



# Water Ways

Volume XXIII — Spring 2026



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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 photo was taken by Don Craig, IRWA Executive Director, in Gibson City, Illinois.**

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](http://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](mailto:ilrwadb@ilrwa.org).



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# *EPA Announces Launch of RealWaterTA Initiative*

*by Don Craig,  
IRWA Executive Director*

DUNCAN, OKLAHOMA – The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced the launch of the Real Water Technical Assistance (RealWaterTA) initiative on March 4, 2026.

With a “back to the basics” approach, RealWaterTA realigns the Office of Water’s mission to help communities stay in compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act and Clean Water Act through infrastructure improvements and technical assistance.

“NRWA applauds EPA and Assistant Administrator Kramer for the launch of the RealWaterTA initiative, refocusing on what rural utilities truly need. Returning to the core intent of the statutory requirements will restore trust, strengthen compliance, reduce public health violations, and deliver real benefits to rural communities,” said NRWA Chief Executive Officer Matt Holmes. “Congress has long supported grassroots, hands-on, onsite technical assistance through trusted peer-to-peer partnerships that result in creative, locally driven, and community-supported solutions. NRWA looks forward to continuing our work with EPA and small and rural communities across the country to deliver the effective, efficient assistance they want and need.”

Technical assistance should be coordinated through states and those closest to small and rural utilities, not through a top-down, bureaucratic structure. Otherwise, communities can experience confusion, delays, and diminished quality of assistance, or even operational failures, especially during emergencies. EPA staff should not function in dual roles as both regulators and direct technical assistance providers, as this may discourage utilities from seeking help due to fear of enforcement exposure. Trusted relationships between communities and experienced technical assistance providers lead to the best outcomes in compliance for water and wastewater systems. EPA’s RealWaterTA focuses on eight common-sense priorities when helping water and wastewater systems reliably provide safe drinking water and effectively treat wastewater over the long term. RealWaterTA will:

- Support returning to and maintaining compliance;
- Focus on traditional and innovative water infrastructure;
- Define the scope of technical assistance;
- Strengthen technical, managerial, and financial (TMF) management;
- Empower the water workforce;
- Improve financial readiness and access to financial


- assistance;
- Reduce inefficient costs; and
- Drive real-world results.

In a statement released by the EPA, Assistant Administrator for Water Jess Kramer said: “RealWaterTA

ensures that EPA is stewarding taxpayer dollars responsibly with a laser-focus on water quality improvements and high-impact public health protection. It will yield tangible results by providing technical assistance to water systems working day-in and day-out to deliver clean and safe water. This effort will have a positive impact across the country, especially in rural America, where water systems face significant challenges and need on-the-ground technical and managerial support.”

NRWA and its State Affiliates have provided training and on-site technical assistance to small and rural water and wastewater systems across the nation for over 50 years. During this time NRWA has had a successful partnership with EPA that is now approaching five decades of service to rural America. As one of NRWA’s flagship initiatives, the EPA Training and Technical Assistance Program has assisted countless utilities and provided immeasurable benefits for rural residents since 1977. Now with a portfolio of technical assistance and training programs, NRWA and State Affiliate field experts spent more than 485,000 hours helping utilities in 2025 alone. This directly benefited more than 40 million Americans across all 50 states and Puerto Rico.

EPA and Assistant Administrator Kramer’s RealWaterTA initiative aligns with the Rural Water mission to assist rural America’s communities and their water and wastewater systems to provide safe drinking water and clean wastewater treatment for generations to come, and we look forward to continuing this collaborative effort.

To learn more about this initiative, please visit:  
<https://www.epa.gov/water-infrastructure/real-water-technical-assistance-realwaterta> 



# The Illinois Water Inventory Program

by Jay Bell,  
IRWA Board Member

As most of you know, I recently received a letter from the University of Illinois regarding the Illinois State Water Survey. We all get this each year, but do we really know what they do with all this information? Here is a brief overview of the program.

The Illinois Water Inventory Program (IWIP) is part of the Illinois Water Survey. Initially created in 1978, IWIP is a state-mandated report that collects basic information on water withdrawals at the facility-level across the state. This report is required by law through the 2010 Amendments to the Water Use Act.

Annually they collect water use data from public water supplies, commercial, industrial and irrigation facilities (and everything in between) that has a well or surface water intake that, combined, is rated to pump 70 gallons per minute (gpm) or greater. They also collect water purchased and distribution data between facilities. The individual reports, collectively form IWIP's database of high-capacity water withdrawals throughout Illinois.

That data is used by their team of scientists to get a sense of how our surface and underground water reserves are coping and if they are being drained more quickly, then they can recharge, which is especially important in a drought year. This data is fundamental for estimating Illinois' future water withdrawal needs and can be used to answer issues like the impact of high-capacity wells on neighboring wells.

IWIP data allows us to help planners such as city officials and drillers determine where they get their water from in the future; and helps to make sure communities, businesses, and individual Illinoisans have enough water for their needs.

## HERE ARE SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **1. Is completing the Water Inventory form mandatory?**

Yes, as of January 1, 2020, annual reporting of withdrawals from wells and surface water intakes that pump at a rate of 70 gallons per minute or greater will be mandatory in the State of Illinois, according to Public Act 096-0222. A notable exception to the mandated reporting is the use of high-capacity well and intake use agricultural irrigation. Agricultural irrigators are exempt from reporting for the first five years of the act (until January 1, 2015). However, individual farm irrigators with good records of irrigation water use are encouraged to report their annual water use prior to that date so their operations may serve as benchmark farms to aid in developing irrigation estimation coefficients.

### **2. Why is my Illinois EPA facility number wrong on the form?**

For public water systems, the Water Inventory Program uses an extra digit, a "9" in the fourth place, to identify the systems as such in our database.

### **3. What is the SIC code?**

The Standard Industrial Classification, of SIC code, is a system of classifying establishments by type of activity. The Water Inventory Program assigns SIC codes to facilities in order to make data classification and retrieval more efficient. For example, public water systems all have the code 4941, "Water Supply". Electrical power generation facilities have the code 4911, "Electric Services".

### **4. Should the contact person be the same as the person to whom the IWIP form is addressed?**

Typically, the form is addressed to a manager or administrator of some kind. The contact person is the person most knowledgeable about water use at the facility, and the person the Illinois State Water Survey can contact, with any questions about the numbers reported.

### **5. Why are there duplicate numbers in the list of wells and surface water intake?**

If the list includes both wells and surface water intakes, the intakes are listed after the wells start with "1". An intake does not have a depth. In addition, intakes should have a particular identifying name or the word "intake".

### **6. We don't have any wells. Why should we fill out this form?**

The Water Inventory Program tracks the use of both self-supplied water (that is, water withdrawn from wells or surface water intakes) and purchased water. If your facility does not have



continued on page 6

wells or intakes, please leave the first part blank and go on to the next part of the form.

**7. What is the difference between Total Annual Gallons Purchased and Total Annual Gallons Withdrawn?**

Purchased water is the amount of water your facility buys from another facility. Withdrawn water is the amount of raw water from your own wells or surface water sources that is delivered directly to your treatment plant. Please note that the first page asks for raw water, and the second page asks about treated or finished water and how it is distributed throughout your system.

**8. As an operator, I know how much water is withdrawn from our wells and intakes. How do I figure things like population, residential and commercial services, and residential and commercial quantities?**

Often the billing department of your facility will have figures for population within and outside city limits, as well as the breakdown of services and quantities.

**9. We have a master meter that tells us the total amount of gallons withdrawn, but we do not have exact measurements of the amount from each source. How should we report the amount from different sources?**

If your wells or other sources alternate consistently, simply divide the total amount by the number of active sources. If you know the percentage output from the sources, take the percentage of the total amount and report the result in gallons.

I hope this answers some of the questions you may have about the Illinois Water Inventory Program. 💧

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IRWA is glad to provide this Sewer Video Inspection Service to our members, and non-members (at a higher fee). As of March 1, 2024, the IRWA voting members "set minimum maintenance fee" for this service is \$500.00 for projects that do not exceed 500 feet (Non-IRWA voting member utilities pay \$750).

Larger projects requiring more time and inspection coverage, will be based on the set minimum maintenance fee up to 500 feet. Then a maintenance per foot charge of \$1.00, will be assessed for footage above the minimum allowance. IRWA member utilities receive an automatic discount on the "per foot" charge, as well as the reduced set minimum maintenance fee, for each of these types of projects. Non-IRWA member systems will pay the increased set minimum maintenance fee of \$750, plus a charge of \$1.50 per foot, above the initial 500 feet allowed in the minimum.

(Note: Due to staffing varied work demands and logistics, IRWA will not undertake video inspection jobs exceeding 5,000 feet maximum per project.)

A proposal (contract) must be signed in advance of the inspection. Upon completion, your system will be invoiced for the services and will also receive a detailed report including graphic diagrams of the inspection features, and a correlating digital video file for visual reference.

For more information, or to schedule an inspection of your system, email Roger Noe at: [noe@ilrwa.org](mailto:noe@ilrwa.org), or you can call him at 217-820-1564.

# Does Illinois Have a Williams Bay, Wisconsin Situation Waiting in the Wings?

by Dave McMillan,  
IRWA Training Specialist

What happened in Williams Bay, Wisconsin that we should be concerned about?

On August 28, 2025, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) issued a “do not drink” order for the Village of Williams Bay. This occurred because two infants within the community may have contracted methemoglobinemia (blue baby syndrome) stemming from elevated nitrite levels in the water distribution system. In consultation with WDNR, the village conducted monitoring that indicated that nitrite concentrations in some areas of their system exceeded the maximum contaminant level of 1 milligram per liter (mg/l). In addition to methemoglobinemia, WDNR indicated that studies have shown that high levels of nitrite may cause birth defects, and an increased risk of some cancers. On or around September 5, 2025, the village had sufficiently chlorinated and flushed their distribution system to allow WDNR to authorize them relieve the “Do Not Drink” order. However, WDNR indicated that the village would need to continue their diligence to preclude a reoccurring concern.

So, where does that leave us here in the Land of Lincoln?

Since 2019, Illinois regulation has required all community public water supplies that use chloramine as their disinfectant, to develop and implement a nitrification action plan (NAP). This was the Illinois Pollution Control Board’s (IPCB) first attempt to address the risk posed by nitrification of distributed potable water. This author believes that the IPCB intentionally cast a wide and broad net with its regulation. Meaning, the regulation is designed as a “process control” rule, where water supplies are largely allowed to set their own monitoring schedules, sampling techniques (standard lab methods are not required), trigger levels and follow-up actions. Water systems can tailor their NAP based upon their need and degree of nitrification “risk”. Yep, I said the four-letter word, “risk.”

What have we learned about risk since 2019?

First, ammonia in groundwater is much more prevalent than (at least the author) imagined. This said, the Illinois Rural Water Association (IRWA) assisted many groundwater dependent systems significantly reduce their ammonia risk (nitrification risk in distributed water) by understanding the type of disinfectant and concentrations they are using or able to use. Specifically, many water systems are now deciding whether they want to establish a free residual or optimize the formation of monochloramine. In this regard, Illinois has removed many systems from the risk noted in Williams Bay.

Unfortunately, along the way we are discovering several systems that are up a creek without a paddle. To put this in

the most simplistic mathematical terms (considering only ammonia demand and a 5.1 to 1 chlorine to ammonia ratio without considering such factors as pH), a water system using chloramination that has more than about 0.9 mg/l of free ammonia (which

results in a total/monochloramine concentration of 4.0 mg/l) in their groundwater is continually releasing ammonia into their distribution system. Without considering degradation of the system’s chloramine residual, if the water supply has more than about 1.9 mg/l of free ammonia in their groundwater, this creates the potential to exceed the 1.0 mg/l nitrite MCL. Obviously, the more available free ammonia (especially beyond 1.9 mg/l) and the older the water gets, the higher the risk for nitrification to occur in distributed water. Hence, without great diligence, these water systems have greater risk of exceeding the MCL for nitrite and creating potential health implications seen in Williams Bay.

In certain instances, rethinking chloramination as a preferred disinfection practice is in order. Going to breakpoint (plus the required 0.5 mg/l free residual) might prevent a nitrification problem and issues with consistent disinfection residual. This said, a free residual does not solve the ammonia problem for every system. In the case of establishing monochloramine residual, we have already noted that we are bound by a 4 mg/l upper limit at a water systems first customer. Exceeding breakpoint and establishing a free residual will not create the same concern at the water system’s first customer; however, we have a National Science Foundation (NSF) limitation.

Specifically, when break point chlorinating, special care should be taken to prevent exceeding NSF chemical dosing limitations. The maximum NSF application level in potable water is 30 mg/l (as Cl<sub>2</sub>) for chlorine gas and 10 mg/l (as Cl<sub>2</sub>) for sodium hypochlorite. Again, keeping the math simple (considering only ammonia demand and a 7.8 to 1 chlorine to ammonia ratio without considering such factors as pH), a system using chlorine gas cannot reach breakpoint if their source water



continued on page 9



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## ***Does Illinois Have a Williams Bay, Wisconsin Situation Waiting in the Wings?***

*continued from page 7*

has much more than 3.8 mg/l of free ammonia (breakpoint plus 0.5 mg/l residual requirement). A system using full strength sodium hypochlorite, cannot reach breakpoint if their source water has much more than 1.2 mg/l of free ammonia (breakpoint plus 0.5 mg/l regulatory requirement).

So, what is the point?

If a water system uses sodium hypochlorite, their hands are really tied if they have more than about 1.2 mg/l of free ammonia (which may be overly optimistic as this is not considering other types of chlorine demand) in their source water. These systems are going to have to chloramine to avoid exceeding NSF limitations. If the system has between about 1.2 and 1.8 mg/l of free ammonia in their source water, implementation of a NAP should be effective in controlling nitrification with minimal risk to customers/consumers.

However, systems using sodium hypochlorite that form chloramines with over 1.8 mg/l of free ammonia in their source water, have an increased risk to consumers. Implementation of NAP monitoring with special emphasis on distribution system nitrite sampling is critical. Further, these systems should take every possible opportunity to reduce the age of distributed water.

As soon as possible, these systems should evaluate: existing water storage practices; the effectiveness of the active mixing system in elevated storage tank(s); routine (and monitoring driven) flushing; and potential use of automatic flushing devices in areas of the distribution system with the oldest water. Long term, these water systems may have no alternative but to begin considering their treatment and source water options. Specifically, to reduce the nitrification risk, these systems should consider construction of an ammonia removal treatment component prior to the existing water treatment process (e.g., biological ammonia removal) or seeking a different source of water (e.g., new wells or purchasing water from another water supply).

In conclusion, and getting back to the title of this article, time will tell if Illinois has a repeat of the Williams Bay experience. Certainly, the risk exists for a nitrite problem resulting from nitrification of free ammonia from Illinois groundwater. My hope is that implementation of the NAP regulation has brought enough attention to distribution system water quality to prevent a similar incident. 💧



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**IRWA, PO Box 49, Taylorville, IL 62568** or pay on-line at [www.ilrwa.org](http://www.ilrwa.org) with a credit card. All fees must be paid when registering—we cannot do purchase orders or special billings. **Pre-registration must be received by July 3, 2026. No refunds will be made after this date.**

**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 conference center. Please note that on-site registration is \$25.00 higher than pre-registration and any registrations received after July 3, 2026 will be charged as “on-site”.

**Hospitality Evening** After the sessions end for the day on Thursday, we will once again be taking a bus to the Tuscan Hills Winery for appetizers & beverages. Join us and mingle with your peers!

**Cancellation & Refunds** Refunds are issued only in the event of an emergency or hospitalization. We must have a **written notice of cancellation** to issue a refund.



**VENDORS!** This year a few of the speakers will have a vendor table set up on Thursday morning so you can visit with them at your leisure in between sessions!



**Questions?** Contact Heather—800-762-3547 or [ilrwahm@ilrwa.org](mailto:ilrwahm@ilrwa.org).

## **Testimonials from past attendees**

- ◆ *“I really enjoyed meeting other offices and sharing info”*
- ◆ *“Appreciate the variety of topics covered! And excellent hospitality”*
- ◆ *“Love the laid back, fun atmosphere”*

## **REGISTRATION FORM**

*Must be completed for all attendees  
(Please photo copy for each additional attendee)*

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## **REGISTRATION FEES**

<b>PRE-REGISTRATION (BEFORE JULY 3)</b>	<b>Member: \$175.00</b>	<b>Non-Member \$200.00</b>
<b>ON-SITE REGISTRATION (AFTER JULY 3)</b>	<b>Member: \$200.00</b>	<b>Non-Member \$225.00</b>

## Thursday, July 16th

8:00 a.m.—8:30 a.m.	Registration/Check in
8:30 a.m.—9:15 a.m.	<b>Compliance and Safety in Water Tank Risk Management</b> Chad Johnson; USG Water
9:15 a.m.—9:25 a.m.	<i>Break</i>
9:25 a.m.—10:10 a.m.	<b>Crisis Communications</b> Kim Biggs; IEPA
10:10 a.m.—10:20 a.m.	<i>Break</i>
10:20 a.m.—11:05 a.m.	<b>Options for Accepting Electronic Payments</b> Chase Elmore; Nexbillpay
11:05 a.m.—11:15 a.m.	<i>Break</i>
11:15 a.m.—12:00 p.m.	<b>Illinois Equal Pay Act</b> Amy Sneirson; Illinois Department of Labor
12:00 p.m.—1:00 p.m.	<b>Lunch Included with Registration</b>
1:00 p.m.—1:45 p.m.	<b>Getting Started with SAM.gov</b> Caitlyn Justice; Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity
1:45 p.m.—2:00 p.m.	<i>Break</i>
2:00 p.m.—2:45 p.m.	<b>Meter Reading Systems</b> Tyler Tucker; Sensus
2:45 p.m.—3:00 p.m.	<i>Break</i>
3:00 p.m.—3:45 p.m.	<b>Cybersecurity/Ransomware</b> Jenifer Lyn Walker; Water ISAC

## Friday, July 17th

7:30 a.m.—8:30 a.m.	<b>Breakfast Buffet Included with Registration</b>
8:30 a.m.—9:15 a.m.	<b>Roundtable Discussions</b> Bring your topics of discussion and see how others do things at their system.
9:15 a.m.—10:00 a.m.	<b>Water Rates - Are you charging enough?</b> Clark Cameron; IRWA
10:00 a.m.—10:15 a.m.	<i>Break</i>
10:15 a.m.—11:00 a.m.	<b>Budgeting 101</b> TBD; Government Finance Officers Association
11:00 a.m.—11:45 a.m.	<b>FOIA</b> Chris Boggs; Illinois Attorney General's Office
11:45	<b>Closing &amp; Prizes</b>

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## 2026 Annual Conference Wrap Up

by Heather McLeod,  
Membership Services Assistant

Thanks to everyone who supported the conference for another great year! The Annual Technical Conference in Effingham provided 12.5 water and 11.50 wastewater credits over the 2 1/2 days to 590 attendees. 69 registering to take their water license exam and 32 registered for the wastewater exams on Thursday. 110 exhibitor booth spaces were filled with vendors excited to share the information about their newest products and services with everyone. The list of winners are below. You may find these photos and others from the conference on our Facebook page.

### Congratulations!

Gun Raffle – Dave Hopkins

Best Tasting Water – Anna-Jonesboro Water Commission

Water System of the Year – City of Mt. Carmel

Water System Operations Specialist of the Year – Dustin McCann; Village of Roxana

Wastewater System of the Year – Village of Tilton

Wastewater System Operations Specialist of the Year – James Mensendike; Village of Elizabeth

Runner Up Water Systems of the Year – Village of Ashmore, and Village of Ashland

Runner Up Water System Operations Specialists of the Year – Charlie Dunmire; City of Macon and Nick Berry; Village of Pecatonica

Runner Up Wastewater Systems of the Year – Village of Forreston and City of Greenville

Runner Up Wastewater Systems Operations Specialists of the Year – Larry Root; Village of Stewardson and Steve Westerfeld; City of Atlanta

Associate Member of the Year – Cahoy Pump Service



### Spotlight on Scholarship Winners

The Illinois Rural Water Association Associate Member Scholarship Fund was created in 1997 to promote further education for an eligible family member of any active voting member of IRWA. Each year we present two \$1,000 scholarships (one to a boy and one to a girl). Any current Associate Member of the Illinois Rural Water Association can contribute to this fund. The winners are announced during the awards ceremony on Tuesday morning of the conference.

Each year the applicants must write an essay on a topic of the scholarship committee's choosing and submit it with their application. This year the essay topic was "Explain what an "Aquifer" is, and How do Aquifers get their water? Are the water levels in the Illinois Aquifers adequate? Do you get your water from an Aquifer or surface water?". The winners chosen for 2026 were: Hank Alexander Fletcher and Alexi Nichole Stork.

Hank is the son of Dustin Fletcher who is an alderman for the City of Benld. Hank attends Gillespie High School in Gillespie, IL. He has been on the honor roll and is has been active in NHS, FFA, and a state qualifier in 4x800 in track and cross-country. He is also a student of the Macoupin County CEO program and owns and operates his own lawn care business. Hank will be attending Illinois College in the Fall and majoring in Accounting and Business.



Alexi is the daughter of Toby Rinehart who is the Superintendent of Public Services for the City of Flora. She is attending Flora High School in Flora, IL. Her recognitions include: high honor roll and honor roll. She has also been active in cheerleading, 4-H, FFA, Christ in Youth, babysitting and working at a boutique as well as the Clay County Counseling Center. She plans to attend a 4 year college majoring in BS/Nursing with a minor in business administration.

continued on page 23



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**(Winners are limited to winning one time per year)**

## ***New Arrival to Southern Illinois Wastewater Tech Position***

***by Shawn Dakin,  
IRWA Wastewater Tech #2***

I wanted to take a minute of your time, and introduce myself to everyone. My name is Shawn Dakin, and I am the IRWA Wastewater Technician in southern Illinois. I call the Village of Tamms my home, which is located approximately 10 miles out from and nestled in the southern end of the Shawnee National Forest. My wife, Shannon (who is originally from Poplar Bluff, MO) and I, have been building a quite life and paradise there since we were married in 2013.

Except for a couple years serving in the U.S. Army in Fort Story VA, I have lived most of my life in Alexander and Pulaski County. I have held a few select jobs that have formed most of my adult life....from U.S. Coast guard licensed Tankerman, tanking chemicals that traveled the Midwestern waterways, to Licensed Pilot, holding a 500 ton Masters endorsement on all the same waterways.

With careers...come change, and that change came with a new position in the Illinois Department of Corrections. After retirement, which was just not for me, I decided to rejoin the workforce trying to help my local community, the Village of Tamms. I held the position of Maintenance Superintendent with a class 4 wastewater license, until a great opportunity came along with Illinois Rural Water Association!

Like many of you in your community systems... In the past, I had seen an IRWA Tech several times, and talked with them. I reaffirm "talked" but not listened, necessarily. By doing so, with my mind drifting to things I needed to take care of in the system, etc., I missed out on some the greatest information and assistance that one could ask for!

I will admit that when I came on board, I thought, how in the world could I ever be able to assist somebody with issues in a Class 2 or Class 1 Plants, if I am only a class 4 lagoon guy? It seemed daunting and intimidating to me, and I didn't

want to let people down. Now that I have been on the job helping communities in southern Illinois, It finally dawned on me. I travel to new places all the time, I talk with different system plant operators, daily. I'm making multiple contacts in a week. I record names, phone numbers, and very useful information and data from some of the most intelligent people in the field. Most importantly, I work with a group of fantastic people that have a wealth of knowledge to share. It is not just me, showing up at your plant or community wastewater system. In reality, it is the culmination of a host of minds and knowledge that can be tapped to help resolve problems that you might face.

The sheer amount of services that IRWA offers, could simply overwhelm this introduction piece... so, instead, I will be bringing it to your door step in the very near future.

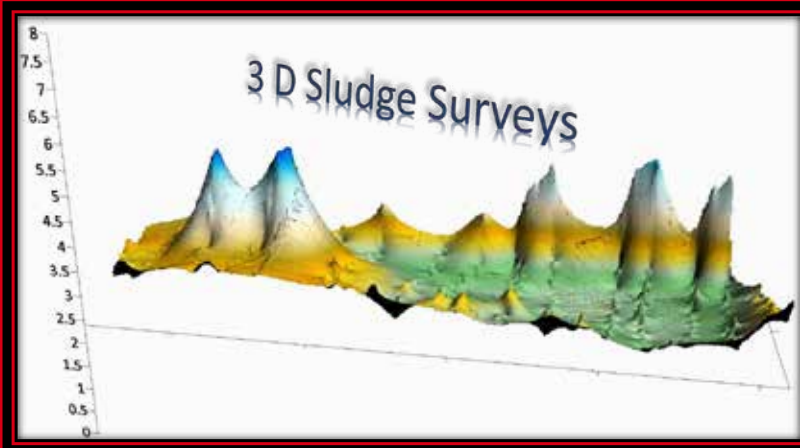
And, prior to that, if you have a question, I can be reached at 217-820-5544, or you can email me at: [Dakin@ilrwa.org](mailto:Dakin@ilrwa.org). If I do not have the answer, I will do my best to bring it to our IRWA Team, and find the best answer I can for you! Until then, thank you for your time! 💧



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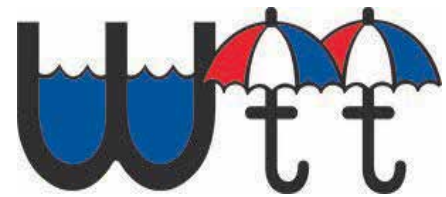
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# PFAS Cost Recovery Program

## Phase 2

In partnership with the National Rural Water Association and Napoli Shkolnik PLLC, we are sharing this call to action with you concerning the Phase 2 Settlement Deadline for the PFAS Cost Recovery Program.

### Is this supported by our Association?

Yes, this program was initiated in 2018 when National Rural Water Association engaged the law firm of Napoli Law to file litigation on behalf of its members and all public water supplies. We encourage your system to register into the settlement to lessen the financial burden on your system and rate payers.

#### Act Now to Access Funding

Gain access to \$15.4 Billion Dollar Settlement for PFAS Detections and Contamination. Systems must register to receive this funding. There is zero cost to register into the program.

#### Who is Eligible?

Any public water system that has tested and found detections of ANY PFAS chemical, at any level, is eligible to receive an award from this settlement based on level of detection and maximum daily flows. This includes all 29 PFAS compounds included in the UCMR5 monitoring rule.

#### Deadlines and Urgency

##### 3M/DuPont Settlements

- Phase 1 of the 3M/DuPont settlement has ended.
- Phase 2 of the settlement is now open for systems that tested after June 22, 2023. The deadline to register in the program to be eligible for the settlement is **July 12, 2026**.

##### Additional Settlements

- Twelve other companies are in the settlement process with no set deadlines yet. Napoli Law will ensure your system is included in all applicable settlements.



##### Contingent Cost

There is no cost to register into the cost recovery program. Your utility will have no costs unless Napoli Law recovers funds for your system.



##### How much will my utility receive?

The amount will depend on the level of detection, the compound detected, and maximum daily flows.



##### Unrestricted Funds

There are no strings attached to the funding your system receives; the decision to utilize funds is at the discretion of the utility. There are no approvals or reporting requirements.



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## Laboratory Choices and Consequences

by Mary Reed,  
IRWA Compliance Assurance Specialist

As we move into the early months of the new year your water system will need to evaluate the cost of your annual monitoring and what laboratory you choose to do business with for the new fiscal year. There are considerations to think about when choosing a lab so let's dive into the nitty gritty.

In order for a public water supply to provide a safe, clean, adequate supply of water for your customers you must make sure that your facility is properly constructed, operated and maintained. However, proper construction, operation and maintenance alone cannot guarantee the safety or quality of the water. It is necessary to collect representative samples of water and have them analyzed by a certified laboratory. Sampling, combined with proper operation and record keeping, can be a way of confirming the safety and quality of the water that you are distributing to your customers.

The monitoring requirements for your public water supply will be based on the source of water you are distributing; groundwater, surface water, purchased water, and the population served. Other factors that may determine your monitoring schedule are the incorporation of new regulations, and/or contaminant detections that may trigger additional monitoring requirements or change the monitoring frequency.

It is highly recommended that the responsible operator in charge or the sample collector periodically (at least quarterly) download a new schedule since monitoring schedules can change frequently. The current monitoring schedules can be found on the Illinois EPA's Drinking Water Watch database. If you need assistance in accessing your monitoring schedule you can call me Monday to Thursday until 1 pm at 217-561-8376 and I will walk you through the process.

<https://water.epa.state.il.us/dww/index.jsp>

It is also very important that the sample collector understands the sample collection requirements for each type of monitoring your system must do. The sampling locations and sampling procedures will be different depending on the type of samples being collected and if they are not followed it may result in re-sampling or violations. The majority of the laboratories in Illinois will provide your system with sampling instructions along with the chain of custody for the samples to be collected.

The State of Illinois has adopted all federal MCLs and also has adopted several states only drinking water standards (no federal MCL). The categories are as follows:

**Microbiological:** Total Coliform, E. coli

**Inorganics:** Nitrates, Nitrites, Metals

**Organics:** VOCs, SOCs

**Disinfection Byproducts:** TTHMs, HAA5

**Lead & Copper Rule:** Tiered sampling, dependent upon inventories

**PFAS:** New regulations and expand monitoring and guidance later this year

**Radionuclides:** combined radium, gross alpha, and uranium, for

applicable systems

**Physical and Aggregate Properties:** Color, conductivity, hardness, alkalinity, odor, residues (solids), turbidity, salinity, asbestos, acidity, pH

When choosing a laboratory, you want to be sure that they are accredited by NELAP, The National

Environmental Laboratory Accreditation authority. You should ask them if they are IEPA-certified for the required methods for each of the contaminant categories listed above and if not, do they sub-contract your samples out to another laboratory. If so, will the sample results still be electronically submitted to IEPA?

Does the lab offer courier, pickup, or drop-off options? This can be especially important for rural systems. Do they have staff available for questions or problems with bottles or sampling procedures? Does the lab offer the ability to request rush samples or samples on weekends or holidays if needed? Do they report the results electronically to the Illinois EPA? These are all important questions to ask before choosing a lab partner for your monitoring.

You will also want to be sure that the lab can meet the turnaround time for your reporting deadlines, normally 10 days after the end of the monitoring period. However, if you collect very late in the monitoring period, realize that no matter what the lab does they may not be able to report on time. That is why it is so important to collect your samples as early in the monitoring period as possible. Be aware that the DBPs may require a very specific timeframe for collection if your system is on quarterly monitoring. You can check drinking water watch (DWW) and confirm that the laboratory has electronically submitted your samples before the deadline passes. If you don't see the results in DWW that means that the IEPA compliance unit does not have the results either.

There have been instances in the last year where your water system may have received a monitoring violation, but it was due to an issue with the laboratory and not your failure to collect and/or report the samples on time. If this happens to your system there is not really any recourse that you can take, but you can make it very clear in the public notification that you did collect on time, and the violation was not by fault of the water system. Make sure to include a detailed description of the laboratory failure in the "what happened" section of the public notification.

I am available to review your public notifications and annual consumer confidence reports after you have developed them but prior to submitting them to the IEPA, this way you can correct any omissions or errors. These documents can be hosted



on the IRWA's website for a fee. I can be reached at reed@ilrwa.org or by phone at 217-561-8376, Monday to Thursday from 7:30 am to 1:00 pm for more information.

### Due Date Reminders

- **LSL Inventory and replacement plan updates** – April 15th
- **Annual distribution material inventory notices to LSL, GRR, and unknowns** – 12 months from last time your notices were sent, no less than once per calendar year. Do NOT forget to certify to the IEPA that this has been completed.
- **Submittal of school/childcare certification for previous year** - July 1st reporting for the previous calendar year. 2025 Certification form is due July 1, 2026.

- **Lead Consumer Notifications** – to customers within 30 days of receiving results, certification to IEPA within 90 days of the end of current monitoring period, i.e. December 31st (annual), October 31st and March 31st for 6-month systems.
- **Public Notification Certification** – due to IEPA within 10 days after issuance of PN.
- **Consumer Confidence Report** – deliver to your customers by July 1st, submit completed CCR certification form, copy of CCR, URL notification (if applicable) by July 10th. 💧

## National Rural Water Association Encourages Water and Wastewater Utilities to be on Alert during this time of Geopolitical Unrest

The National Rural Water Association (NRWA) is encouraging heightened awareness and vigilance at water and wastewater utilities. The current geopolitical environment may lead to increased Iranian cyber activity or associated physical security threats to the Water and Wastewater Sector.

### What is the threat?

Last week, U.S. and Israeli forces launched coordinated military strikes against Iran, targeting key sites including military installations, nuclear sites, and high-ranking officials. Military strikes against Iran will likely continue in the coming weeks. As a result, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security has warned that Iranian-affiliated cyber threat actors may target information and operational technology networks and devices of U.S. infrastructure, including water and wastewater utilities.

Historically, amid geopolitical escalation/tension, Iran-aligned threat actors and others have conducted cyberattacks against U.S. critical infrastructure, including the Water and Wastewater Sector. These actors may launch disruptive cyberattacks targeting unsecured networks and devices, exploiting unpatched or outdated software, using default or common passwords, and conducting brute-force attacks. Iranian-affiliated cyber actors may exploit these vulnerabilities to disrupt physical operations or conduct ransomware attacks against water and wastewater utilities.

Additionally, while the threat of targeted physical attacks in the U.S. is low, current geopolitical tension could also inspire domestic extremists to conduct acts of violence.

### How can systems reduce risk?

NRWA is encouraging water and wastewater owners and operators to take actions to improve their security posture and mitigate cyber threats. Drinking water and wastewater systems are encouraged to implement the following measures:

- Replace all default passwords with strong, unique passwords.
- Reduce exposure to the public-facing Internet.
- Implement multifactor authentication utilizing at least two independent credential types (Prioritize remote access to networks and devices.)
- Perform software updates to enhance performance, fix bugs, and close security vulnerabilities. When updating software, always visit the vendor's site directly rather than clicking on advertisements or email links.
- Limit access and credentials by enforcing the principle of least privilege, ensuring users only have necessary permissions. This includes revoking access to staff and contractors when access is no longer necessary.
- Be on the lookout for phishing and social engineering threats that focus on deceiving individuals to gain confidential information. These tactics may use fake emails, websites, or texts to steal data or install malware.

Also, be aware of suspicious physical activity. This can be an incident, event, behavior, or activity that seems unusual or out of place. Terrorists and criminals often conduct specific activities as they plan a bombing attack. These activities can include, but are not limited to, eliciting information, testing or probing of security, and observation/surveillance. 💧

# The Future is Flowing: Apprenticeship Program Update and Success Story

by Jeff Tumiati,  
IRWA Apprenticeship Coordinator

As always, it's my pleasure to provide updates for the apprenticeship program both nationally and locally. As of March 25, 2026 nationwide, there are thirty-five states that have active apprenticeship programs which represents seven hundred and ten active apprentices, and five hundred eighty-seven completed graduates.

In Illinois, we currently have forty-one active apprentices. Of those, twenty-eight are in the water training program, and thirteen are in wastewater program. Fourteen have completed the program, and have already obtained various levels of IEPA certification. We couldn't be more proud of all of our apprentices. And, I'm truly honored to be able to be a small part in an ongoing effort to recruit career seekers into the Water/Wastewater industry.

The Illinois Rural Water Association continues to partner with high schools, community colleges, and trade schools, present at career fairs, and Job Expos. Our hope is that sometime in the future, we can offer a youth apprenticeship. This would allow high school students preparing to enter the workforce, to shadow incumbent workers currently in both the water and wastewater field. Creating a pathway to a career in the industry. With a large portion of the water/wastewater workforce nearing retirement, there's an urgency to pass down the knowledge. Estimates show that about 30 to 50 percent of drinking water and wastewater professionals, will be eligible to retire within the next 5 to 10 years. And that the median age of water/wastewater employees is around 48 years of age, with only 8% of the water workforce being under 24 years of age. Young workers often see the water/wastewater sector as traditional or outdated.

Apprenticeships help shift that narrative by offering better career pathways...by providing mentorship and hands-on experience, offering paid and structured training without requiring a four year degree. And, the demand for skilled professionals in our industry has never been greater. The apprenticeship programs offer a powerful solution by blending hands-on experience with classroom learning, to prepare the next generation of water/wastewater operators, technicians, and environmental stewards.

The NRWA Apprenticeship Program is the first nationally recognized United States Department of Labor Registered Apprenticeship program for both water and wastewater system operators. The program starts as a job, but emerges as a solid and secure career. It was designed to help meet the increasing demands of our industry's workforce. With such a large portion of the water/wastewater workforce nearing retirement, smaller utilities (many with fewer than three employees) are struggling to recruit and retain younger workers into these critical and technical roles.

Illinois Rural Water Association currently has several eligible applicants waiting for their chance to get started on their journey into a great career that the water and wastewater fields have to offer. If you are thinking of hiring additional staff, please give one of our eligible applicants your consideration.



Another great success story is nine apprentices recently completed the apprenticeship training program. Those Operations Specialists are now operating water/wastewater facilities located around the state of Illinois. The graduates in attendance at the IRWA 44th Annual Technical Conference, were recognized and presented awards at the opening session ceremony. Congratulations for your commitment and dedication!



*Pictured left to right Coordinator Jeff Tumiati Apprentices Fisher O'hara City of Beardstown, Christian Vacker Village of Kincaid, Joe Garrett and Dan Bowen Urbana/Champaign Sanitary District and Training Director Mac Lemrise*

The National Rural Water Apprenticeship Program is changing the Rural Water Workforce one person and one utility system at a time...both today and into the future.

*"Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire."  
— Commonly attributed to W.B. Yeats*


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