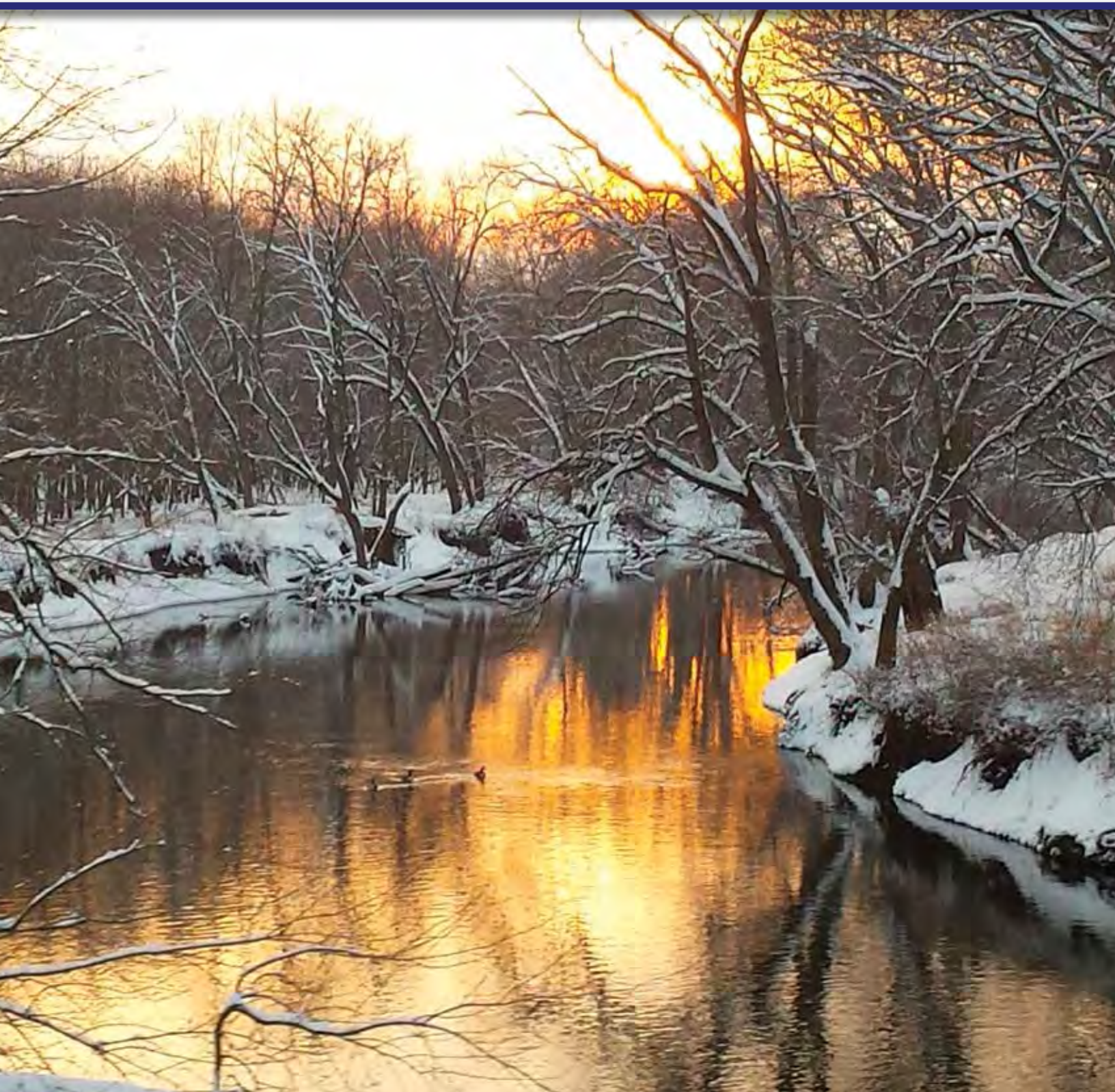




Water Ways

Volume XIII — Winter 2016



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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:

This picture was taken of the Sangamon River located in central Illinois by Heather McLeod, IRWA Membership Services Assistant.

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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NFP Sales Tax

by Frank Dunmire,
IRWA Executive Director

I know this article won't apply to a lot of IRWA members but it will be of great interest to the not-for-profit (NFP) water companies throughout the state. A few years back tangible personal property used in the construction or maintenance of a community water supply, as defined under Section 3.145 of the Environmental Protection Act, that is operated by a not-for-profit corporation that holds a valid water supply permit issued under Title IV of the Environmental Protection Act became exempt from the tax imposed by the Retailers' Occupation Tax Act [35 ILCS 120/2-5(39)]. Beginning on January 1, 2008 NFP water corporations could purchase supplies needed to construct and maintain their systems without paying sales tax on those items. The thinking behind this change was that more pipe could be put in the ground and more customers served if money that was being paid in sales taxes could instead be put into the project at hand.

Almost from the beginning, problems were surfacing with some vendors not wanting to provide their products without charging sales tax and the first of several meetings with representatives of the Illinois Department of Revenue (IDOR) was convened. Out of the meeting the NFP water corporations were instructed to provide

their vendors with a form certifying that they were a not-for-profit corporation operating a community water supply, as defined under section 3.145 of the Environmental Protection Act and they were in possession of a valid water supply facility number. This seemed to work well until most of those involved moved onto other positions and were replaced with people that didn't really understand this particular exemption.

After several more meetings over the past few years, Steve Fletcher of the Washington County Water Company and I met with our Lobbyist to discuss how we might best clear up this confusion. Would it take additional legislation? Do we continue meeting with IDOR every time a problem popped up? It was at our lobbyist's suggestion that we meet with IDOR one more time in an effort to forge some sort of compromise that we felt would work. That meeting took place last month and, we believe, was very successful in that IDOR created an entirely new form (ST-589) for use by NFP water corporations when making sales tax exempt purchases.

This form is available at the IRWA website at ilrwa.org/Downloads/ST-589.pdf. While on our website you may also want to download the definitions for



this sales tax exemption. This document can be found at ilrwa.org/Downloads/NFP_Tax_Exemption_Definition.pdf. The ST-589 form can also be found on IDOR's website at www.revenue.state.il.us/TaxForms/Sales/ST-589.pdf.

For those that download the form for use you will notice there is a now a phone number for the IDOR included on the form. We were told by using that number you should be connected to the department that is most familiar with the community water supply sales and use tax exemption. Hopefully this will put an end to the confusion and there will not be any more problems in claiming sales tax exemption. If you do have any problems don't hesitate to give me a call.

continued on page 5



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BELOW IS THE IDOR'S FORM CHANGES. (Steps 1 & 2)

 Illinois Department of Revenue ST-589 Certificate of Eligibility for Sales and Use Tax Exemption — Community Water Supply	
The seller must keep this certificate. The community water supply must always complete Steps 1 through 4. If the purchaser is a contractor, the contractor also must complete Step 5.	
Step 1: Identify the seller	
Name _____	Address _____ <small>Number and street</small>
Phone (____) _____	City _____ State _____ ZIP _____
Step 2: Identify the community water supply	
Name _____	Date of purchase _____ / _____ / _____ <small>Month Day Year</small>
Address _____ <small>Number and street</small>	Illinois EPA Water Supply Facility Number: _____
City _____ State _____ ZIP _____	IL _____
Phone (____) _____	FEIN _____ - _____

IRWA's Partner in Source Water Protection

*by Mark Mitchell,
IRWA Source Water
Protection Specialist*

I am looking forward to a presentation at our Annual Technical Conference in February. I have talked to many of you over the years about the United States Department of Agriculture – Farm Service Agency (USDA – FSA) that funds the National Rural Water Association's source water protection program across the nation.

Many funds have been made available to provide incentives to remove acreage from row crop production and plant instead grasslands or even hardwood timbers in well head protection areas.

Attend the presentation and meet some of the people who work very hard to assist you in your efforts to protect your wells in agricultural settings throughout Illinois.

Jamie Diebal shared with me what

she and Kimberly Martin plan to share with us next month in Effingham.

Jamie Diebal has been with the Farm Service Agency for 10 years starting as a program technician in the Sangamon County office where she was responsible for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).

Kim Martin has been with USDA for 13 years. Kim is a Program Specialist in the Illinois State FSA Office, Conservation Reserve and Environmental Division.


PRESENTATION TITLE:

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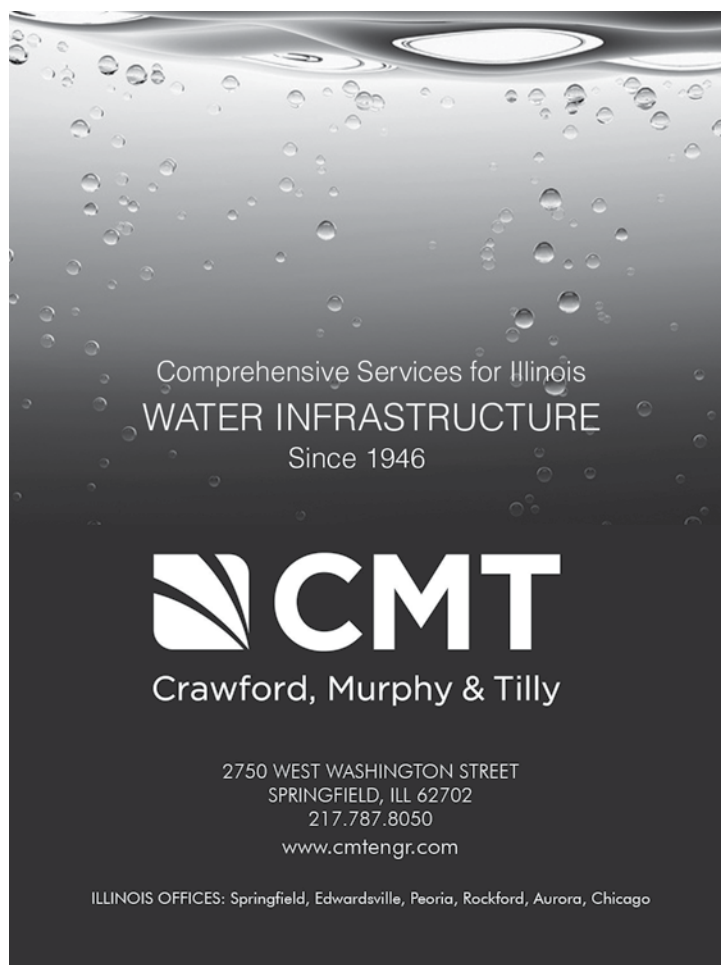
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Time for New Meters?

by Chuck Woodworth,
IRWA Circuit Rider

The following article was originally printed in the May – June 2014 issue of the TAB. I wanted to offer a follow up about the system with a 47% unaccounted for water loss after a full meter replacement.

Today, utilities are faced with aging infrastructure and reduced operating budgets while challenged to meet rising customer demands. Because water meters are a utility's cash register, if the meter is not working correctly, the water system is losing money. How long can you allow your system to lose money? Is it long enough when your paycheck starts bouncing? Of course, that is almost a far-fetched time line but I have seen systems keep meters for 30 years or better.

This past winter was really rough on us who had to work outside. Did you think anything about your meters? I had quite a few systems this past winter start running higher than normal unaccountable water usage. I know, my first thought was a leak also but the system did not have an increase in the amount of water pumped. I was at a system whom had a 47% unaccounted for water. After printing out a spread sheet of monthly flows, it was obvious that the water sold had been decreasing over the past year but the water pumped was remaining relatively the same amount. While looking back to last year's water sold and water pumped, both dropped off about the same amounts or increased about the same. This is only one reason why an operator should keep records of past pumping levels.

While discussing the high unaccountable number I was asking several questions about the system such

as how often are the meters read, are the meters estimated during winter, who reads the meters, when do you change a meter and how old are the meters. I think most would be surprised at some of the answers I received from those questions. The best reply for how old are your meters was "I've been here 19 years and only changed the ones that stopped registering. The system was installed late 70's or early 80's so probably most meters were originally installed back then. How long does a meter last?" So let's say that the system was installed in 1980, we now have meters that are 34 years old. A general rule of thumb is that household meters should be changed out after 15 years of service. Some manufacturers recommend they be changed between 10 to 15 years. In this case the meters should have been changed twice by now. I know some people may say look at the money they saved by not changing the meters, I say look at the revenue they lost by not changing them. Operating any water supply is no different than running any business, sometimes you have to spend money to make money. I'm sure the expense of buying new meters can and will be recouped within the next two years from the increase in revenue. If you doubt if your meters need to be replaced, pull a few and do a bench test. Take a new meter and make an adapter to connect the old meter to it and then connect a water supply, measure the discharge water if you want and there you go a meter tester. Be sure to record the readings on both meters before running water through them. Chances are if it is 30 years old or older it is costing you money. Are the cash registers in your system making money or costing you money?



Here Is The Rest Of The Story...

The system this article is about has 90 meters and serves a population of 220. The new PVC distribution system and new meters were installed in 1979.

The operator admitted that the only meters he replaced were the ones that stopped registering, maybe 6 or 7. All but 6 or 7 meters were 35 years old.

Before doing the meter replacement, the system was facing the fact of having

continued on page 8

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to do a rate increase. Two part time employees read the meters monthly, figured the water bills by hand and mailed them. Total hours of the two part time employees averaged 30 hours per month.

The system purchased new drive by radio read meters, a new lap top computer and a printer, along with new plastic meter pits – the original meter pits were the black fiber material and most of them had caved in. So they hired a company to install the new pits and meters.

Before the meter replacements the water loss had climbed to 49%! After the installation was completed (by May 2015), the water loss for November 2015 was figured at only 8%.

The major benefit is that the system now has only one part time employee reading meters and printing the water bills, and to top it off, only turning in a total time of 6 hours.

The Mayor told me that “the lap top computer starts reading meters from the truck before the driver starts the engine and puts on his seat belt”. They have figured that the system will break even in three years time because of “selling almost all the water they purchase” – and also by saving 24 hours of labor each month. “We could have broken even sooner if we didn’t hire a company to install everything but we knew they would get everything installed faster than we could”.

The rate increase has been put on hold for now. The Mayor asked if IRWA would complete a rate study around the end of next summer “just to see what the numbers show”.

Now you know the rest of the story....Good Day. 💧

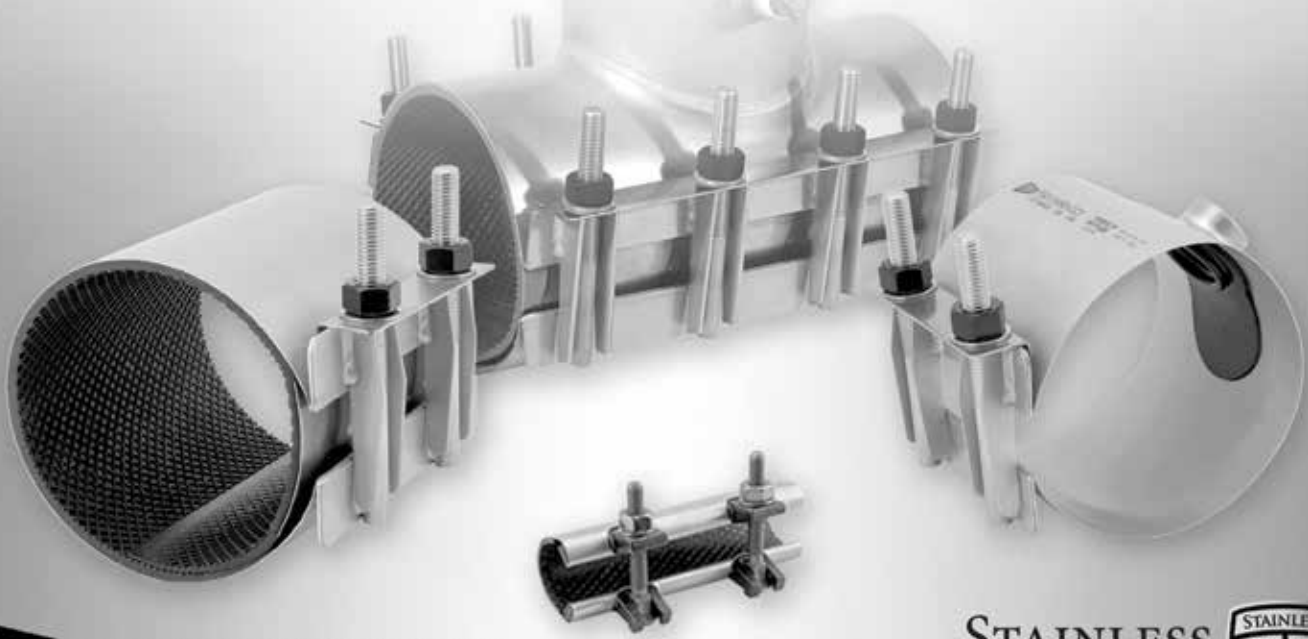
Winter Wordsearch

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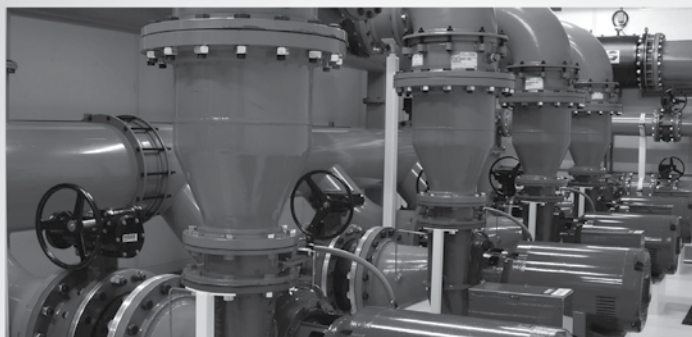


Important Notice

Flouride Rule Change New Target — .7 mg/L

The new fluoride rule that we have all been hearing rumors about has now been finalized. The new target for fluoride is now .7 mg/L and was published in the November 20, 2015 Illinois Register with an effective date of November 9, 2015. Therefore Illinois water supplies should now target .7 mg/L rather than the former .9 – 1.2 mg/L range.

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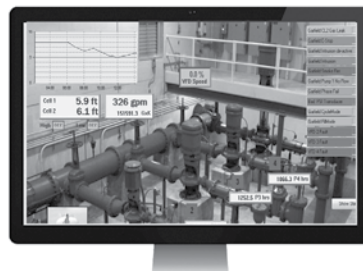
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Registration & badges are required for all conference attendees. Please register each attendee using the registration form included in this packet. Include the attendee's full name on the registration form as it should appear on his or her badge.

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Pre-registration must be postmarked by February 5th, 2016.

On-Site Registration:

All conference attendees must obtain a name badge and conference material at the registration desk. If you do not pre-register, please make sure that you register as soon as possible after you arrive at the Keller Convention Center.

****Please note that on-site registration is \$25.00 higher than pre-registration.****

Registration Hours

Tuesday, February 16th 8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.
Wednesday, February 17th 8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

Cancellation & Refunds

Refunds only in the event of emergencies. We must have a written notice of cancellation to issue a refund.

EXHIBIT HALL

Professionals from all areas of the water and wastewater industry will be on hand to help solve your problems and provide you with the information you need to make those crucial decisions. 96 companies will be bringing their products and services to you at this year's conference.

The exhibit hall will be open during the following hours:

Tuesday February 16th 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.
Wednesday, February 17th 8:00 a.m.-3:15 p.m.

EXHIBITORS HOSPITALITY NIGHT

Tuesday, February 16th 5:30 p.m.- 8:30 p.m.

Come down and thank the exhibitors for providing the food and beverages for the evening.

PUB CRAWL

Tuesday, February 16th 7:00 p.m.

Buses will be available again this year for those who want to go on a pub crawl.

CASINO NIGHT

Wednesday February 17th 6:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m.

SPORTSMAN RAFFLE

The exhibitors will be donating sports related prizes for the raffle. Attendees have the opportunity to purchase raffle tickets for these prizes. The winners will be announced at the conclusion of Casino night. Last year we purchased additional equipment for our staff to better serve our members and sent a portion of the proceeds to rural water lobbying efforts in Washington D.C.

Tuesday, February 16th		Registration Open: 8:00 a.m.— 4:00 p.m.	
9:00 a.m.	Opening Session/Awards Ceremony/RD Update		
10:00 a.m.	Break/Exhibit Hall Opens		
	WATER	WASTEWATER	BREAKOUT
11:00 a.m.	How to Track & Minimize Pump Energy Consumption by Leveraging VFD's, Flow Meters, & Telemetry		Modernization of Billing
12:00 p.m.	Lunch Buffet—Ticket Required		
1:00 p.m.	Overcoating of Water Storage Tanks		Legal Issues facing your system
1:45 p.m.	Utility Work Zone Traffic Control		
2:30 p.m.	Break/Exhibitor Drawings		
3:00 p.m.	Locator Training		More Legal Issues Facing your System
3:45 p.m.	Water Line Leaks & Recouping Revenue		
4:30 p.m.	Water Taste Test		Annual Meeting
Wednesday, February 17th		Registration Open: 8:00 a.m.— 4:00 p.m.	
8:00 a.m.	Exhibit Hall Opens		
9:00 a.m.	Valve & Hydrant Assessment & Maintenance	Sonic Algae Treatment	How to Evaluate CCTV for Rehab Planning
9:45 a.m.	Packaged Pump Systems and Variable Flow Pressure	IEPA –Bureau of Water Updates	Troubleshooting Wastewater Biology
10:30 a.m.	Break/Exhibitor Drawings		
11:00 a.m.	Update on Phosphate Technologies	IEPA NPDES Lab Procedures	Biosolids 2015—An Ever Changing Industry
12:00 p.m.	Lunch Buffet—Ticket Required		
1:00 p.m.	What Can You Do? Choose CRP to Protect Soil, Water & Wildlife	Lagoon Operation & Disinfection	Fulton, IL Water Supply Expansion
1:45 p.m.	IEPA Regulatory Update		
2:30 p.m.	Break/Exhibitor Drawings		
3:00 p.m.	Implications of an E.coli Positive Sample	Lagoon Nitrogen Removal	The Use of Algal Biofilms to Enhance Decentralized Onsite Wastewater
3:45 p.m.	Regulatory Changes in the Operator Certification Law—Part 681	Review of Wastewater Treatment in Our Areas	
Thursday, February 18th			
7:30 a.m.	Breakfast Buffet—Ticket Required		
8:30 a.m..	Understanding Total Cost of Ownership		
9:15 a.m.	Temporary Treatment When Your Treatment Plant is Rehabbed		
10:00 a.m.	Break		
10:15 a.m.	Water Main Extensions		
11:00 a.m.	RFID Tags for Marking Infrastructure		
11:45 a.m.	Closing Ceremony/Grand Prize Drawing		

SESSIONS AT A GLANCE

WATER SESSIONS

Rural Development Update—Mike Wallace; Rural

Development—Do you know about the funding options available to you for your water and/or wastewater projects?

How to Track and Minimize Pump Energy Consumption by

Leveraging VFD's, Flow Meters, & Telemetry—Jim Mimitz;

Navionics Research, Inc.—The title pretty much sums it up! Also learn about a new figure-of-merit "Gallons Per Kilowatt-Hour"

Overcoating of Water Storage Tanks—Erik Otten; Taylor

Coatings—Coating system evaluation, overcoating options, & coating system selection for repainting the exterior of water storage tanks without removing all the existing paint.

Utility Work Zone Traffic Control—Roger Watwood; J.U.L.I.E.,

Inc.—Utility service providers often need to work on or near roadways posing unique challenges to health and safety of both motorists and workers.

Locator Training—David Shelley; Subsurface Solutions—

Different types of locators available, troubleshooting, and how some tools work better than others in different situations.

Water Line Leaks & Recouping Revenue—Gerry Harstine;

Servline—This session will discuss how you can protect your utility and your customers financial loss during a water line leak.

Valve & Hydrant Assessment & Maintenance—Ron Karczewski;

Utility Service Co.—An integrated approach to locate, access, inspect, operate, repair, rehab & document work orders & activities for system valves & fire hydrants.

Packaged Pump Systems & Variable Flow Pressure Boosting—

Shawn Chong; Grundfos—How do we enjoy the benefits of packaged systems in pressure boosting applications and how does proportional pressure control help?

Update on Phosphate Technologies—Mike Ricks; Water

Solutions Unlimited—Uses, treatment technologies, and updates on use of phosphates in the treatment process.

What Can You Do? Choose CRP...to Protect Soil, Water & Wild-

life—Jamie Diebal; Farm Service Agency—What is FSA? What is CRP? How can it benefit me? Answers to these questions, and more!

IEPA Regulatory Update—Dave McMillan; IEPA—Find out what new regs are in store for you at this update.

Implications of an E.coli Positive Sample—Lori Stenzel; Illinois

American Water—Case studies of what happens when you have an E.coli positive and when sampling VOCs what could cause toluene, styrene, and xylene detects!

Regulatory Changes in the Operator Certification Law-Part 681

—Wayne Nelson—The IEPA is making several changes to Part 681 of the Water Operator Certification Regulations. Some are just housekeeping changes, while others will affect how we do our job.

Understanding Total Cost of Ownership—Brad Gould; Hydroflo

Pumps—A discussion of new pumping system design as well as modifications to existing equipment to reduce costs.

Temporary Treatment When Your Treatment Plant is

Rehabbed—Jim Goose; Watersurplus—A review of reasons why a filter system may need to be rehabbed, how temporary treatment might work, and examples of communities that used temporary treatment.

Water Main Extensions—Nicholas Wagner; MSA Professional

Services—Start to finish of doing a water main extension, including design, permits, and installation.

RFID Tags for Marking Infrastructure Assets; Thomas Tym,

Berntsen International, Inc.—This presentation will review how a local university is using RFID tags to improve the marking and identification of their campus utilities.

WASTEWATER SESSIONS

Sonic Algae Treatment—John Bell; IRWA—Sonic treatment and other new gizmos

IEPA Bureau of Water Update—Scott Twait; IEPA—Update of the

Water Quality Standards and the possible requirement of ammonia and phosphate removal to meet the standards.

NPDES Lab Procedures—Michelle Rousy; IEPA—Proper

technique & laboratory equipment review.

Lagoon Operation and Disinfection-Wayne Nelson—A case study of operational problems & solutions.

Lagoon Nitrogen Removal-Patrick Hill; Triplepoint Water Tech-

nologies, LLC—A new methods of treating ammonia nitrogen from a lagoon treatment facility.

Review of Wastewater Treatment in Our Areas-John Bell & Evan

Jones; IRWA—Answer general questions that you may have.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Modernization of Billing-Rick Holmes; LOCIS—Debt recovery,

web based billing, fraud prevention, and new meter reading equipment & the importance of having a GPS based system.

Legal Issues Facing your System—Mike Antoline; The Law

Office of Michael Antoline—Mr. Antoline is returning for another afternoon of sessions of legal issues that all systems face.

How to Evaluate CCTV for Rehab Planning—Barry Howell;

Visu-Sewer of Missouri, LLC—Evaluating CCTV footage to determine needed sewer rehab methods.

Troubleshooting Wastewater Biology-Kevin Ripp; Aquafix—

Wastewater biology is unpredictable. Changes in temperatures to industrial contributors all can effect your biology.

Biosolids 2015 -An Ever Changing Industry—Greg Firrantello;

Stewart Spreading—Industry Updates for IEPA & IEMA Biosolids regulations.

Fulton, IL Water Supply Expansion—Chris Peschang, Layne

Christensen—Hear the story of the City of Fulton and the challenges they faced as they constructed a new facility.

The Use of Algal Biofilms to Enhance Decentralized Onsite

Wastewater—Daniel Johnson; OneWater, Inc.—Algal biofilms leverage the mutually symbiotic relationship between algae & bacteria to create a diverse treatment ecology that delivers many benefits.



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February 16-18, 2016

REGISTRATION FORM
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(Please photo copy for each attendee)



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| <input type="checkbox"/> Member—\$175.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Spouse—\$175.00 |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Non-Member—\$195.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Non-Member Individual Joining as a Member + Conference—\$194.00 |

PLEASE CIRCLE WHICH DAY YOU WILL BE ATTENDING (for one day registration only)

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WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

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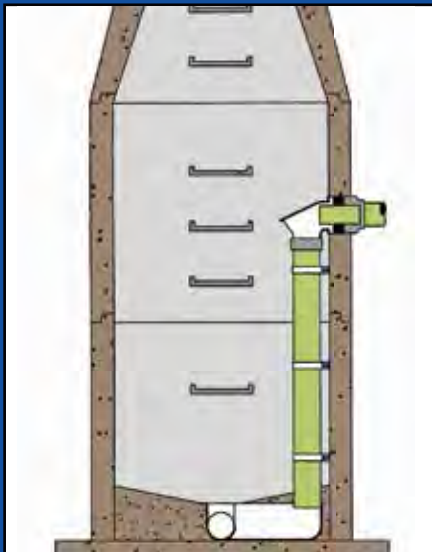
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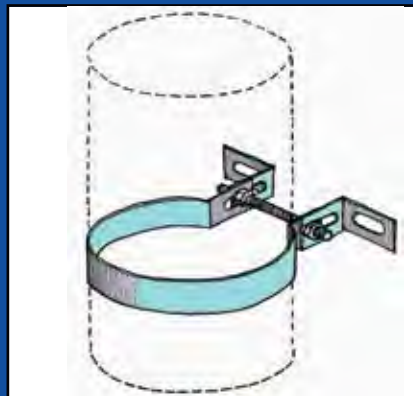
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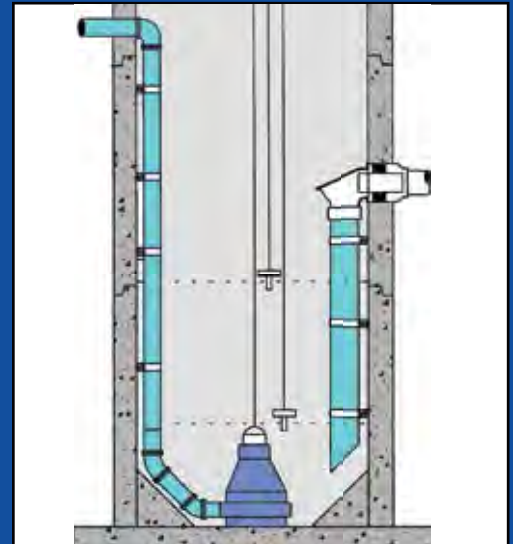
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Selling A Rate Increase To Your Customers

by Wayne Nelson

A funny thing happened on my way to retirement. I was recently hired as the operations manager for the Curran-Gardner Water District to help guide it through an upcoming \$4,000,000.00+ plant expansion project. During my first few months there, the major topic was where the money would come from. We had promises of funding from both the IEPA SRF program as well as from Rural Development. Of course, this was all loan money and has to be paid back. After months of debate by the board, it was agreed at our December 8 meeting to obtain the funding from Rural Development. It was not an easy decision for the obvious reasons. Yes, a longer term loan allows for a smaller monthly rate increase but the total payback is much higher while a shorter term loan has a smaller total payback but

creates the need for a higher monthly rate increase.

Based on our calculations our district will need to raise every monthly water bill by approximately \$5.73 to pay for this expansion. While this is less than the cost of a Big Mac Value Meal we knew that some customers would object to this or to any raise. Trust me, I've already met a few!

That is why I want to stress to any system that is pursuing a major project or even if it just needs to raise rates to get its head back above financial water and how important it is to sell to your customers the need for any type of rate hike.

Below is a copy of the newsletter that we sent to all of our customers in December. In it, we point out the many costs of providing water to our



customers. Near the end we remind everyone that nothing lasts forever.

While the following narrative is specific to our district I know that the operators reading this will see a lot of their systems in there. There's nothing new in it but please feel free if you want to tailor it to your customers.

WATER IS FREE, WHY DO WE HAVE TO PAY FOR IT?

All of the water that we treat at the Curran-Gardner Water District comes from underground aquifers via wells. It is there for the taking but the taking is what costs us.

Before we take a look at all of these costs, the end result is that we consistently meet all federal and state regulations, we do not exceed any contaminant levels, and our customers have a safe quality product 24/7 by just a turn of a faucet handle.

Let's start with our wells. It can cost us hundreds of thousands of dollars to install just one well. Land, easements, engineering, archeological & endangered species studies, well installation, disinfection, sampling, and, of course, the piping, well pump and motor, and electrical controls all figure into this cost.

The costs for the operation of our wells don't stop there.

Electricity to pump the water to the treatment plant, routine maintenance, and monthly IEPA sampling fees are on-going costs. For example, we recently had to replace one well motor and this alone cost \$5500.00.

Once the water is pumped into our plant it is treated with a variety of chemicals. We utilize chlorine gas for disinfection purposes, lime to soften our water, and fluoride to help prevent dental caries. Due to the large amount of water that we treat for our customers we spend a lot of money on these chemicals. For example, we may utilize 20 tons or more of lime per month for the softening process. We also run the water through sand media filters to remove any suspended material and to improve water clarity.

After we use the lime to soften our finished water, we have to deal with the disposal of the sludge left behind. Our district spent \$79,000.00 in September of this year to have

continued on page 20

this sludge hauled from our plant lagoons.

Again, we have a lot of the same costs in the plant as on the wells such as electricity and we also have laboratory analysis costs to ensure that your water is safe. The USEPA Safe Drinking Water Act requires us to test for over 75 different potential contaminants in addition to the daily tests that we perform every morning.

Next, let's discuss our distribution system. We have miles of water mains to get water to your front door. While water main material and installation costs are expensive, we can't forget that we also have to include hydrants for fire protection and the flushing of our mains, shut-off valves, valve boxes, meters, and meter pits and lids.

While a lot of our system is out of sight so out of mind, our elevated water storage tanks are definitely seen by you our customers. The initial cost of these tanks run hundreds of thousands of dollars to install and just a single sandblasting/repainting job can run well over \$100,000.

And, then there are the SCADA controls that we have in place that shows us what the system is doing. To top all of these expenses off, we can't forget to include the wages and benefits of our IEPA-certified water operators as well as the equipment needed to get around to perform routine maintenance, to read the water meters, and to install or

repair our distribution system components. And then there's the "little" things that run the cost of water up:

- ✓ **The costs of required training for our certified operators. Our Illinois Environmental Protection Agency-certified Class A operators are required to obtain 30 hours of approved training every three years.**
- ✓ **The cost to our system of performing J.U.L.I.E. locating. J.U.L.I.E. charges member utilities such as ours over \$2.00 for each faxed locate request. This doesn't include the labor or travel costs to the location site to mark our utilities.**
- ✓ **The cost of the administrative building's maintenance, utilities, and office staff.**
- ✓ **The cost of reading our meters, printing the bills, and the postage to forward them to our customers.**
- ✓ **The on-going cost of meeting new and ever-changing federal and state regulations and mandates.**
- ✓ **The repayment of current debt service.**

IMPORTANT INFORMATION TO OUR CUSTOMERS

As you can see from the information above, it's a long costly road from the wellhead to your tap. And, unfortunately, nothing lasts forever.

Our current plant was constructed in 1969 with only a few upgrades since. Due to the deterioration of the plant because of age and usage and the need for future pumping capacity, we are pursuing a major plant upgrade.

Based on the design plan developed by our engineering firm, it is estimated that the cost of this upgrade will be \$4,040,000.00. You can review this plan in its entirety at www.currangardner.com. This cost is significant and your water district board has not taken this fact lightly. However, many of the plant's components are nearing or have surpassed their lifespans with many of

the original parts no longer available. The need for an increase in water rates to fund this project is unavoidable.

We plan to hold an informational meeting in the very near future to show what funding options we have available to us as well as to address your questions and concerns. You our customers will be notified of the date, time, and location of this meeting.

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Confined Space Safety at A Glance

by Evan Jones,
IRWA Wastewater Technician

A confined space is defined as an enclosed area with limited space and accessibility. An example is the interior of a storage tank, which may be occasionally entered by workers for maintenance but is otherwise not a habitable space.

We all know what and where they are in our systems. In the collection system, they include every manhole and lift station wet well out there. At the treatment plant, they can include clarifiers, return sludge pits and oxidation ditches just to mention a few. If we are being honest, we can all admit to being in each of them a time or two while performing cleaning or maintenance tasks.



For safety's sake, it is very important everyone be able to differentiate from permitted and non-permitted confined space entry.

Non permitted spaces are things like closets and open trenches. These don't require constant monitoring of the atmosphere and permits to enter.

Permitted spaces are any spaces that may contain a risk to life, safety and health.

For permitted spaces the main things to remember is that they have the potential to become dangerous situations. Monitoring is key — air quality and explosive limits. Oxygen concentration is considered safe if it is between 19.5% and 23.5% of the total atmosphere. To protect against toxic gases, contaminants have permissible exposure limits (PELs), which are set by OSHA. Work also cannot continue if the concentration of a material reaches or exceeds 10% of its lower explosive limit.

Some of the safety equipment needed to enter a space includes air monitoring equipment, ventilation fans, harness, retrieval lines, chemical protective clothing, respirators and gloves. These are just some examples of safety equipment that should be available for use when tasks are being completed in confined spaces.



It is also very important there be a written confined space entry policy put in place that states what kind of equipment will be needed for any given task. A template for a confined space policy can be found at www.phylmar.com/?s=confined+space&search-submit=SEARCH.

Now that you have a policy or program in place you should also be conducting training on your entry program at least annually along with inspecting your equipment so that there is no concern of it being an issue when it is time to use it. Properly trained staff will make any job easier especially when it is such a safety sensitive job.

If anyone is looking for materials regarding confined space safety, feel free to contact an Illinois Rural Water staff member or look online at Illinois Department of Labor's web site or OSHA web site. I have several PowerPoint presentations that I am willing to loan out on confined space if anyone is looking for a topic for a staff safety meeting. Just let me know and I'll get a copy to you.

I hope everyone had a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Stay safe and I'll see you out in the field. 💧

USDA Rural Development

by Jacki Ponti-Lazaruk,
Assistant Administrator, Water & Environmental Programs,
USDA Rural Utilities Service

USDA Rural Development has low cost infrastructure loans and grants available now to help you provide quality water and waste services to your customers and we stand ready to assist you! USDA Rural Development has a long, rich history of working with rural America's smallest and most needy communities to provide loan and grant assistance for essential water and sewer infrastructure projects. Since 2009, we have helped more than 18 million rural residents receive new or improved water and waste disposal services, emergency water assistance, and technical help. Our assistance has been as varied as the need: for new or upgraded water and sewage treatment plants, equipment, wells, and even water itself for drought-inflicted communities.

Our program started as a partnership with rural communities. It was designed with an understanding of how good, clean, affordable and reliable service interconnects with every other aspect of life in rural America and the knowledge of how important rural contributions are to the national economy. Seventy-eight years later - the issues surrounding water are no less critical to our country. And the need for programs like rural development's water program remains high.

We are proud of our successes – but we know we can do better. We realize that the funding process for USDA water and waste loans and grants can be time-consuming. We are working to change that.

Our goal is to ensure our loan and grant applicants receive funding decisions within 45 days of submitting a complete application. We have already demonstrated this can be achieved. Grove City, Minnesota sought funding in FY 2015 from Rural Development to replace its more than 50-year-old sewer system. In just thirty days from the time they submitted a complete application,

the project was reviewed and funds were obligated. In Georgia, the Town of Resaca received loan and grant funding for their sewer project in 48 days from the date a completed application was on hand at Rural Development. Mustang Special Utility District has a similar experience when funds were obligated in 57 days from completed application.

USDA Rural Development funded more than \$1.6 billion in loans, grants and guarantees in all 50 states over the last year. We have funding available now under the Continuing Resolution, and our success depends on helping you, our rural partners, receive the funding you need to provide essential water and waste services.

To reach our goal, we are taking measurable steps to improve and expedite our customers' experiences. Through new streamlined underwriting processes, use of improved technologies, collaboration and outreach, as well as increased employee training and engagement, we are decreasing loan processing times.

Many time-saving improvements have already been implemented. On September 28, 2015 we launched **RD Apply** at the **NRWA Water Pro Conference** in Oklahoma City. **RD Apply** is an online system that allows you to complete and submit your applications online. You can register to use the system on any smart phone, tablet or laptop. And the system is designed with our applicants and their consultants in mind. In Oklahoma City hundreds of community leaders, engineers and circuit riders signed up and were able to test out the system. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive. "Easy to use" was the most used way to describe **RD Apply**. Even NRWA President registered and started an online application at the conference! The system will result in faster processing times and an easier

to understand filing process. If you are interested in learning more, contact your state Rural Water Association, or USDA at 202-253-8060.

In 2014, our streamlining efforts began in earnest with the introduction of new procedures for faster processing Emergency and Imminent Community Water Assistance Grant (ECWAG) applications. By utilizing this new streamlined process, towns such as tornado-ravaged Gifford, Illinois were able to receive much-needed ECWAG grants to help replace a destroyed water plant and damaged water tower in record time. Our guaranteed loan program is currently being revamped and streamlined. We will have a new user-friendly guaranteed loan process in place in the coming year.

We are also intensifying our employee training and customer outreach efforts, ensuring all staff has the knowledge and skills to deliver our programs efficiently, effectively, and consistently.

Collaboration with other state and federal agencies remains a priority. Our partnership with EPA on the new sustainability guide, also known as **Workshop in a Box**, has proven to be very successful. Over the last 24 months, together we have trained more than 1,600 trainers to facilitate the workshop. Workshops have been held in more than 140 locations across the country. Through this and many more collaborative efforts, we are building capacity and leveraging knowledge and financial resources.

To learn more about how Rural Development can help meet your water and waste needs, please contact your local USDA office. I look forward to working with you and the rural communities we all serve! 💧



Shimkus Touts New Law to Assist Small, Rural Drinking Water Systems

*press release issued
December 30, 2015*



Left to Right: Gateway Regional Water Company Board President Keith Ritter, Congressman John Shimkus, Illinois Rural Water Association Executive Director Frank Dunmire

Maryville, Illinois – Congressman John Shimkus (R, Illinois-15) today joined local leaders in Dieterich, Marshall, Lawrenceville and Sandoval to announce the availability of technical assistance for rural water systems.

The new law reauthorizes \$15 million each year through 2020 for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) technical assistance program for small, public water systems, and requires EPA to target the training and technical assistance funds appropriated by Congress to programs most beneficial to small and rural communities.

"A major source of financial stress for small and rural drinking water supply systems is compliance with EPA regulations," Shimkus explained. "These communities need access to technical professionals to help find the most cost-effective way to identify repair and replacement options for their systems, and to comply with EPA standards."

Shimkus was joined at each location by Illinois Rural Water Association (IRWA) Executive Director Frank Dunmire. The IRWA represents over 800 small communities, water districts and co-ops throughout the state.

"Almost all of the more than 3,500 community water supplies in Illinois are dependent on on-site technical assistance and training while they struggle with complying with the ever-growing list of EPA regulations," said Dunmire. "It is through this training and on-site assistance that many communities avoid violations and/or hefty fines."

As Chairman of the Environment and Economy Subcommittee, Shimkus led passage of the rural water bill in November.

"Illinois, and the country as a whole, are fortunate to have John chairing a committee that can ensure that small community water supplies have the needed tools to provide safe drinking water," Dunmire added. 💧

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See page 3 for IRWA's
Board/Staff contact information!



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