

2022

RURAL WATER 2022
ANNUAL
REPORT



“Assisting, educating and representing our members in the wise use of water resources”

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Dean Bergstrom (Cumberland)

On behalf of the board and myself, we would like to welcome you to the 2023 WRWA 35th Annual Technical Conference. Rural water staff, committees and board members have been busy putting together another one of the largest technical and training conferences in the state. I would like to thank everyone who has helped and supported us in this endeavor. I want to update you on some of the happenings from the past year at WRWA. We have been working with the Village of Plover to purchase land that lies directly to the west of the current WRWA office building. We are very close to finalizing the purchase of the property and hope to have it ready for our next Operator Expo in August. There will be a potential new area for vendors and additional parking. Stay tuned for further details.

Last September, WRWA staff along with board members Tom Tietz and Rob Nelson, attended the National Rural Water Association Water Conference in National Harbor, Maryland (the Washington D.C. area). They attended training sessions discussing funding, PFAS and emerging contaminants and other water issues that are affecting the entire country. The Exhibit Hall was full of the newest technology in the water field. Thank you to all of those who represented Wisconsin Rural Water Association. The LCRR and PFAS funding we fought for in 2021 is now coming to our rural membership and is very welcomed. Our connections with our federal representatives and governor are paying off through access to grants and loans from both the USDA Rural Development and the state SRF programs. We can remove lead and test for PFAS at a much more affordable rate and help our customers on the private side with replacing lead lines on their properties. Our National Rural Water's Washington D.C. Water Rally was held on February 6-9, 2023. Kevin Mraz, Gene Larson, Hershel Marks and Chris Groh visited four congressmen and Senator Tammy Baldwin. They advocated for continued funding of the USDA Rural Development Grants and Loans and also continuation of our Technical Assistant training programs. It is always important for us to be highly represented in Washington D.C., as many of our dollars come from the Federal Government.

We also have a new board member. Steve Bien from North Fond du Lac, who replaced Jim Jacobs from Ripon on the board, will finish his term. Welcome Steve! Thank you for your participation and help so far. In addition, our very own WRWA staff member, Jeff LaBelle, is retiring after being with WRWA for 23 years. Jeff has helped many operators over the years and his retirement will leave a big hole in our experience and knowledge base. Dan Wundrow, who will be replacing Jeff, will be taking over and helping with the training of operators in northern and western Wisconsin. Thank you Jeff for your many years of dedication to WRWA.

I would like to thank all our business members for their support and sponsorships. I would also like to thank the Sportsman's Raffle, which again is running bigger and better than ever. Thank you to all the vendors and the Sportsman's Raffle committee for their hard work and service to WRWA. Please make sure to stop into the vendor hall and thank all the vendors for their support of WRWA. In addition, I encourage you to purchase raffle tickets for prizes, as all the money comes back to WRWA and to yourselves. I would also encourage anyone who would like to be on either of the committees or on the WRWA board, to contact Chris Groh or one of your board member representatives and they will be happy to assist in getting you signed up. I hope everyone has a great 35th Annual Technical Conference and if there is anything we can do to improve the conference, please feel free to let us know. Thank you, be safe and enjoy the conference.

Sincerely,

Dean Bergstrom, WRWA President

NATIONAL DIRECTOR'S REPORT

By Kevin Mraz (Algoma SD)

Water Industry: Safe drinking water is the most vital commodity in our state, nation, and the world. The unfortunate part for our industry is we go largely unrecognized because we do such a great job providing uninterrupted service to our customers, until an emergency or crisis arises that reminds every one of our important role. For WRWA our greatest asset is all of our member water and wastewater utilities, staff, and operators that work tirelessly to provide customers with our essential service of providing safe drinking water and wastewater treatment 24/7/365 days a year.

Loan Funding: Your ability to provide uninterrupted water service is a balancing act between affording necessary infrastructure versus the financial impact on customer rates. NRWA has worked toward securing \$1.638 billion for clean water state revolving loan funds and \$1.126 billion for safe drinking water revolving loan funds. This funding of EPA programs is split between all the states and then allocated by the WDNR locally to provide low interest rate loans and access to the necessary funding for your utility projects. Please take the opportunity to meet with WDNR staff at our annual conference to discuss obtaining funding for your utility through these programs.

NRWA has also helped secure \$596 million of federal funds toward the USDA Water & Wastewater Disposal Loan and grant program. USDA will also have staff at the conference to discuss their funding opportunities.

Interim Financing: WRWA now has a program to offer members interim financing to cover expenses that happen between the start of your construction project and the time you take the first draw on either your SDWL, CWF, or USDA loan. This WRWA financing program offers a very low interest rate and has a seamless transition between the interim financing and your loan. The application process is a simple, one page document that has an automatic approval as long as you have been approved for the loans stated above, which your finance department will be glad to have. Please contact the WRWA office for more information and to start the interim financing.

PFOA and PFOS Litigation Update: The Multi-District Litigation has a bellwether case proceeding this year at the Federal District Court in South Carolina. The decision in this case will determine the future direction and liability for these man-made chemical compounds contaminating the water cycle. The attorneys representing water utilities stated they are pleased to

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report that on September 16, 2022, the Court issued an order denying the defendants' summary judgment motion, based on the "government contractor defense."

In the State of Wisconsin more than 180 utilities have signed up for this litigation. WRWA will continue to keep our membership updated as this case proceeds.

National Water Pro Conference: This Annual Conference will be held on September 25-27, 2023 in Aurora Colorado. This conference is open to everyone, and you can obtain training credits for DNR certification renewal by attending.

Apprenticeships and Workforce Development: Our rural water and wastewater utilities continue to have a challenge with staffing shortages nationwide. Locally our WRWA website currently has 40 job openings listed.

Nationally, in order to address this talent shortage, we have started an apprenticeship program that is now active in 34 states and may be coming to Wisconsin soon. NRWA is securing funding from the Department of

Labor to help start and grow the apprenticeship program in every state. Our apprenticeship program has been recognized by the White house and continues to expand while gaining national support.

NRWA is creating radio and TV advertisements that will bring attention and showcase our industry to generate interest in the apprenticeship program and our industry. We plan the first commercial and public service announcement hitting the airwaves in late 2023. I anticipate that this advertising campaign will bring excitement to our field and hopefully attract more candidates seeking career opportunities to our member utilities.

I look forward to seeing you at this year's WRWA Conference as it should be one of our best. We have assembled a great list of speakers and specialists that will be available to discuss, review, and make suggestions to provide insight and help improve your utility. Please take advantage of this opportunity and enjoy learning from all members of our association. Feel free to reach out to me directly if you have any questions or want my help in making introductions with our regulators or program specialists.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

by Chris Groh (Eau Claire)

Executive Director's Report

Chris Groh (Eau Claire)

2022 was a year of returning back to normalcy with some interesting upgrades to our business. We were coming out the Coronavirus and able to return to our usual face to face technical assistance and training. There is plenty of Covid still out in the world, along with flu and other ills, but we are more than 90% back to assisting and training our membership in person. In 2022 we returned to our Expo and Conference and were able to bring our training back into our systems without too much fear of spreading the "plague".

Much of our training is now pay for, or a fee is charged. Since the pandemic, we have realized that fee free training cannot support the Association and we would have to start charging for our training. There still are a few fee free training sessions available through WRWA, but we primarily charge a small fee for our training sessions now. We most likely charge the least for the best training in the industry, so we feel it is a very good "bang for the buck". As I always say, if you're getting your training from someone else, it may not be the best. Be careful who you get your training from. You not only need the continuing education credits, but you really need to bring the training back with you and apply it to your every day work. We have expanded our virtual training, and we often offer virtual training on training sessions that are under 6 hours. We are also planning on more training available throughout the state, not only at the Plover Technical Center.

The state legislature was not in session for much of 2022. But the work of hearings, considering supporting or not supporting legislation being worked on and attending informational meetings. Most of the legislative work being done in 2022 was involving PFAS regulations and making funding available

for treatment and monitoring. Funding for lead and copper removal has also been discussed and enacted at the state capitol, so there has been a couple water industry related tracts of work that has been going on through the year. Wisconsin rural Water has been right there working either for or against or providing information on your behalf. This kind of work is not fun, but it is so important that Rural Wisconsin is represented.

In 2022 the PFAS cost recovery program has had a lot of members join and provided a lot of information to Wisconsin municipalities. Litigation is going to start in early 2023, so systems that have joined the program, and find PFAS influencing their water or wastewater will have a very good chance of having their costs covered. If a system finds themselves in a PFAS positive position after early 2023, they can still join, but the process will be greatly extended and costs may have a lesser chance of being covered. The testing regimen for PFAS in water systems was started in Wisconsin in 2022, starting with the larger cities in the state. Testing will continue for the rest of the municipalities in state, and all the way down to OTMs & NNs in 2023. Results will be made available on the DNR's website.

Again in 2022 there have been some changes in the staff at WRWA. We hired a new EPA Water Circuit Rider, Seth Petersen, and Seth will be visiting our Tribal and underserved systems in the state. Seth will bring a lot of knowledge to the position and he will be available for questions, training and help to everyone who calls him. Welcome Seth!

Jeff LaBelle has announced his retirement in early 2023. Jeff is a 23 year veteran of WRWA and he will be taking a lot of experience with him when he leaves. We should all feel lucky that someone of Jeff's caliber has worked for us for so long. Jeff is truly rural Wisconsin born and raised. Dan Wundrow will be taking Jeff's position and another will be hired for the Energy Efficiency position that Dan is leaving.

Overall, the work we have put in for the last 2 years towards recovering from the pandemic has been seeing a lot of good results. Our staff has worked hard towards recovering and getting back to the former "normal" work of WRWA. Throughout this recovery, we have strived to bring our members (and nonmember Rural Wisconsin systems in general) the best training, technical assistance, emergency response and water industry services in the United States. I do see that we have made some changes, for the better, and that we are a stronger, better Association for it.

WRWA TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Technical Assistance to operators of water and wastewater systems in Wisconsin is the backbone of our service to our members. WRWA conducted 2841 actual on-site technical assistance visits in 2022 in addition to over 5522 phone calls to small systems across the state. WRWA currently has nine field staff providing onsite technical assistance to water & wastewater systems in the state. The breakdown in onsite Technical Assistance visits in 2022 was:

Municipal Water	1240
Municipal Wastewater	769
Energy Efficiency	30
Sourcewater	114
OTM/NN Water	688
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	2,841

WRWA technical assistance is provided in a number of areas, including:

REGULATORY COMPLIANCE - assistance in meeting both state and federal regulations including such areas as sampling & monitoring, monitoring site plans, monthly reporting, Consumer Confidence Reports, water conservation, and DSPS safety codes.

UTILITY MANAGEMENT - assistance in finding and applying for construction loans & grants, budgeting, record keeping, customer relations, water & sewer rates, human resources, wages and employee benefits.

DISTRIBUTION - assistance in solving distribution system problems such as line location, leak detection, valve exercising, hydrant maintenance & repair, conducting hydrant flow tests, troubleshooting water quality problems, inflow & infiltration, manhole rehabilitation, sewer line televising, pipe thawing, grease trap maintenance, cross connection control, jobsite safety, tower painting and inspection.

TREATMENT - assistance in troubleshooting water and wastewater control systems, treatment plant optimization, chemical addition equipment repair, advice on new treatment plant processes and treatment system monitoring.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE - assistance in all types of emergency situations including well problems, water contamination, loss of pressure, tornados, flooding, freezing, and sever winter conditions.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY - Energy audits that look over the entire water or wastewater system and looks for means of saving energy, lowering energy bills and optimizes treatment processes.

SOURCEWATER PROTECTION - assistance in completing wellhead protection plans, vulnerability assessments, potential contaminant inventories.

SYSTEM OPERATIONS - assistance such as compliance with DNR & PSC regulations, safety program development, ordinance templates, maintaining cross connection control programs and completing sustainability assessments.

LOANER EQUIPMENT - WRWA provides a wide variety of equipment for use by our membership. This saves communities the cost of having to purchase and maintain expensive equipment that they may only use occasionally or in emergency situations such as line locators, leak detectors, sewer cameras, valve turners, pumps, generators, flow testing, pipe thawers, pressure recorders, chemical feed pumps, portable samplers and dozens of other tools and pieces of equipment.

WRWA TRAINING

WRWA continues to be the leading provider of training again in 2022 in the state of Wisconsin to those in the water and wastewater industries. In fact, the Wisconsin Rural Water Association is one of the leading trainers of water and wastewater systems in the nation.

In 2021, WRWA conducted a total of 190 training sessions and events. These were attended by 5302 operators, managers, administrative personnel, plumbers and private business representatives. The training for 2022 was as follows:

TYPE	NO. OF SESSIONS	LOCATIONS	TOPICS	ATTENDANCE
Municipal Water Training	60	19 + Zoom	26	1272
Municipal Wastewater Training	24	8 + Zoom	8	439
Safety Training	59	36	6	1363
OTM/NN Training	8	3 + Zoom	2	122
Events	2	2	43	1800
	153	65 + Zoom	85	4,996

WRWA MEMBERSHIP

The Wisconsin Rural Water Association offers ten different membership levels-one individual, six system levels and three business levels. WRWA's total membership currently stands at 1118 members. The breakdown of membership is:

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP	NO. OF MEMBERS
Water Industry Professionals (WIP)	274
SYSTEM MEMBERSHIP	NO. OF MEMBERS
OTM/NN	66
Under 1,000	248
1,001 - 2,500	139
2,501 - 6,000	90
6,001 - 10,000	41
Over 10,000	84
	668
BUSINESS MEMBERSHIP	NO. OF MEMBERS
Associate	99
Corporate	58
Corporate Gold	27
	184



WRWA's system members currently provide water and wastewater services to around 4 million Wisconsin residents.

WRWA DONATIONS

WRWA currently has eight different federal programs and three different state programs that fund the Association. Internal income and expenses cover staff salary and benefits and come from such areas as membership dues, advanced training, events, advertising, interim finance, raffles and donations. WRWA always welcomes donations but our focus is on assistance more than the donations aspect, so we wish to thank everybody that has donated either their time or money to WRWA. The list of donations are many to list here, but a short list of donors include:

Bayfield	Lake Delton	Sister Bay
Bloomington	Lancaster	South Wayne
Deer Park	L-R Meter Testing	Taylor
Elcho SD	New Auburn	Thomas Griesmer
Fall River	New Holstein	Town of Fulton
Fox Marquette Estates	Plainfield	Town of Shelby
Hawkins Inc	Port Wing	Wauzeka
Iron River SD1	Rome	Wheel Estates
Junction City	Seymour	Winter

If you would like to further support WRWA with a donation of money, volunteer time or join the Water Industry Professionals, please call our office for more information. Help us help you and your neighboring systems!



WRWA COMMITTEES

*denotes WRWA Board members

BOARD COMMITTEES

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- *Dean Bergstrom-Chairman
- *Hershel Marks- Vice-Chairman
- *Gene Larson-Secretary
- *Kevin Mraz (Algoma SD)
- *Ramon Knudtson-Past President

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- *Jim Jacobs
- Chris Groh

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- *Bill Miller- Vice-Chairman
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- *Ramon Knudtson (Melrose)
- *Kyle Gruetzmacher (Clintonville)
- *Rob Nelson (Mauston)

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- *Larry Gates - Vice-Chairman
- *Bill Miller (Bloomer)
- *Rob Nelson (Mauston)
- *Steve Bein (N Fond du Lac)
- Alan Kunz (Core & Main)
- Katie Gruber (B&M)

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- *Gene Larson – Chairman
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- *Kyle Gruetzmacher (Clintonville)
- Dave Dodge (Adaptor Inc)
- David Jensema (Martelle Water Treatment)
- Mike Stoffel (Ayres Associates)
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- Alan Kunz(Core & Main)
- Doug Gries (Ferguson-Davies)
- Katie Gruber (B&M Technical Services)
- Jon Strand (CBS Squared)
- Bryan Unterweger (L.W. Allen)
- Todd Hanson (Sparta)
- Randy Sanford (SEH)

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- *Ramon Knudtson- Vice-Chairman
- *Rob Nelson (Mauston)
- *Hershel Marks (Boscobel)
- *Larry Gates (Prairie du Chien)

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- *Kevin Mraz- Vice-Chairmen
- *Kyle Gruetzmacher (Clintonville)
- *Steve Bein (N Fond du Lac)
- Jon Strand (CBS Squared)
- Tim West (Core & Main)



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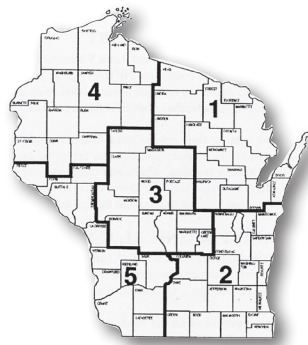
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Steve Bein (District 2) North Fond du Lac

Tom Tietz (District 2) Cambria

Bill Milller (District 4) Bloomer

Larry Gates (District 5) Prairie du Chien



WRWA STAFF

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 Executive Director

Sue Wojtalewicz
 Chief Financial Officer

Jeff LaBelle
 Technical Assistance Director

Renee Koback
 Member Services Coordinator

Andrew Aslesen
 Sourcewater Specialist

Jesse Hass
 Wastewater Trainer/Circuit Rider

Kay Curtin
 Wastewater Trainer/Circuit Rider

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Seth Petersen
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