



Water Ways

Volume XII — Winter 2015



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ARTICLES

Year In Review	by Frank Dunmire	4
Sportsman's Raffle.....		6
Opportunity	by Greg Bates	9
Winter Word Search.....		10
33rd Annual Technical Conference.....		12
Registration Form		16
James W. Jardine		
Water Purification Plant.....	by Mark E. Mitchell	19
Meters – Asset or Liability?.....	by Chuck Woodworth	20
IRWA Training.....		21
Bugs...and Good Ones!.....	by Evan Jones	22
Nifty at Fifty.....	by Liz Bourne	23
Member Services:		
GPS/GIS Mapping.....		25
Video Inspection		25
What's In It For Me?.....		26

MISSION STATEMENT

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

On the Cover:

Picture of deer in a wooded area in Northern 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. Articles and photographs are encouraged. Advertising and submissions should be mailed to the above address or e-mail us at ilrwadb@ilrwa.org.



LIST OF ADVERTISERS

American Flow Control.	17
Cady Aquastore.....	27
CEU Plan.....	11
CoBank.....	18
Coe Equipment, Inc.....	18
Crawford, Murphy & Tilly, Inc.	6
Curry & Associates.....	18
DN Tanks	7
Flo Systems.....	18
Heneghan & Associates, P.C.	9
Maguire Iron	5
Metropolitan Industries.....	8
Pittsburg Tank & Tower Maintenance .	4
Ressler & Associates.....	24
Schulte Supply, Inc.....	2
Taylor Coating Sales, Inc.	17
Test, Inc.	6
The Ford Meter Box Co., Inc.	7
United Systems & Software.....	11
USA Bluebook	28
Water Well Solutions.....	11

Year In Review

by Frank Dunmire,
IRWA Executive Director

In this, the first publication of the year, I will review some of the major events that took place during 2014.

USEPA Training and Technical Assistance (TAT) Program: After a one year funding hiatus the USEPA TAT program was funded for FY2014. Although the competitive funds were awarded to National Rural Water Association (NRWA) as a pass through grant to state affiliates, the funding levels were considerably lower than past awards. The funding received was further divided into 2 separate programs: a TAT program focused on SDWA compliance, and a TAT program focused on small publicly-owned and on-site/decentralized wastewater systems. The ratio of funding

dollars was roughly 75% SDWA TAT and 25% for WW TAT. As you all are most likely aware Wayne Nelson has administered our TAT program for years and he has devoted the past few months to satisfying the requirements of the SDWA training and technical assistance and will now be focusing his efforts on the wastewater training and technical assistance portion of the program. Even though we were a somewhat disappointed with the funding levels it was still better than another year of no funding. Several weeks ago USEPA announced grant awards for FY 2015 and it appears that the funding levels being awarded to NRWA will shrink by about another 10%. Negotiations are still ongoing as to what the individual requirements will be but one thing is for certain – there will be fewer dollars to work with in the new contract year.

Wastewater Program: Due to last year's sequestration, the amount of funding available nationally for the Wastewater grant fell short of the amount needed to retain all of the Wastewater Tech positions. Every effort was made to retain all positions in hopes that the funding level would be restored at a higher level for this year. Unfortunately, that has not taken place and it appears and the WW program was reduced by 7 positions nationwide. These programs are awarded to the states based on a ranking formula approved by the NRWA



and take into consideration such things as: number of community water supplies, land area and, in this instance, wastewater borrowers + combined water and wastewater borrowers. Luckily IRWA was not affected by this downsizing.

Circuit Rider Program:

Accompanying the months long delay in passing any appropriations bills came a reduction in the number of Circuit Rider positions available nationwide. In the middle of November, 8 positions were eliminated and I am pleased to say that Illinois was not one of the states that lost a position. Since November, most appropriation bills were passed and the Circuit Rider program was fully funded but we have not heard if and when the furloughed positions would be reinstated.

eCCR: This was the second year that consumer confidence reports could be posted on a website in lieu of publication or direct mail. Realizing that most small systems may not have the capabilities of posting their CCR IRWA

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continued on page 5

offered to post them on our server for a small fee. Several dozen systems availed themselves of the service and saved, at a minimum, several hundred dollars each. We will plan on continuing this service into the future.

SB 3507: This past summer Senate Bill 3507 was amended and passed. The synopsis of the bill that passed through the House and Senate read as follows: “Amends the Township Code.

Provides that a township board may, by ordinance establish and collect a charge for connection to a waterworks system or sewerage system, or combined waterworks and sewerage system to new users. Prohibits the charge from exceeding 1/6 of the user’s estimated annual charges for that class of service. Makes similar changes in the Illinois Municipal Code.”

This was a bill that we originally

slipped in opposition of but somehow slipped off of everyone’s radar screen (including ours). The bill had many flaws and through a concerted effort on the part of several other agencies and associations we were successful in getting the Governor to veto the Bill. Since there was no positive action taken during the veto session SB 3507 is now dead.

Hopefully the new year will be a bright one for all of us! 



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SPORTSMAN'S RAFFLE!

We are gearing up for our 8th year of the Sportsman's Raffle at our annual conference. This is a raffle of items that are donated by our exhibitors and other interested parties.

Primarily, we hold this raffle for Waterpac. This is the money collectively donated by each state association and the National Rural Water Association for lobbying efforts in Washington D.C. for funding of Rural Water programs.

With the money that is left after our donation to Waterpac, each year we have been able to purchase new equipment for our staff, so they are able to serve our members better.

If you would like to donate an item to the Sportsman's Raffle or would like more information, please call Heather at IRWA. 800-762-5011. We appreciate your support!!



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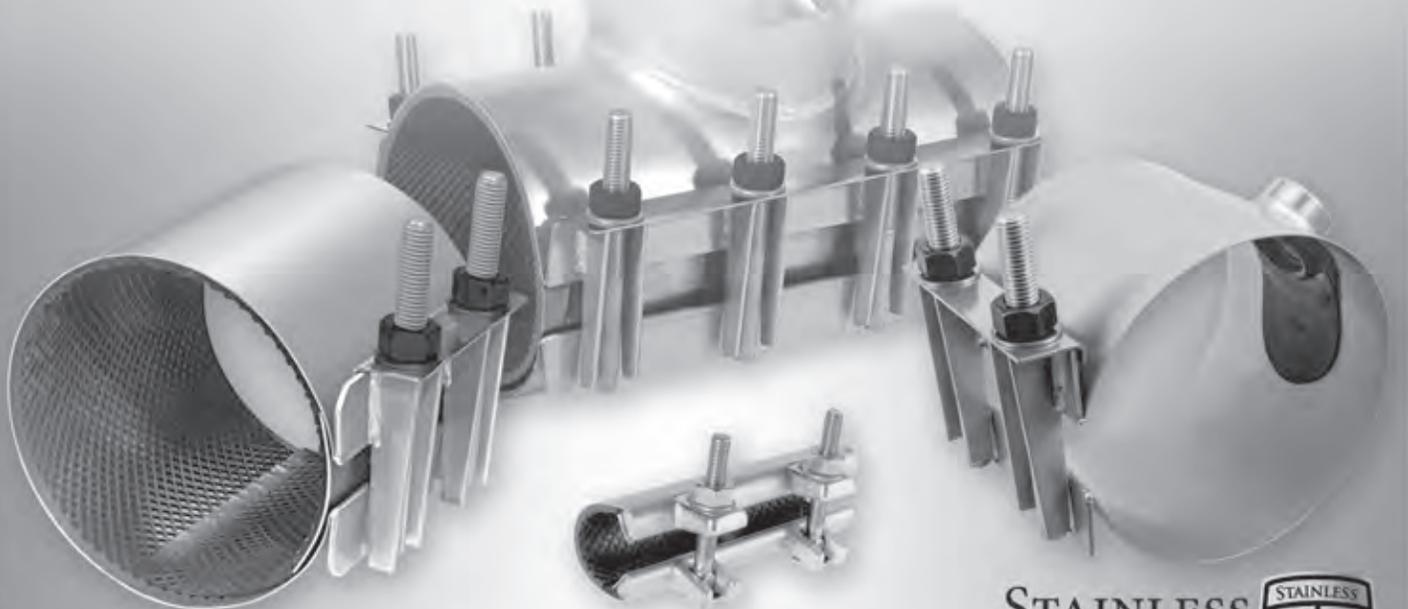
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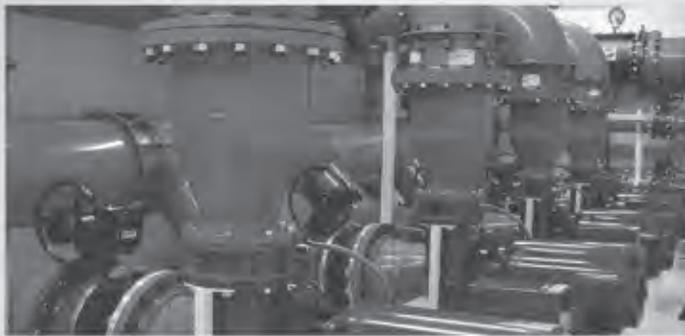


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Opportunity

by Greg Bates,
IRWA At Large Board Member,
IRWA Board President

As the end of yet another year quickly approaches, it allows us time to reflect back on what has been accomplished and what still needs to be done. Many of you are in the budget making stage of the year and with the tight economy, are finding that it seems downright impossible to fund everything that still needs to be done. With the lack of any new construction over the past several years, we were given the unusual opportunity to catch up on many of the maintenance items that were deferred for way too many years. This economic downturn afforded us the opportunity to get caught up on hydrant flushing/maintenance, valve exercising and replacement and my personal favorite – painting. Even though funds are tight and manpower may not be at the levels we would have liked, we still managed to find a way to complete some of the much needed maintenance items that had been put off for years.

We all have those little irritating issues such as valves that keep getting covered up, a slow leaking hydrant, a

valve that doesn't seat or even a meter lid that is up out of the ground that freezes every winter...especially when the customer removes the lid. What better time than now to create a listing of these smaller projects to create work orders to keep your staff occupied and yet not break the budget. Some of the bigger items may not need immediate attention and may need to be added to your budget list and deferred until funds finally become available. In our case, many of these maintenance items seemed to get done without too much of a financial burden as long as a "to do" list was in front of us. Many of these items were "cheap" fixes and just required having the extra time to do them was all that it took to make the list seek to become



shorter. Just as at home, we all know that the "to do" list never really gets shorter – as one item is checked off one or more are added. Even at that, as one project is completed it gives everyone involve a sense of accomplishment. Besides a never-ending list is job security. Create yours today! 💧

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Answer Key**

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Winter

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 K C H M R E T N I W E C D T V E K T C Y C
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 G S R N I R I C E F I S H I N G H C I M L
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 E O M Z D L K F F N N L Y C E F S Q R V S
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 M C J T O A S Q B W P K B O O T S A O V N
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REGISTRATION

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.

Pre-Registration:

To pre-register complete the registration form and mail with payment to:

IRWA
PO Box 49
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Or pay on-line with your credit card at www.ilrwa.org.

Pre-registration must be postmarked by February 6th, 2015.

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 17th 8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.
Wednesday, February 18th 8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.
Thursday, February 19th 8:00 a.m.-8:30 a.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. 98 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 17th 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.
Wednesday, February 18th 8:00 a.m.-3:15 p.m.

EXHIBITORS HOSPITALITY NIGHT

Tuesday, February 17th 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 17th

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

CASINO NIGHT

Wednesday February 18th 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 generators for disaster relief and sent a portion of the proceeds to rural water lobbying efforts in Washington D.C.

Tuesday, February 17th		Registration Open: 8:00 a.m.— 4:00 p.m.	
9:00 a.m.—10:00 a.m.	Opening/Awards Ceremony/RD Update		
10:00 a.m.—11:00 a.m.	Break/Exhibit Hall Opens		
	WATER	WASTEWATER	BREAKOUT
11:00 a.m.—12:00 p.m.	Power Loss Emergency		I & I Investigations—Basics, Methods & Tools
12:00 p.m.—1:00 p.m.	Lunch Buffet—Ticket Required		
1:00 p.m.—1:45 p.m.	Improving Performance & Maintaining Compliance via Filter Maintenance		Legal Issues facing your system
1:45 p.m.—2:30 p.m.	Protective Coatings & Linings of Potable Water Storage Tanks		
2:30 p.m.—3:00 p.m.	Break/Exhibitor Drawings		
3:00 p.m.—3:45 p.m.	Increasing Revenue/Improve Customer Service with AMI Metering		More legal issues facing your system
3:45 p.m.—4:30 p.m.	Self Service Trends in the Utility Industry		
4:30 p.m.	Water Taste Test		Annual Meeting
5:30 p.m.—8:30 p.m.	Hospitality Night		
Wednesday, February 18th		Registration Open: 8:00 a.m.— 4:00 p.m.	
8:00 a.m.	Exhibit Hall Opens		
9:00 a.m.—9:45 a.m.	Save That Tank! - Rehabbing & Retrofitting Concrete Tanks	Lift Station Math	Remote Ticket Entry
9:45 a.m.—10:30 a.m.	Why Mix Potable Water Tank &	IEPA –Bureau of Water	
10:30 a.m.—11:00 a.m.	Break/Exhibitor Drawings		
11:00 a.m.—12:00 p.m.	IEPA Regulatory Update		
12:00 p.m.—1:00 p.m.	Lunch Buffet/Ticket Required		
1:00 p.m.—1:45 p.m.	Records Documentation/ Identity Theft & Local Utilities	Smoke Testing	Fleet Risk Management
1:45 p.m.—2:30 p.m.			Sampling
2:30 p.m.—3:00 p.m.	Break/Exhibitor Drawings		
3:00 p.m.—3:45 p.m.	Identify Theft & Local Utilities continued	Roots—Control Methods	SmallWaterSupply.org
3:45 p.m.—4:30 p.m.	What to Know About Chlorine Gas		
6:00 p.m.—9:00 p.m.	Casino Night /Announcement of Sportsman Raffle Winners		
Thursday, February 19th		Registration Open: 8:00 a.m.— 9:00 a.m.	
7:30 a.m.—8:30 a.m.	Breakfast Buffet/Ticket Required		
8:30 a.m.—9:15 a.m.	Rural Water—Moving Forward or Repeat the Past		
9:15 a.m. — 10:00 a.m.	Potholing, Hydroexcavation & Valve Exercising		
10:00 a.m.—10:15 a.m.	Break		
10:15 a.m.– 11:45 a.m.	Meter Testing & Lost Revenue		
11:45 a.m.—12:00 p.m.	Closing Ceremony/Grand Prize Drawing		

SESSIONS AT A GLANCE

WATER SESSIONS

Rural Development Update—Mike Wallace; Rural Development—Hear about funding options for your water and/or wastewater projects.

Power Loss Emergency—Ted Padilla; City of Rock Falls—February 13, 2014; A day before Valentine's Day to remember. A case study of the water departments response to loss of power to the sewer main lift station.

Improving Performance & Maintaining Compliance via Filter Maintenance; Mike Polster, Utility Service Group—Proper Operation of your plant's filters can make the difference in hearing compliments or complaints.

Protective Coatings & Linings of Potable Water Storage Tanks—Erik Otten; Tnemec/Taylor Coating Sales—Maintaining your storage tanks is like getting your vehicle regularly serviced. You want to get the most out of these items. Hear how to get the most life from your tanks.

AMI Metering Program; Dan Cerrezuela, Utility Service Group—Reading water meters have come a long way over the years. Learn how to make this job a lot easier.

Self Service Trends in the Utility Industry—Jason Stinnett; CUSI—Today's consumers increasingly rely on self-service for payment and account management. Find out about what is available to utilities of all sizes.

Save That Tank! Rehabbing & Retrofitting Concrete Tanks - Jerry Myers & Adam Blazer; DN Tanks—Covers the potential for rehabbing and retrofitting concrete tanks for plant upgrades, improving performance and saving money.

Why Mix Potable Water Tank & How to Remove THMs—Michael Christensen; Medora Corporation—There are reports that say that 65% of all water tanks have water quality issues. Find out how mixing can solve these problems. This presentation will also explain methods to reduce your high THMs.

IEPA Regulatory Update—Mary Reed & Andrea Rhodes; IEPA—A lot is changing in the world of water regs, especially in operator certification changes. These changes will be covered, as well as changes affecting current operators, and other regulatory changes.

Records & Documentation—Chrissie L. Peterson; Heyl, Royster, Voelker & Allen—What records should be created & kept in the course of business, when responding to a violation notice from the IEPA and what records are subject to FOIA and what must be disclosed.

Identify Theft and Local Utilities—Chrissie L. Peterson; Heyl, Royster, Voelker & Allen—Guidelines for complying with federal and state regulations protecting customers' information from identity theft; training on the Fair and Accurate Credit Transactions Act and how to protect the confidential information that is necessary to recover unpaid bills.

Gas Chlorine—Geza Ehrentreu; Viking Chemical—It's the most inexpensive and strongest disinfectant out there, but like most chemicals, we have to respect it. Learn how to do just that.

Rural Water-Moving Forward or Repeat the Past—Jim Maras; CoBank—Discuss the present and past success of rural water, look into industry trends in the industry, operational and management issues. How does the future look?

Potholing, Hydroexcavation & Valve Exercising— Key Equipment & Supply—A look at multi-purpose equipment that can clean valve boxes, hydroexcavate and exercise valves.

Meter Testing & Lost Revenue — Ben Morman; Midwest Meter—Find out how to test your meters and see how much money you are losing due to those inaccurate meters.

WASTEWATER SESSIONS

Lift Station Math—John Bell; IRWA—When the metering fails, we will show the steps to take to determine your pump flow.

IEPA Bureau of Water Update—Scott Twait; IEPA—Find out about any changes going on in wastewater regulations.

Smoke Testing—John Bell & Evan Jones; IRWA—Where is all the water coming from? A quick and easy method to determine inflow to the sewer system

Controlling Tree Roots in Sewers — Chad Smeltzer; Dukes Root Control—Understanding the basics of tree root growth and the impacts they have on our collection system. The fundamentals and the implications of a chemical root control program will be taught.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

I & I Investigations - Basics, Methods & Tools; Jim Bone, Key Equipment—Basic information on investigating inflow & infiltration, methods used, and newer tools available.

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.

Remote Ticket Entry—Roger Watwood; J.U.L.I.E—Remote Ticket Entry (RTE) is a program that lets excavators who frequently call JULIE enter their own locate requests.

Fleet Risk Management: More Than Vehicle Inspections; Kenny Smith; OneBeacon Government Risks—This discussion will review national auto claim trends, provide suggestions and insight for reducing auto liability by updating policies and procedures.

Bad Sampling Leads to Bad Results—Andy Groeper; Suburban Laboratories—Each method has specific sampling requirements from the type of bottle to the type of preservative. This presentation provides an overview of how to ensure a proper sample.

SmallWaterSupply.org—Steve Wilson; IL State Water Survey—Hear about this useful website and how to find the information you need!



2015 Annual Technical Conference

February 17-19, 2015

REGISTRATION FORM

Must be completed for all attendees

(Please photo copy for each attendee)



NAME FOR BADGE: _____

SYSTEM: _____

MAILING ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE _____ ZIP: _____

PHONE NUMBER: _____ E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____

Registrations must be postmarked by February 6, 2015 to receive pre-registration pricing

FULL REGISTRATION: (Includes technical sessions, exhibit hall, meals & activities for all 3 days)

- Member—\$175.00 Spouse—\$175.00
- Non-Member—\$225.00 Non-Member Individual Joining as a Member + Conference—\$223.00

ONE DAY REGISTRATION: (Includes technical sessions, exhibit hall, meals & activities for 1 day only)

- Member—\$145.00 Spouse—\$145.00
- Non-Member—\$195.00 Non-Member Individual Joining as a Member + Conference—\$193.00

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

TUESDAY WEDNESDAY THURSDAY

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James W. Jardine Water Purification Plant

*by Mark E. Mitchell,
IRWA Source Water Protection Specialist*

Last summer the Illinois Rural Water Association's Board of Directors, Staff and one Unit Manager of the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency; Groundwater Section were invited to tour the City of Chicago, more specifically the James W. Jardine Water Purification Plant.

It took us a few months of planning and coordinating schedules, but on October 14, 2014, those that were able to schedule the time to do so, planned to make the trip to Chicago, via Amtrak, beginning in Springfield and boarding the train at points in between with one staff member driving in from the northwest.

By all accounts the trip between Springfield and Chicago via Amtrak was a very easy ride with free Wi-Fi on board so everyone got a lot of work done on the way, or at least "that's what I heard". With a cab ride from Union Station to James W. Jardine Water Purification Plant, we arrived at the Plant's Security Gate where we were checked through security and then ushered up to the main entrance where we were given the warmest welcome you could ever hope to get by Alan Stark, Deputy Director of the Department of Water Management for the City of Chicago and two other employees who would help Alan give us a full guided tour of the facility.

I will not say much in this article about the inner workings and security measures in place at this plant, but I will say that if some of our members were to ever get an opportunity to tour this plant, they would learn how to take security measures on a very serious level. This plant treats water in the same way all conventional surface water purification plants do, but on a grandiose scale.

To the scale of an average of 1 billion (that's with a B) gallons per day. This plant and the South Water Purification Plant, supply all the water to the roughly 5 million people in the City of Chicago and surrounding suburbs. We were taken on a tour through the plant from where the water enters the plant, the screening process, the pumping to the chemical feed area, the gravity feed of water through the flocculation and settling basins and finally the massive gravity sand & gravel filters.

This marvelous feat of engineering was built in a time of manual labor and without the large power equipment we enjoy using to build infrastructure today. We were allowed to view the sub-levels of the plant and see the massive (I have simply run out of words to describe the vastness of this plant) water intakes that come in from the offshore intakes out in Lake Michigan.

Our hosts could not have been more congenial and those who rode the train



were chauffeured back to Union Station by employees of the Chicago Water Department in a final gesture of goodwill.

All in all the Illinois Rural Water Association was treated to a day in the life of "Big City" water purification. I think any of us who were able to go would tell you, "If you ever have the opportunity to take this tour, do not miss it!" If you can get there by auto, by rail or by air, not one of us were sorry we made the trip. 💧



Meters – Asset or Liability?

by Chuck Woodworth,
IRWA Circuit Rider

The last article I provided was published in the May-June 2014 issue of the T.A.B. The T.A.B. is the association newsletter that is sent to our members every other month in an effort to get information to them concerning training updates, legislative information, associate member news, system news and the latest update in regulations and technology. In the May-June 2014 issue I discussed the need to keep meters updated and working correctly. I wanted to expand on that in this magazine. Before I continue with this article I want to point out that I am not working for any meter company on the side, I don't make any commissions if you buy new meters and I am not bashing the brand of meters you have in your system nor am I promoting a certain brand of meter, just the need to keep meters working properly and providing you with the most revenue possible.

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? I'm going to make up a water system, Chuck's Water System is a rural water district that was built in 1985 by using the Rural Development loan and grant program. Everything in the system was new in 1985. Chuck's Water System has 200 meters. For several years since 1985 Chuck's Water system has purchased and sold approximately 1 million gallons per month. The last couple of years the amount of water sold has been declining, last month the system purchased 1000000 gallons. The water sold has decreased to 950000. $1000000 - 950000 = 50000$. $50000 / 1000000 = .05$ The meters at Chuck's Water System are reading 5% inaccurate. Chuck's Water system gave away 50000 gallons last month due to meters being 29 years old.

Yesterday I was at a small system who purchases water from a parent supply, because of the unaccountable water they thought they had a leak. The system only has 135 meters and about 30 fire hydrants. We went to each one to listen for leak sounds, only found one fire hydrant that needed to be closed a little more, Other than that no leak sounds were found anywhere. The master meter was flowing at 17 gallons per min and would appear to almost stop turning every now and then. Most of the meters in town was said to be about 35 years old, one of which is a 3 inch meter.

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 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?"

A general rule of thumb is that household meters should be changed out after 15 years of service. Some manufactures recommend they be changed between 10 to 15 years and I have seen others say between 15 to 20 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 and there you go a meter tester. Be sure to record the readings on both meters before running water through them. Chances are if the meter is 30 years old or older it is costing you money. 💧

IRWA Training – 2015 Tentative Schedule



Illinois Rural Water Association 2015 Tentative Training Schedule

February 5, 2015	Freeport	Distribution System O. & M.	Water
April 8, 2015	Riverton	System O & M / How to do all that Paperwork	Water
May 29, 2015	Wenona	Wastewater A to Z	Wastewater

List of Water Audit Training Seminars

(please see our website for more details or call the office and ask for a brochure)

February 10, 2015	Peoria
February 11, 2015	Champaign
February 24, 2015	Mt. Zion
February 25, 2015	Sparta
March 3, 2015	Olney
March 4, 2015	Vandalia
March 10, 2015	Hudson
March 11, 2015	Jacksonville
April 7, 2015	Maryville
April 8, 2015	Cartersville
April 9, 2015	Taylorville
April 21, 2015	Springfield
April 22, 2015	Macomb

*****THIS IS A TENTATIVE SCHEDULE. OUR WEBSITE (WWW.ILRWA.ORG) WILL REFLECT THE LATEST CHANGES AS WELL AS CURRENT TRAINING TO REGISTER FOR. PLEASE CALL THE OFFICE AT 217-287-2115 WITH ANY QUESTIONS.**

Bugs...and Good Ones!

*by Evan Jones,
IRWA Circuit Rider*

On December 2, 2014, I was at the local mechanic's shop to have the IRWA truck serviced before I started my rounds to all the members in my area. As I was standing there in the shop, shooting the bull with the unlucky guy that got to do my oil change that time around, the owner walked into the shop and saw me there. He got this great big smile on his face and said, "YOU ARE THE MAN I WANTED TO TALK TO!" I know that in our business, this is the point that we start looking for an exit, because we never know if someone is going to start discussing their high water bill or the way their street was plowed in the last snow storm. Since the truck was up on the lift, with no oil in it at the time, I had nowhere to run - ha. But, I did relax a little, having known this particular man all of my life.

As the owner made his way across the shop, I could see that look in his eye... that he wanted a favor. Now I don't know about all of you, but my mechanic is one of those wheeler dealers that will and can buy, sell, or trade anything; and make a hundred bucks without even moving from his seat or laying eyes on what he's dealing in at the time. So those things were all going through my head, and all I could come up with is... this is going to cost me some money.

He finally made it over to me, and talked to me about his trip last weekend, to the camp ground to winterize his camper. I knew this guy has an old camper that he got in one of his trade deals, where he came out on top... At least that is what he thought, when he did this deal.

He began by saying, that Sunday morning, he started to drain his wastewater tank to put in the antifreeze, but as

he opened the valve, nothing came out. Not thinking that was really all that odd, because his family uses the house shower for everything, he closed the valve, went inside and dumped about two gallons of the pink RV antifreeze into the toilet, tripped the lever and nothing happened. The valve opened, but the liquid just didn't go anywhere. So then he thought he was in need of a new toilet. He got some towels to clean out the antifreeze, and when he finished, he inspected the toilet, then hit the lever to try and find the problem. As he was tripping the handle, he kept looking in and thought that it did not look right.

Come to find out, when he did this hum-dinger of a deal, he had looked at the camper thoroughly, and saw that the waste tank gauge said FULL. He assumed that the gauge was just broken and stuck, as the guy he was getting it from never had used it. Well, as you are figuring out now and probably starting to smile, it was full of waste. And, it had been, as far as he could figure, for about three years! So my mechanic went and got a stick to see how this was going to work. He discovered that it was as hard as a brick. Being a Sunday late afternoon, at that point, he had few options. So he got on a RV website, to see if he could get an idea on how to get this solid two hundred gallon "brick of gold" out of his tank. The only things that the people posted for this were two options. One.... he could buy a new tank (which in this case, the camper is literally built around the tank) or two.... contact the local wastewater plant operator. So, it was at that point, that I figured out why he was looking for me.

Then, it was my turn to have a big smile; and I started saying to myself that



this was going to cost someone... just not me. So the mechanic just stood there looking at me saying, "Well I'm asking- what do I do?" I replied that "it won't be fun putting a new waste tank in that camper". He didn't find that a bit funny... like I and all of his employees did, as they had been listening to the whole story. He finally said "Is that my only choice?" And all I replied back to him was, "you need bugs and good ones." He looked at me like I just fell off the apple cart. As you all know that's what makes our plants work....the bugs.

So I explained to him what I meant, and how the whole process works. He said that's all fine and dandy, and asked where he could purchase them. My answer to him was, to go buy a bunch of yeast packets and some beer. He looked at me and said, "Really.... beer"? I told him that beer has got the active ingredients needed; and to mix the yeast with hot water and put a couple cans of warm beer in the top occasionally stirring and adding more as needed. I told him the key was to keep the tank warm and the bugs active.

He was happy to call the other day, and announce that the treatment is working on breaking down that gold brick that he was blessed with. He now has

continued on page 24

I tore open yet another long white envelope and pulled out the contents, the predictable 'Still Nifty at Fifty' stared at me from the gaudily colored card with its inane cartoon face leering up at me. I opened it to discover it was from Jill, my neighbor. Sighing, I placed it alongside the array of good wishes from other friends and relatives. They all showed middle aged females in varying forms of decomposition, apart that is, from the one with its lurid fluorescent green badge proclaiming 'fifty and proud of it'. On balance, I thought I preferred the decaying women.

On the mantelpiece, alongside the wedding photograph of me and Brendan on our wedding day, was the picture of our daughter, Randy, and her new baby, Isabel. Although I was thrilled to be a grandmother, and loved the baby to bits, psychologically, being 'granny' is very depressing. It conjured up pictures of white haired old ladies and knitting, something I had tried only the once with such disastrous consequences that I had never again picked up a knitting needle.

I went back to the bedroom to get dressed. Remembering the article I had been reading the previous evening about cosmetic surgery, I heaved my ample bosom up to see whether a boob job would make a vast difference to the effects of fifty years of gravity. Looking in the mirror, all I had succeeded in achieving was a soft pillow for my second chin to rest on. Oh well, I would just have to stick to the Gossard balcony bra to provide the necessary scaffolding apparatus to contain my curves. Perhaps I should try a tummy tuck, but another glance in the mirror confirmed my fear that even an industrial fork lift truck

might have a problem heaving all my wobbly bits into the right places, and that would only be after serious liposuction!

I opened my underwear drawer and pulled out my comfortable and sensible knickers. How on earth today's young girls managed to cope with thongs was beyond me. You couldn't even work out which bit to put your legs into without the aid of a labelled diagram. I comforted myself with the thought that Hugh Grant had been turned on by Bridget Jones' big pants. I walked down the stairs for breakfast, depressing myself by wondering how long it would be before I had to think of installing a stair lift to make this journey.

Wandering into the kitchen, I pulled a bowl from the cupboard, and emptied the end of a box of bran flakes into it. These were chosen carefully by me at the supermarket for their high fibre content and added vitamins designed to stave off the inevitable age related medical conditions. Pouring on the low fat milk, I marvelled that once upon a time my body had actually coped with full fat dairy milk and cocoa pops. As I picked up a spoon to eat I opened her copy of FIFTY magazine which was lying on the table, having arrived this morning as a birthday present joke from my friend Tina. I had finally given up on Cosmo when it started to make me feel inadequate both in the kitchen and the bedroom, especially when it combined the two activities and suggested uses for chocolate I hadn't contemplated even in my wildest fantasies. I had switched to 'The Domestic Female' as a less threatening alternative; gloomily I thought I might now have to make do with FIFTY.

Crunching my way through the bran flakes, thinking about how long it might be before my teeth protested and I had to settle for sloppy porridge instead, my eye was caught by an article about fifty year old women and incontinence. 'Dear God' I breathed, not that as well. For the cost of a postage stamp, you could receive one free continence pad. Quickly I flipped the page over and started to read about 'planning for the funeral you want'. I hadn't realized that fifty was so far advanced that I had to plan my funeral. When I turned the page and read 'Have you made your will?' I decided to put off any further depressing news for another day. Being fifty was obviously a very serious time of life.

Putting my hand in my pocket, I pulled out the one letter I hadn't opened yet. I didn't open it at once; I knew exactly who it was from. It was from Wilkins, the garage in the next town. My new car was ready for collection today. I had ordered it months ago, when the kids and Brendan had suggested that as I was nearly fifty, I get myself a more sensible car than my sporty 206. I had listened very carefully, and taken their words to heart, going to the garage that very afternoon and ordering my new vehicle. I had negotiated my way to a very good price, and had received a year's tax and a manufacturer's warranty. Brendan told me how sensible I had been. Now the day had arrived for its collection, appropriately enough my 50th birthday. I walked into the garage and signed the paperwork. Mr. Brent, the salesman, opened the car door for me and I climbed in.

Leaning back in the seat, I started the engine. The bright red sports car

continued on page 24

Nifty at Fifty

*continued from
page 23*

purred as my foot went down on the accelerator. I sped onto the motorway and soon touched 100mph. Exhilarated and laughing to myself, I opened the bar of high fat milk chocolate and turned up Radio One as loud as I could. Blow it, fifty - who cared. I pressed the button for the roof to go down and tossed my greying hair laughing as the wind caught it and blew it around my fifty year old face. Fifty was definitely a state of mind I wasn't going to enter into just yet!

About the Author

Liz Bourne is an author and freelance trainer writing articles and books both for fun and for self help and training. She also writes training workshops for other people to teach as well as designs and delivers workshops herself. 💧

Bugs...and Good Ones!

*continued from
page 22*

another issue that he said I need to take care of with his wife, and that is the fact that their RV smells like a brewery.

Now the great thing that I thought of from all this was, why can't more people suggest wastewater operators for more advice from our line of work. It was really nice to be able to help a member of the public with an issue such as this. He got a new respect for what treatment plant operators do on a daily basis.

In short, make sure you winterize your equipment early enough so that when you run into a problem like this, it can be solved before it freezes. Also, if it's too good to be true, it usually is. Hope you all had a wonderful Christmas and a Happy New Year! See you in the field. 💧



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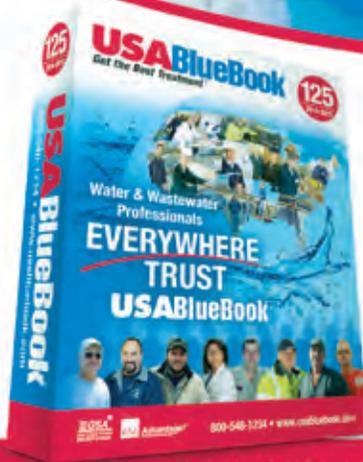


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