intent, is to develop this program to a sustainable level, that will empower us to put on at least one full-time dedicated GPS/GIS Technician, and possibly another as the program continues to grow.

Needless to say, I have a lot to learn about conducting GPS locating and implementing GIS mapping. So, it's important for all our members and systems to understand, that this is a program in development, and will take some time to get running at 100 percent. This is not to say, that we have not

already received some training in the use of GPS equipment and software, because Frank and I did a few weeks ago at MaySync's training center in Lexington. We are planning to go back, the first week of November for additional training in GIS software and production of digital and hardcopy maps. That will be followed later by even more training. But, as all of you well know...experience is the best teacher. So, the more acclimated we get in using the equipment and software, the better the program will be.

We appreciate your patience in this endeavor, and look forward to continuing to provide new services to our members, and improving on those we already do.



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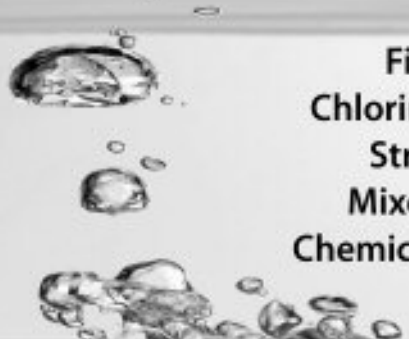
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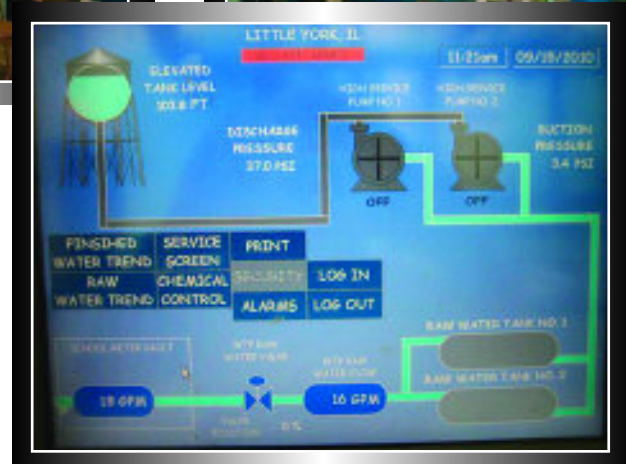
by Gale Moore, Circuit Rider

The water supply located in the Village of Little York, Warren County could not meet the Maximum Containment Level for Radium. The Village utilized one deep well with chlorination that was causing the MCL. After reviewing all of the options that were available to the Village, it was decided to abandon the well and purchase water from The City of Galesburg. The City of Galesburg supplies the Village with untreated water from its transmission line. Since Galesburg's supply requires treatment, a filtration

plant was constructed. First, Little York ran approximately eight miles of its own transmission line to tap into Galesburg's line. This then is pumped into two thirty thousand gallon ground storage tanks. From there two booster pumps send it to a pretreatment tank and then on to the filters. After the filters, chemical treatment of chlorine and fluoride is applied and sent to the water tower and distribution. Also included in the project was total water main replacement with PVC and water meter replacement. This new



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Pictures from around the State



7th Annual IRWA Golf Outing August 27, 2010 - Piper Glen Golf Club



The 7th Annual IRWA Golf Outing was held at Piper Glen Golf Club in Springfield, Illinois on August 27, 2010. There were 100 Golfers and 25 sponsors this year. Thanks to all who made the outing a success—see you next year!!

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Public Relations: Getting Along With Mildred

*by Shannon Rasmussen,
Rural Water Association of Utah*

Originally printed in the 4th Quarter 2009 issue of the National Rural Water Association "Rural Water" magazine. Reprinted with permission.

I don't like talking about that summer much. Most of it is locked away in the vault of "things we will never speak of again." But at the time I thought it was a small price to pay to earn money for my education. (Little did I realize it would later serve as an education in and of itself.)

And no, I am not talking about the month after my freshman year of college where the girl with the headset in the drive-thru window of the local McDonalds looked dangerously like me. Ridiculously, eerily like me. Ahh, that navy blue polyester polo tucked just so into black elastic. Top it off with a crown of golden arches, tastefully displayed visor-style and highlighted perfectly by a glorious rack of 6-inch bangs. I was a 1997 McVision of loveliness.

But that stint, however educational, was not to be topped by the one spent as an orderly at the old folk's home. Fastforward one year from the summer of cheeseburgers and now instead of donning elasticized pants I am changing them. On others.

Of the many things I learned during my tenure at the rest home (not counting the glaring realization that I was not cut out for the medical field—something not entirely surprising given my already healthy aversions to the surgery channel, the use of tongs for anything but salad and all things back-less gown) I learned more than I ever wanted to know about human nature. And, as I would discover later, I learned as much or more realities about real-life public relations during that time than my PR degree ever supplied.

Why? Because ultimately, public relations is about people. And when you're dealing with people, be it at a drivethru window, serving a 4 pm dinner to seniors or sitting in a city council meeting, basic human behavior tends to be the same. Don't believe me? Raise your hand if your Dad likes M*A*S*H.

Still not sold? I will illustrate further. The following folks are people I came to know and love in my time at Shady Acres...and I am willing to bet that the PR challenges I faced with them represent on a small scale some of the same challenges you face every day either with your customers, your mayor or the local media. In many ways I am probably describing your back yard...

Let's start with "Aunt" Mildred. A formidable presence on the D wing, and one whose path few dared to cross—especially when she was wielding her Hover-Round. Aunt Mildred ran that joint and if you were ok with her, things were good. If you weren't, you were looking for your teeth in someone else's jar.

Aunt Mildred would park in the hallway each morning and watch the day unfold, carefully scanning the operation for errors of any kind. She knew who was supposed to be where, and what was supposed to be happening at all times—according to her anyway. If the bingo cards were warped or the pudding skin was too thick you heard about it. And so did everyone else. The other aides warned me about Mildred and told me it was best to ignore her snide remarks and steer clear as much as possible so as not to provoke the beast.

I tried to heed their advice but "steering clear" proved difficult when the person you were trying to ignore was sitting 6 inches above the wheels that had

been ramming into the back of your legs all day.

My only respite was dinner time. Aunt Mildred liked dinner time (given it was to her satisfaction.) Come 4:30 Mildred was a full and happy camper and my radius in which to operate extended to three feet.

But by day 5 I knew my head-in-the-sand method was not cutting it. Mostly because half of the hall was in a panic over Aunt Mildred's theories on why dinner was served late that night (of course it was an elaborate attempt to lighten our work load. If we gradually added six minutes between each meal in 11 years we would be down to two-a- days. It was a genius plot.)

At this point I realized the inevitable—if I wanted Aunt Mildred to have correct information I had to give it to her. From then on when Aunt Mildred complained I actually listened, and found out what I could about the matter. If the problem was unavoidable (or imaginary), I apologized and tried to enlighten her on the real reasons behind the madness.

If her dinner was going to be at 4:36 instead of 4:30 I found out why if possible and let her know. By the end of my tenure her complaints had turned into invitations—a daily invite to join her at the coffee shop (aka rec. room). Not only had I made a friend out of this once formidable enemy, but the rest of the D Wingers were considerably happier as their informant was now, for the most part, correctly informed. It was time well spent.

Then there was Alice. Alice was my favorite. Alice thought I was her waitress and would yell across the dining room for more sugar in her coffee upwards of

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78 times a day. The first day I gave Alice sugar every time she asked for it. Not a good move. Halfway through breakfast her coffee looked like a gelatinous blob of sugar-ooze at the bottom of a bowl of heart-healthy cheerios.

The next day I tried to cut Alice off after sugar drop number five. Again not a good move. She got upset at being refused service, I lost my tip and she demanded a new waiter. There wasn't one due on shift for another 12 hours so I had to figure something out. For a while I tried simply ignoring the sounds of "Waitress! Waitress!" coming from the north corner of the dining room. It didn't work. They just got louder (and slightly more hysterical.) It was only when I began answering her calls for sugar with a simple visit to her corner providing the attention and validation she was really after did things settle down. I also earned back my tip. Three empty packets of Sweet-n-Low paid in full.

Lester. Lester had teeth. Somewhere. They were never where they were supposed to be and this was a constant cause of concern. Because it was never Lester's fault his teeth were not in his head. We had stolen them. Or the night janitor had used them on an elusive chore for which only Lester's teeth would suffice. Or it was Aunt Mildred (that one was actually possible). But never, ever, ever was Lester a factor in the problem. It was always us. Shy of 24-hour surveillance I could never figure out how to keep Lester's teeth in close proximity to his gums. But what I could do was help him retrace his shuffle to locate his chompers with ease (usually next to his breakfast bowl.) And the up side? Those teeth were much less likely to be in strike mode after his Poli had gripped because he knew someone was looking out for him.

And last, but not least, Bill. Bill was

free as a bird and the world was his restroom (but he preferred the radiator). Every time I approached a grisly scene with Bill I found myself sounding alarmingly like my mother "Bill I'm not going to say it again—that is not how we use the radiator." (Which between you and me that saying never made any sense to me as a child. She would say it again. Usually in under five minutes. It was like the other one she liked to use which made no sense to me: "Don't cry or I'll give you something to cry about!" Well, I obviously already have something to cry about so why don't you give me something I don't have? Like a bike. Yeah. Those phrases were lost on me. I just acted like I knew what I was being threatened with. It was safer that way.) What was not safer was leaving Bill to his own devices. It took some serious broken record tactics and even more patience to dissuade Bill from his favorite hobby. But by the end of the summer he rarely approached a radiator for purposes other than taking off the chill. And if he had something else in mind he at least checked over his shoulder. I called it progress. Then Lester caught on to the game. Some messages you can never stop sending. Ever. It is just the way it is. One group changes their ways and the next one picks up where they left off. The trick lies in continuing to send the message.

And your organizations are no different. Some of the technicalities may need to be sorted out, but when all is said and done it is your job to simply send the message. Over and over and over again. So what's stopping you? Everything you really need to know about public relations you probably already know. Because you know people. And yes, you know water (or wastewater. Hey guys.) now you just have to get the two together.

er. That industry knowledge you take for granted, the stuff that seems so simple and self explanatory to you, is often the very thing causing all of the fuss in the outside world. So tell them. Take a proactive stance with your PR: go build a relationship with the local media and let them know when something will affect the public—before they have a chance to come to their own conclusions. Develop a monthly or quarterly newsletter to spread some sugar by highlighting a customer or an elected official who has done a great job. Use your water bills to remind people to conserve. Turn your CCR into a PR showcase of your work for the year. Just taking these simple steps to get your message out to your public—whoever that may be at the moment—will help your public relationships immeasurably.

And maybe you can't please them all. But if you can get Aunt Mildred on your team, you can at least please the people in her Rolodex. And the people in theirs. And for most of us, that's a pretty good start.



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Benefits of a Computerized Maintenance Management (Asset Management) System

by Craig Watkins

It's 3:00 PM on Friday afternoon and you receive a call from your boss. They ask for a complete asset inventory for ALL the water distribution system assets to include purchase dates, equipment ages, and remaining useful life. To top off the request, they have asked for copies of all the work orders generated from a specific section of a water main that has been a trouble spot for several years. The final request is that you need this information turned in prior to a city council meeting Monday morning at 8:00 AM!

Many have been in that exact situation; scrambling to capture information and compiling data into a useable format. Nevertheless, it's gratifying to see opera-

tors able to use software that assists utilities with this very problem. Still, if you don't have an asset management tool, there are a variety of factors you may want to consider when developing an automated maintenance program.

In the past, managers had to capture this information through massive volumes of hard copy data. This required a large block of time. However; if this facility had implemented an effective asset management program these tasks would be completed in a matter of minutes and transmitted to the boss's email by the end of the business day. Leaving you with more time to complete other assignments for your utility and returning

the weekend golf trip that you almost missed out on.

In today's economic environment, it is essential for utilities to effectively manage and maintain their assets. Why is it so important?

First let's look at the definition of asset management: Asset management is maintaining a desired level of service for what you want your assets to provide at the lowest life cycle cost. Lowest life cycle cost refers to the best appropriate cost for rehabilitating, repairing or replacing an asset. Asset management is implemented through an asset manage-

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Benefits of a Computerized Maintenance Management (Asset Management) System

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ment program and typically includes a written asset management plan. (Asset Management: A Best Practices Guide, USEPA)

Utilities can face several challenges when managing their assets. Not to mention the industry talk of the government making asset management plans mandatory, since it helps to cut unnecessary spending. Several of these challenges are due to shrinking workforce, determining the best time to rehabilitate/repair/replace aging assets, increasing demand for services, overcoming resistance to rate increases, diminishing resources, rising service expectations of customers, overwhelming regulatory requirements, responding to emergencies as a result of asset failures and protecting assets.

Water & wastewater utilities which utilize an effective asset management program, realize the benefits of prolonging asset life. These benefits include aiding in rehabilitate/repair/replacement decisions through efficient and focused operations and maintenance, meeting consumer demands by focusing on system sustainability, setting rates based on sound operational and financial planning, budgeting focusing on activities critical to sustained performance, meeting service expectations along with regulatory requirements, improving response to emergencies, improving security and safety of assets.

The first step in establishing an effective asset management program is to identify the current state of the utilities

assets. Some of the data that should be captured is:

- What equipment does the utility own?
- Where is it?
- What is its condition?
- What is its useful life?
- What is its value?
- Does the utility have a current asset inventory and system map.
- Developing a condition assessment and rating system.
- Assessing remaining useful life by consulting projected-useful-life tables or decay curves. This information is typically found in equipment operations and maintenance manuals.

The next step would be to determine the required level of sustainable service. This will help implement an asset management program and communicate to stakeholders the goals of the utility. Quality, quantity, reliability, and environmental standards are elements that can define level of service and associate system short- and long-term performance goals. Utilities may use information about customer demand, data from utility com-

missions or boards, and information from other stakeholders to develop your level of service requirements. The level of service requirements can be updated to track changes due to growth, regulatory requirements, and technology improvements.

Data utilities should capture:

- What level of service do my stakeholders and customers demand?
- What do the regulators require?
- What is my actual performance?
- What are the physical capabilities of my assets?

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Benefits of a Computerized Maintenance Management (Asset Management) System

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The next step in implementing an effective asset management program is to identify which assets are critical for sustained performance. Because assets fail, how utilities manage the consequences of failure is vital. Not every asset presents the same failure risk, or is equally critical to your water system's operations. It is important to know which assets are required to sustain the water system's performance. Critical assets are those identified as having a high risk of failure (old, poor condition, etc.) and major consequences if they do fail (major expense, system failure, safety concerns, etc.). Utilities must decide how critical each asset is and rank them accordingly. Many water systems may have already accomplished this type of analysis in vulnerability assessments.

Data utilities should capture:

- How can assets fail?
- How do assets fail?
- What are the likelihoods (probabilities) and consequences of asset failure?
- What does it cost to repair the asset?
- What are the other costs (social, environmental, etc.) that are associated with asset failure?

Identifying equipment life cycle costs provide a basis for allocating resources, both financial and equipment. Operations and maintenance (O&M), personnel, and the capital budget account for an estimated 85 percent of a typical water system's expenses. Asset management enables a system to determine the lowest cost options for providing the highest level of service over time. Effective asset management optimizes the work O&M crews are doing, where they are doing it, and

why. An asset management program helps make risk-based decisions by choosing the right project, at the right time, for the right reason.

Questions utility managers should ask:

- What alternative strategies exist for managing O&M, personnel, and capital budget accounts?
- What strategies are the most feasible for my organization?
- What are the costs of rehabilitation, repair, and replacement for critical assets?

Sound financial decisions and developing an effective long-term funding strategy are critical to the implementation of an asset management program. Knowing the full economic costs and revenues generated by your water system will enable utility managers to determine the system's financial forecast. Accurate financial forecasts can then help managers decide what changes should be made to your system's long-term funding strategy.

Effective asset management requires an investment in time and resources and is not a 1-year project, or even a 5-year project. It is a continual, fundamental change in the way infrastructure assets are managed. Successful asset management programs are committed to spending time and money to implement the program by focusing on making cost-effective asset decisions with the ultimate goal of providing a sustainable level of customer service for the community.

Thinking about your assets differently can be the first step towards having a sustainable water system. With the limited resources of most systems, shifting

away from reacting to events and towards making strategic plans can lead to real financial resource savings.

***About the Author:** Craig Watkins has played an instrumental role in the introduction and customization of the SEMS Software in water utilities across America. Mr. Watkins has spent time working with associations, federal and state government agencies, and thousands of utilities nationwide to develop ways to make compliance and utility management more effective and efficient. He is also responsible for building relationships on the customer level as well as implementing compliance and asset management systems in water utilities and public works departments. SEMS is directly responsible for helping over 25,000 drinking water and wastewater utilities complete Vulnerability Assessments and Emergency Response Plans to comply with the Bioterrorism Act of 2002. Currently SEMS is actively involved with 31 States and is positioned to serve all 50 states with compliance and regulatory software within the next 12 months. More recently, SEMS, in partnership with TRWA, has been contracted by the Department of Homeland Security to bring the new RAMCAP (Risk Assessment Methodology for Critical Asset Protection) and the NIMS (National Incident Management System) to aid utilities in attaining FEMA reimbursement during critical and emergency times. You can download the RAMCAP and NIMS for free at www.semstechnologies.com.*



Americans Take Back Drugs

by Kathy Rodgers, EPA Source Water Specialist

On September 25th approximately 4,094 sites and 2,992 state and local law enforcement agencies participated in this first-ever nationwide program to remove prescription drugs from America's medicine cabinet.

IRWA joined forces with county agencies and the DEA promoting the 1st National DEA Prescription Drug Drop-Off Day. In fact, Cory D. Randolph, Grant Program Manager, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington D.C. said, "Thanks for the follow-through! Our Office will surely note your participation in this program in our next In-Sites highlights! Keep making a difference".

Fliers were dispersed to local assisted living communities, mass emails were sent to local agencies and businesses, ads were running on a local radio station, write ups were featured in local papers, and local television stations spotlighted the initiative.

Thanks to these efforts a steady flow of people showed to dispose of their unused or expired medicine. Cars lined up as law enforcement agents stood outside and let people drive up and drop off.

Nationally - The latest on the DEA's website reports as followed:

SEP 29 — WASHINGTON, D.C. —

The nationwide results from DEA's firstever nationwide prescription drug "Take-Back" campaign will still not be known for a few days. However, early indications are that the initiative was an overwhelming success. Americans turned out in force on Saturday, September 25th in all 50 states to turn in their expired, unused, and unwanted prescription drugs for destruction.

DEA's Acting Administrator Michele M. Leonhart "This effort symbolizes DEA's commitment to halting the disturbing rise in addiction caused by their misuse and abuse. Working together with our state and local partners, the medical community, anti-drug coalitions, and a concerned public, we will eliminate a major source of abused prescription drugs, and reduce the hazard they pose to our families and communities in a safe, legal, and environmentally sound way." <http://www.justice.gov/dea/index.htm>

Although, our motives are not the same; Illinois Rural Water Association, law Enforcement, and local community partners are working together for one



common goal: To safely dispose of hazardous drugs. Join us in finding a feasible solution to reduce and/or prevent medicines and supplements from entering our streams and rivers.



Chris Miller and
Tim Hoffman



A Tale of Two Companies

by Steve Fletcher and Harry Kuhn

The following article was co-written by Steve Fletcher and Harry Kuhn and tells the story of a small water system, Egyptian Water, merging with a larger system by the name of Washington County Water Company.

Mr. Kuhn was the manager of Egyptian Electric Co-op when the Egyptian Water Company began operations. Harry was the driving force behind the creation of the water company and became its first manager. To this day, Harry still assists with the day-to-day operations of the system.

Mr. Fletcher serves as Illinois Rural Water Association's director to the Board of the National Rural Water Association and manages the Washington County Water Company.

Egyptian Water Company's Story:

In the mid 1990's a number of rural electric cooperatives were entering into the rural water business in response to the Clinton administration's Water 2000 initiative and the Board of Directors of Egyptian Electric became interested in participating as a community service project. Since a large part of Randolph County did not have rural water service, the Board authorized the manager to look into the feasibility of starting a rural water company for the purpose of serving a substantial portion of Randolph County and a small portion of Jackson County with potable water.

At the same time that Egyptian was looking at establishing a rural water company, Chester, Evansville, Baldwin, Sparta and Steeleville were conducting a study to determine if it was feasible for the towns to build a county wide water

system. The plan was to have all of the towns connected and not have every town producing its own potable water. After completion of the study, the towns decided not to proceed with a county wide plan and Egyptian decided at that time to proceed with a feasibility study. Of the five towns that considered a county wide system, Baldwin was the only one that was still interested in getting out of the water treatment business. After many discussions with them it was decided that any further feasibility studies should also include providing Baldwin with potable water.

Two attempts had been made in past years to form a rural water company to serve parts of Randolph County, but both suffered the same fate and died for lack of funding. The Egyptian Board was determined that this attempt would not fail and they were successful in receiving adequate funding to build out the system. What made this attempt successful? In large part it was the participation of Baldwin. Baldwin had already received some grant money to rehabilitate their treatment plant and they qualified for a DCCA grant to build part of the water system. With their grant money and Egyptian's loan and grant from the Rural Development Agency, the project was feasible and all that was needed was a water source. After a couple of unsuccessful attempts to line up a supply, the city of Sparta stepped forward and offered to sell water at a price Egyptian could afford to pay.

The initial project consisted of a 200,000 gallon overhead tank, an 80,000 gallon ground storage tank, a pumping station, 40 miles of main and 290 meters. Since receiving its initial operating permit in January of 2000, an additional 120,000 gallon standpipe, 80 more miles



Steve Fletcher

of main and 540 meter connections have been added to the system. In addition to these changes, the City of Chester has also been added as a second supplier of treated water.

When the Board of Egyptian Electric established Egyptian Water Company it was with the intent that Egyptian Electric would not be in the water business for a long period of time. At some point it was expected that Egyptian Water would either be able to stand on its own or it would be acquired by another rural system. With that in mind, it was decided that Egyptian Water would have no employees until some time in the future. The manager of the electric cooperative would also be the manager of the water company and other services would be contracted.

Since Egyptian Water was starting from scratch with no experience in the water business, discussions were had with Washington County Water Company with regard to rules, regulations and general operating procedures. In the course of these discussions, they indicated a willingness to handle the monthly customer billing, meter settings, maintenance, JULIE locates and provide the certified water operator. In essence, Washington County was doing the bulk

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of the work outside of the day-to-day management of the company.

When the Board of Egyptian Electric decided it was time to get out of the water business, they decided that it was in the customer's best interests that it be acquired by a bigger system. In the Board's judgment, it was more cost effective to be with a larger company as opposed to trying to go it alone. That being the decision, the obvious choice was to request Washington County take over the system. They were already doing much of Egyptian's work, they have water lines in Randolph County close to Egyptian's lines and they are a large and successful rural water company. The Board's main criteria was that whatever company Egyptian joined, that company had to be committed to bringing potable water to the rural areas and have a track record that demonstrated such a commitment. Egyptian Water was formed solely for the purpose of supplying safe, potable water to the rural residents and the Board firmly believes Washington County Water Company will carry on with that mission.

Washington County Water Company's Story:

From the very beginning of Washington County Water Company's (WCWC) existence, its Board's mission was to supply anyone in need with an adequate supply of affordable potable water. WCWC began operating in 1980 with 700 customers and now provides service to more than 5200 customers located in seven counties. Unless the residents request their service, WCWC does not extend mains into un-served areas. In addition to the 5200 customers, WCWC also wholesales water to four communities that decided to get out of the water treatment business as well.

Requests also came from two other water companies asking that WCWC take over their service areas as well. Both of these companies also came to the realization that although they could build their systems the customer base could ill afford paying the high monthly costs of operating, maintaining and paying down the debt.

When Egyptian approached WCWC asking for guidance on operating a rural water system they were more than happy to assist them in any way possible. Initially the conversation revolved around how WCWC could provide contract assistance with the billing process and evolved into providing them a certified operator and daily O&M services. As the partnership flourished the Board of EWC began asking if WCWC would be interested in assuming ownership of all assets and liabilities of the entire EWC water system. After an exhaustive financial analysis was completed it was determined that, even though EWC was a relatively young not-for-profit, they were

financially strong and their revenues did out pace their annual expenses on a consistent basis. With this in mind, WCWC recognized the benefits that the customers of both systems would enjoy if they were to merge.

Although the two systems are not currently interconnected, there is the potential to do so in the future and would result in each area having access to additional suppliers. EWC is able to purchase water from the cities of Sparta and Chester. With the construction of a few miles of watermain an interconnect with WCWC and EWC would greatly enhance service reliability to both systems by having multiple avenues to access water.

In conclusion, this is a story of how two water systems worked for the benefit of their member customers and became one. This union will make for a stronger company which ultimately benefits all of its members.



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- Water Ways, IRWA magazine which is published quarterly full of industry articles, news and updates.
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