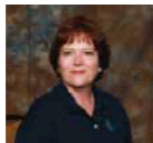


A Trip to the SWAMP

By Michele Swanson



When most people hear the word “swamp”, it usually brings to mind alligators, snakes, and other creatures. I found out first-hand that that is not always the case when I was invited to attend a MAP training this August at the SWAMP (Safe Water for All Minnesota People) facility near beautiful Ely, MN. Tucked back into the woods along the shores of Fall Lake, the SWAMP facility offers a modern classroom setting with state-of-the art equipment and a full lab. MAP trainers Jason Gorr, Pete Smith, and Michael Boyd led the class through a fun, informative water operator training that included topics such as operator roles and responsibilities, sampling, safety procedures, filtration systems, and public relations.

In addition to the presentations, I took part in hands-on demonstrations and group exercises that allowed participants to directly see how the information presented would be applied in their every day work. The wastewater operator portion of the training included a discussion of different system types, safety, and a field trip to the nearby town of Winton where we inspected several manholes and visited a lift station. Gorr and Smith walked participants through an “Inspection 101” session and discussed how to conduct seasonal and periodic maintenance of the system.

As a MAP central office employee, I rarely get to see our technical assistance providers and trainers in action and I really appreciated the opportunity. While I may never become a certified operator, the time I spent at the SWAMP gave me new insight into what our MAP staff do in the field as well as issues rural communities face every day. To see upcoming MAP trainings in your area, please visit www.map-inc.org and click on the Training tab.

Michele serves as Communication Specialist for MAP. Her primary duties include managing and maintaining MAP's website and intranet. She also generates reports and communication related to topics such as training and IT issues. And she now knows how to test water for chlorine!