

SPRING 2011

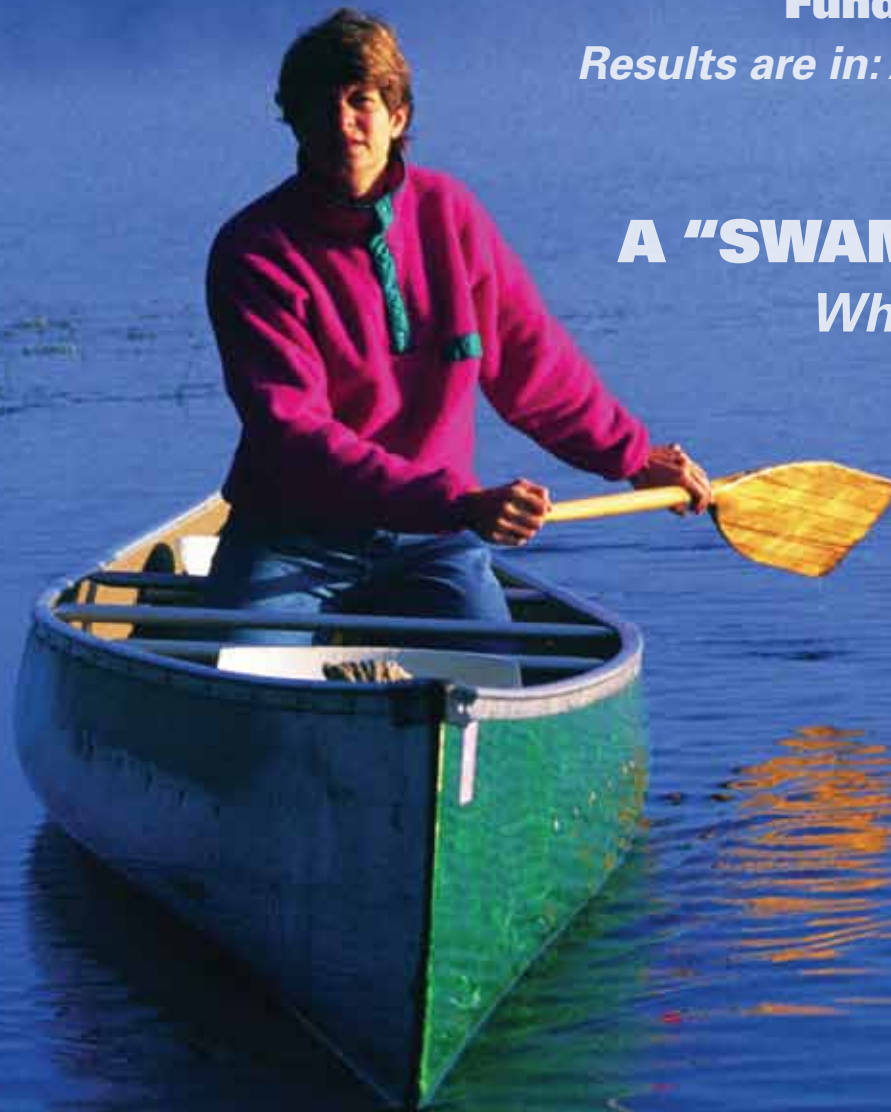
MIDWEST ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
SOURCE

Your source for community solutions

Volume 32, Issue 2

Funding Analysis
Results are in: A Positive ROI

A "SWAMP" Story
*Where learning
is never dry*



The Training Issue!

- spotlight on the Midwest*
- new class offerings*
- meet our new Education Director*

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MIDWEST ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

has been designated an approved vendor by the General Services Administration, which means:

- *MAP is already a GSA-approved contract holder*
- *Agencies can bypass the full request-for-proposal process and come directly to MAP*
- *Less delay getting projects underway*

MAP is the first member of the RCAP network to receive this designation.



Letter from the CEO

What could a nine-state region in the Midwest with diverse landscapes and diverse cultures reaching from Cut Bank, Montana to the Bootheel of Missouri have in common? For one, the entire region on February 1st was under some category of winter weather hazardous outlook; blizzard warning, winter storm watch, and wind chill advisory! Secondly, there was an entire network of local Technical Assistance Providers (TAPs) on the ground to assist local communities - intimately aware of local sensibilities, local geographies and local politics.



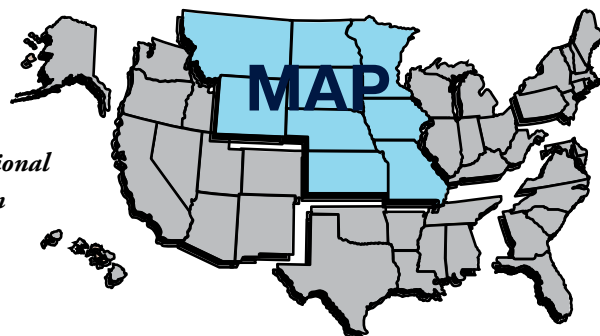
As we dig ourselves out of the winter snows, we are preparing for spring in several ways. In addition to construction season and the improvements of several water and wastewater facilities throughout the nine states, we also are attentive to the congressional season. The MAP

Board of Directors recently attended an RCAP Conference in Washington, D.C. and visited all nine state congressional offices to introduce MAP to our new delegation and reinforce the expanding need for rural communities to have public infrastructure that is safe, healthy, environmentally sound and compliant. I had an opportunity to present at a briefing the work that MAP is doing at the Leech Lake Bug-o-Nay-Ge-Shig School (see more on page 10). And at every visit we reinforced the need for community and operating training and MAP's focus on expanding our education program to not only identify and assist potential system professionals, but to also partner with state and local workforce development advocates.

Every organization that receives federal funds will be challenged in this fiscal environment. As spring will indeed come to the prairie, highlands and mountains of our region, the MAP Board of Directors and staff remain committed to excellent and efficient service, providing the basic water and wastewater infrastructure support to communities most in need.

Marcie McLaughlin

The Midwest Assistance Program (MAP) is a member of The Rural Community Assistance Partnership (network). RCAP is made up of a total of six regional partners including MAP.



RCAP Regional Breakdown

MAP has been helping communities and tribal nations meet their infrastructure and development needs through information, resource management, expertise and technical assistance since 1979. MAP provides solutions to more than 400 such communities each year in Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North and South Dakota and Wyoming. Through individualized support from MAP staff, residents are given the knowledge and tools to revitalize their communities. MAP staff members live in the communities served and have a deep commitment to the strength, vitality, and future of rural America.

Ask the Expert: Q&A

Our resident expert this issue is Bill Jarocki, MAP's new Education Director. Bill joined MAP in November 2010. Prior to joining MAP, Bill was the Director of the Environmental Finance Center at Boise State University, which included a satellite operation in Kansas City, Kansas, serving the four states in EPA Region 7. He was an adjunct faculty member at Boise State University's College of Social Sciences and Public Affairs.



QUESTION: With all of the uncertainty about the federal budget and the looming budget deficit, it seems that local governments will be affected. What should small communities do to sustain their essential utility services?

ANSWER: The federal deficit affects all of us, and the President and Congress will be giving their attention to this problem. Financial instability at the federal and state level need not prevent communities from setting a course toward financially sustainable water and wastewater services. While these budget and deficit issues will affect governments for the foreseeable future, communities can take steps to plan for their futures and move toward sustainability.

The key is taking the long-term view toward financing utility services. This involves looking beyond this year's budget to understand the long-term costs of providing safe drinking water and effective wastewater service.

Start with the water and wastewater budgets. Look at the history of revenues and expenditures for these operations. Are your user fees sufficient to meet expenses – not just this year, but into the near future? Take the long-term view to decide now if gradual increases in revenues will be needed in future years to meet your expenses. Raising rates is a strategic decision based primarily on your need for revenues. (Take a look at our last issue of SOURCE, page 3 for Dennis Siders' advice on the best time to adjust water or wastewater fees.)

Next, look at the replacement costs of long-term assets and plan to reserve monies for replacing key assets in the future. If the federal deficit requires federal grant and loan programs to be cut back, the

cheapest alternative for funding replacement is to save money, earn interest, and replace assets on your schedule. Think about what you're buying. Ask yourself, "What are the future replacement costs?" and "Can we really afford this?"

After that, consider the external events that may or may not affect the community. For example, learn about upcoming changes in regulations, the forecast for the local economy and jobs, and other local factors. These will affect the costs of the systems or the ability of customers to pay their user fees. External factors can have a big effect on the water and wastewater budgets. Pay attention to these signs over the long-term, or meet with people who can provide this information and advice to you (such as your MAP service provider).

Finally, stick to it. Planning for sustainability is a continuous process, not something you do to meet another government's legal requirement. Remember, each year of history becomes the basis for more accurate forecasting of revenues and expenditures. Nobody really knows your community or the services you provide better than you do. Put that historic information to good use to keep your system up-to-date and ahead of the curve. Spend a little time before the budget cycle begins to review that history of the utilities (both internal and external factors). The good habits you develop for long-term management of services will be passed on to generations of leaders in your community for years to come.

HAVE A QUESTION?

Submit questions on subjects such as drinking water, wastewater, solid waste management or rural utility operation to map@map-inc.org. We will feature one question and answer per issue, but you may visit our Web site for more at www.map-inc.org.

MAP Learning Opportunities

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES IN 2011

MAP offers a variety of education and training opportunities throughout its nine-state territory. For more details and the most up-to-date listing, visit www.map-inc.org

MINNESOTA

Water Operator Training

(for water operators)
Detroit Lakes, May 9
New Prague, May 10

MISSOURI

Capacity Development

(for operators, boards and clerks)
West Plains, Apr. 20
St. James, Apr. 21

MONTANA

Capacity Development

(for operators, boards and clerks)
Poplar, Apr. 19
Plentywood, May 17
Glendive, Jun. 28
Bozeman, Jul. 19
Kalispell, Aug. 16
Lockwood, Sep. 20
Thompson Falls, Oct. 18
Helena, Nov. 15
Lame Deer, Dec. 6

NEBRASKA

Water Operator Training

(for water operators)
Grand Island, Apr. 12
Bertrand, Apr. 27
Fremont, May 10
Cozad, May 26
Columbus, Jul. 12
Norfolk, Sep. 20
Ogallala, Sep. 27
Hastings, Nov. 8
McCook, Nov. 15

Backflow Recertification

(for operators, managers and plumbers)
Columbus, Apr. 5
North Platte, Jun. 14
Grand Island, Aug. 23
York, Oct. 11
Kearney, Oct. 18
Gretna, Dec. 6 & 7

Board Adopts Policy Governance *Focus on Accountability*



MAP Board members Joyce Powell, Galen Wisner & John Woodwick

The MAP Board of Directors understands the importance of governance and the responsibility the Board has to Congress to manage the public fiscal resources, and the responsibility to our rural communities to assure excellent services from the MAP organization. As a result, the Board, at their February meeting, adopted Policy Governance as

the structure to guide their actions. Policy Governance is a comprehensive set of principles that allows governing boards to realize owner-accountable organizations.

The result that the Board identified and directed MAP to pursue is that small, rural communities with limited resources and a willingness to invest in themselves have a public infrastructure and maintenance capacity that is safe, healthy, environmentally sound, and compliant. These rural communities have the ability to select the best infrastructure alternative for their present and future situations, have the supportive resources they need to achieve their public infrastructure and maintenance goals and have empowered leaders.

At that same meeting, the Board of Directors welcomed their newest board member, Galen Wisner. Mr. Wisner is President of the State National Bank and Trust Company in Wayne, Nebraska. He is a long-time resident of Wayne and active in several community organizations. Wisner brings an understanding of rural communities and an interest in the environment and its preservation.

MAP Announces 5-year ROI Public Investment

The Midwest Assistance Program (MAP) has completed its five year federal funding analysis and reports a strong return on its public investment. MAP has served 1.1 million individuals at a cost of \$16.41 each over five years. In addition, the \$18.3 million of public funds secured by MAP during that same time period has assisted communities by leveraging \$424 million of additional funds to achieve safe, quality drinking water, wastewater and solid waste for infrastructure improvements and projects to these low-income, rural communities.

“We are extremely pleased with these results, which confirm that a relatively small amount of public dollars can both leverage large amounts of additional funding and serve individuals at minimal costs. Improving the lives of rural citizens by supporting their public infrastructure that is safe, healthy, environmentally sound and compliant is what our 40 staff in nine mid-western states do every day. We are proud of our work and our staff, “ says Joyce Powell, MAP Board Chair.



Talking To Your Decision Makers: A Best Practices Guide

Introduction

<i>Purpose</i>	<p>This Guide will help you better understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The role of the local individual(s) or group(s) that oversee and make decisions affecting your water system. ◆ The benefits of having a good relationship with decision makers. ◆ How to effectively communicate your needs to these decision makers.
<i>Target Audience</i>	<p>This Guide is intended for operators and owners of community water systems serving fewer than 10,000 persons.</p>

General Responsibilities of Decision Makers

Decision makers can play a significant role in ensuring that your system is operating efficiently, that your needs are addressed, and that your customers understand the challenges you face and recognize the hard work that you do.

Financial Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Review and approve annual budgets and monitor annual spending. ◆ Make financial decisions to ensure your system has sufficient funds to meet current and future needs. ◆ Acquire and approve financing for infrastructure repairs or upgrades. ◆ Acquire and approve financing to enhance system security. ◆ Acquire and set aside funding for operator training and certification.
Managerial Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Hire and supervise system staff. ◆ Set staff policy and job descriptions. ◆ Set and provide guidance on system policies. ◆ Determine the strategic vision and goals for the system. ◆ Resolve staff conflicts and address staff needs or complaints.
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Keep customers informed of the current status of the system, upcoming projects, rate setting, staffing changes, and any other key decisions. ◆ Serve as a liaison between system staff and the community. ◆ Ensure that the community is aware of the system's emergency response procedures.

For additional information:

Call the Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 1-800-426-4791, visit the EPA Web site at www.epa.gov/safewater/, or contact your state drinking water representative.



Communicating Effectively with Decision Makers

All decisions should be guided by principles that look to the present and future needs of the water system and what is best for the system's customers and the community. Speak with decision makers regularly to avoid communication mishaps and to develop responsive relationships with them. Your communication with decision makers can take many different forms, from short daily updates on your system to more formal meetings. Effective methods of communication include:

- ◆ Daily or weekly e-mail updates
- ◆ Phone calls for updates on specific issues or to get information
- ◆ Weekly memos with system status updates
- ◆ Suggestion boxes near bill collection areas
- ◆ Formal meetings or presentations for requests for new equipment or rate changes

If you already have a good relationship with decision makers, you have a good foundation for ensuring that these meetings are productive and successful. Regardless of your relationship, though, you should always approach meetings with a firm understanding of the issues, your goals, and the audience you are addressing (especially if meetings with decision makers are open to the public). Keep the following in mind when preparing for and attending a meeting with decision makers:

Carefully prepare your case and use supporting documentation.

Infrastructure Upgrade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Bring operational and maintenance records to the meeting with decision makers. ◆ Obtain cost estimates from reputable vendors.
Security System Upgrade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Explain why the water system is vulnerable to security breaches. ◆ Explain how an upgrade will address these issues.
Rate Increase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Bring documentation outlining the impact of past rate increases on your system. ◆ Bring estimates or financial models showing that the rate increase will help your system to continue to provide the appropriate level of service desired by customers.

Tailor your presentation according to the topic and the audience.

New or Inexperienced Decision Makers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Briefly describe your water system, your experience, and your training. ◆ Explain technical terms when talking to decision makers.
Understand Competing Demands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Learn what other funding needs exist in the community. ◆ Explain how your project will protect public health and benefit the community.

Give decision makers the information they need to state your case to the community.

Improve Communication with Customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Give decision makers non-technical, straightforward reasoning that they can repeat to consumers. ◆ Explain how your proposal will help your system to provide safe, high-quality drinking water to consumers.
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Work with decision makers to develop solutions that everyone can agree on.

Build Respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Work to understand decision makers' priorities and opinions and help them to understand your own. ◆ Realize that decision makers may not always be able to accommodate your suggestions, especially if decision makers must make community-wide funding decisions.
Understand Common Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Remember that decision makers are working towards finding solutions that are in the best interest of the community. ◆ Build a strong working relationship with decision makers so that you can work together to achieve your ultimate goal of providing safe drinking water to the community.



Plant supervisor Don Jones checks the wastewater operations control panel.

East Butler County Wastewater Woes

MAP working to help remedy issues

East Butler County Sewer District Facts

- Located near the city of Poplar Bluff, in Butler County, MO
- Serves a population of 1,286
- 500+ connections to current wastewater system
- Vacuum collection system installed in 2003

The East Butler County Sewer District is having difficulty with its wastewater collection system. Two problems are significant enough to render the system inoperable for frequent and extended periods of time.

The first is that the water table is very near the surface—so near that the water gets into the pits where the pumps for the vacuum system are located, and the pumps shut down.

Second, there is an incompatibility between the system's capacity for treatment and the actual number of connections. The combination of out-of-service pumps, an air-to-water ratio imbalance and inflow and infiltration has had an adverse impact on the system's ability to meet the needs of the community. The extensive repairs and maintenance costs involved with keeping the system operational resulted in delinquent debt service payments to USDA Rural Development and revenue collection was insufficient to meet the needs.

However, thanks to the cooperation between USDA-Rural Development, the Missouri Department of Natural Resources and the District itself—the current vacuum system will be replaced with a new pressure collection system. A recent rate increase, a decrease in maintenance

and repair costs and a re-amortization of USDA-Rural Development debt has recently enabled the district to make the required debt service payments.

Next Step: a 'Workout Plan'

In August of 2010, USDA Rural Development created a "workout plan," a comprehensive document that outlines the system's problems, and the required steps to resolve them. The district has requested MAP's assistance in taking the required actions outlined by the workout plan. MAP staff is pleased to demonstrate their commitment to the district and help them achieve and maintain a sound wastewater system.

MAP's Role

- Address capacity issues outlined by the workout plan
- Facilitate bi-weekly board training
- Define and implement policies and procedures both financial and managerial
- Update Emergency Response Plan
- Help attain new billing and collection system
- Train office personnel in billing and accounting software
- Review insurance, bonding and audit requirements and apply internal and external controls
- Coordinate acquisition of easements
- File quarterly reports with USDA-RD regarding plan compliance

MAP's Capacity

Development Training is a 'Go' in Missouri

Team approach encouraged to help small water systems thrive

The Midwest Assistance Program is eager to implement A Team Approach to Small System Management & Operation' — a new training course funded by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources.

"Most rural water systems fail because of a failure to integrate the technical, managerial and financial components of the system," MAP Regional Director Dennis Siders explains. "It takes a combination of good operational skills by the operator, good procedural and communication skills by the clerk and wise decisions by the owners to make any small utility system operate well."

With this in mind, MAP is prepared to offer training sessions in 2011 to help small water and wastewater systems in Missouri develop the capacity to maintain and sustain their systems. The courses will stress the importance of communication between the owner, clerk and operator—a team approach to system management. MAP encourages these players to attend as a group to get the greatest benefit from the training.

Each three-hour session will be facilitated by a MAP trainer with several years of experience working in small communities, as well as a MAP technical assistance provider who works in the immediate area. Training provides Missouri operator certification renewal hours for water treatment (1.0), water distribution (1.5) and wastewater (1.0). Training will be offered twice a month beginning.

Training Sessions: April 2011

April 20 – West Plains, MO (MDNR Course #1104308)

April 21 – James, MO (MDNR Course #1104309)

Find a complete list of trainings and register online at www.map-inc.org. Select Training, Training Calendars and Missouri. Questions? Email Stephanie Ross at sross@map-inc.org

Agenda

- Team Approach Philosophy
- Roles & Responsibilities: Owners, Clerks, Operators
- Conducting Legal Meetings: Effective, efficient and timely
- The Billing Cycle: Handling cash & controlling expenses
- Financial Reporting: What is needed?
- Adjusting Rates: When and how much?
- Communicating with the public



SWAMP Training Anything But Dry

MAP leads creative, interactive trainings at modern Minnesota facility

SWAMP stands for Safe Water for All Minnesota People—an idea introduced by the Minnesota Department of Health back in 2005. That year, in partnership with Vermillion Community College, the 'SWAMP' training facility was built on the shore of Fall Lake near Ely, MN.

The intent of such a venue was to allow for water and wastewater organizations and personnel to train and learn utilizing the latest technical equipment and resources in a modern, high-tech facility.

"The classroom setting is stocked with AV equipment, pipes, plumbing, a full lab including testing equipment, microscopes, ground and surface water sources, tools and plenty of other water equipment," explains MAP Tribal Circuit Rider, Jason Gorr. Gorr has worked for MAP since 2004. His role mainly involves providing technical assistance to tribal drinking water operators in Minnesota.

"The SWAMP facility allows for better training due to the fact it is a technical college-level lab," Gorr explains. "The hands-on techniques we use better prepare our operators for real-world applications."

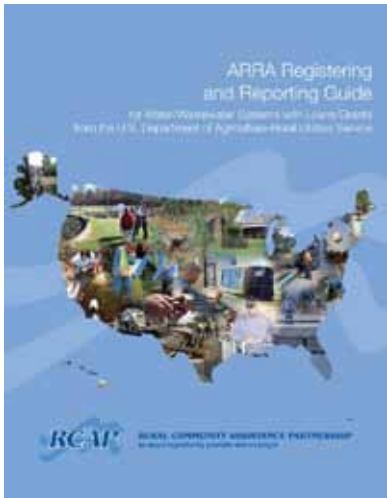
Gorr's goal is to offer informative, exciting training through a variety of techniques which often include: participation, activities, communication and even competition—not your average conference room training.

Topics that have been covered over the years include chemical dosing rates (with actual pumps, flowing water and Hach Test Kits), ground water rule training, GPS training, chemical pump calibration and repair— and much more.

MAP is now finalizing plans for the 5th Annual Tribal Water Operator Training to be held at the SWAMP early this June. Interested tribal staff may contact Jason Gorr at jgorr@map-inc.org. The training is funded by the EPA.

For a complete list of upcoming MAP training events, visit www.map-inc.org

RCAP Releases New Guide to Help Communities Report on Recovery Act Funds



The Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP) has released a new guidebook designed to assist recipients of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds. The guidebooks are supplied thanks to a \$5 million grant of ARRA funds secured by RCAP and furnished by the U.S. Department of Agriculture-Rural Development.

The guide is intended for use by the leader of a small community water system who is responsible for registering the utility and reporting on its use of ARRA funds with various federal and related agencies. The step-by-step guide, written in a question-and-answer format, is

written by experienced RCAP staff and is aimed at communities that have received Recovery Act Loans or grants through the U.S. Department of Agriculture-Rural Utilities Service.

“RCAP wants to help utilities be responsible stewards of the funds they get,” said Robert Stewart, RCAP Executive Director. “This is one aspect of long-term sustainability, which is RCAP’s overall goal for communities.”

The ARRA Registering and Reporting Guide is the first of 11 print resources that RCAP is developing. A list of all the guides that will be produced and a description of each is available at www.rcap.org/commpubs.

Job creation is a leading priority for the nation as we move out of the “great recession.”

According to research completed by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, the agricultural, food, and natural resources sectors of the U.S. economy will generate an estimated 54,400 annual openings for people with Baccalaureate or higher degrees in food, renewable energy, and environmental specialties between 2010 and 2015. This past December, the University of Minnesota hosted the 2010 Agriculture, Food and Natural Resource Summit to convene crucial partners for preparing tomorrow’s workforce.

The Land, a widely circulated rural newspaper in the Midwest, interviewed Midwest Assistance Program CEO Marcie McLaughlin for her reaction to the Summit.

Agriculture education is more than classroom work

by Dick Hagen, published in *the Land*, January 7, 2011.

...For Marcie McLaughlin, Chief Executive Officer of the Midwest Assistance Program, this conference reinforced the need for a growing cadre of middle-skilled people to fill the many jobs developing in rural sectors.

“In many rural communities, the people who operate and manage water and wastewater are getting older. With retirement pending for many, we need to replenish the work force that manages those huge public investments,” McLaughlin said.

“Often these water system jobs are only part-time, which suggests the opportunity for communities to share a trained and qualified operator. Or it could be a part-time position for someone who might have a second job that was not fully demanding on time,” she said.

Even these wastewater treatment jobs are becoming more techni-

cal and require some additional training as part of certification.

Recruiting from within your own community is the first step in much of McLaughlin’s work with MAP’s nine-state coverage which also offers special training classes for certain jobs. Some community colleges provide educational opportunities for some municipal jobs. She also indicated that on-the-job training often suffices for some of these new work opportunities.

She acknowledged that many job offerings through public services are sometimes lacking in public appeal. She asked, “Who drives the snowplow? Who does the curb and sidewalk repair work? Who runs the wastewater treatment plant? Who tends to sewer and gas-line problems?” These are just a few of the many jobs that keep a community going and you really don’t know about them until the person doing them isn’t there.

CASE STUDY



WHERE: Leech Lake Band of Chippewa's Bug-o-Nay-Ge-Shig K-12 School near Bena, MN.

PROBLEM: Ongoing lead levels exceeding the maximum contaminant level in the school's non-community drinking water system.

SOLUTION: Midwest Assistance Program helped the water operator and tribal sanitarian establish, implement and monitor a Corrosion Control Plan to keep the lead levels within acceptable and safe levels for the school.

MAP helps tribal schools become compliant with the lead and copper rule

Bug-o-Nay-Ge-Shig school is located in a rural northern Minnesota forest near the south shore of the state's famous Lake Winnebigoishish near Bena. The school teaches kindergarten through 12th grade and has a campus including a combined elementary-middle school, high school, gymnasium, several out buildings and a bus garage with an average enrollment of 280 students plus school staff. The maintenance staff at the school includes two state certified water operators who are responsible for the non-community drinking water system.

Midwest Assistance Program (MAP) had been working with the school's water operators under contract with the United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) to provide technical assistance and training to tribal water operators and staff in all the Minnesota tribes. MAP was notified by EPA and requested by the Leech Lake Tribal Sanitarian to work at helping them resolve the Lead Exceedance Problem that was occurring there.

Lead in drinking water can also cause a variety of adverse health effects. In babies and children, exposure to lead in drinking water above the action level can result in delays in physical and mental development, along with slight deficits in attention span and learning abilities. In adults, it can cause increases in blood pressure. Adults who drink this water over many years could develop kidney problems or high blood pressure.

Lead is rarely found in source water, but enters tap water through corrosion of plumbing materials. Homes built before 1986 are more likely to have lead pipes, fixtures and solder.

However, new homes are also at risk because even legally "lead-free" plumbing may contain up to 8 percent lead. The most common problem is with brass or chrome-plated brass faucets and fixtures which can leach significant amounts of lead into the water.*

It was revealed that when the school had sampled water in 2008, tests showed the levels were over twice the EPA action levels of 0.015 mg/l for lead. Throughout that year, the school provided alternative drinking sources (bottled water) and adjusted cooking practices in the kitchen as well. Ongoing sampling and monitoring in late 2008 showed elevated levels almost 3 times the previous exceedances. Initially MAP and the EPA were in communication with school staff on how to best lower levels. The first steps were to isolate and remove problem taps where the elevated lead levels were occurring thinking it may be a site-specific plumbing or fixture problem.

When that didn't help and other sample sites were producing elevated lead levels also, MAP was then requested to help work with the staff to complete a Corrosion Control Plan (CCP) which would fully assess the water's physical and chemical characteristics and analyze how best to treat it and lower the lead levels. Upon developing the plan and getting the school staff and sanitarian to learn and endorse it, MAP encouraged communication with their chemical delivery company to allow the staff the proper set up and instruction to add a Ortho-Polyphosphate blend. The compound basically allows for light coating to line the interior of the pipes and fixtures eliminating leaching or aggressive action on its surfaces and creating a barrier between the lead and drinking water.

Continued maintenance and monitoring should ensure the school's lead levels remain at an acceptable and safe level according to EPA standards as long as the CCP is followed. December 2010 samples revealed test levels were all within acceptable standards. Ongoing MAP assistance at the schools will involve helping the staff maintain, monitor, and also inform the staff and public (parents) on the current status of the water and why it is a safe drinking water source again for their families.

**Information extracted from EPA's website*

CASE STUDY

WHERE: Sandyville, Iowa

PROBLEM: Failing wastewater systems in a small, low-income community.

SOLUTION: Midwest Assistance Program helped the community and county secure funding for new onsite wastewater systems, work out the details of funding, managing and maintaining the new systems.



New Onsite Wastewater Systems Bring Iowa Town Into Compliance

Wastewater compliance is no longer a problem for the Sandyville City Council. Approximately one-quarter of the town's 28 households had failed, non-compliant systems. Not so coincidentally, the same residents with failed systems were the lowest income residents.

In January of 2010, the Warren County environmental health specialist asked MAP to meet with the council and explain the USDA Rural Development 504 program. These grants were awarded to individual homeowners to solve safety and health problems. By the next council meeting, seven households were in the process of applying for the grants to replace their deficient onsite systems. MAP continues to assist with procurement of the systems to achieve group discounts and works to establish a good maintenance program to make onsite treatment a more long-term solution.

The city clerk reports that these onsite replacements will make the town fully compliant following installation.

The recession has caused many Iowa small town city councils to reconsider additional debt for any reason. Unfortunately, needed water and wastewater projects are a public health problem and must be dealt with in bad times as well as good times. Good technical assistance with creative financing options can make projects affordable. Alternative onsite projects instead of a central sewer system, or the use of homeowners' grants instead of community grants and loans, may serve to allow small towns to function through the tough economic environment. MAP's innovative practices have kept many rural communities afloat and even generated growth where population loss was the trend.



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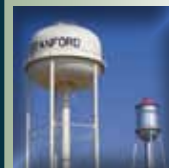
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SOURCE



Source Mission:

To provide information for the clients of the Midwest Assistance Program so they better understand the programs and services MAP offers to help them improve their communities and tribal associations; and to showcase the expertise of MAP employees.

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