

Press Release - Minnesota Rural Water Association

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Minnesota Rural Water Association presents Achievement Award to Chad Zimmel, City of Graceville



The Achievement Award: The criteria for the Achievement Award is for a system and/or person who has applied innovative ideas, inventions, or procedures that has benefited the operation of a public water/wastewater systems and/or its customers.

The city of Graceville identified a need to address infiltration and inflow (I/I) since their collection system was in very poor condition. Chad Zimmel and the City Council made it a priority that the wastewater flows be reduced and bypasses be eliminated. The city understood that replacement of the sanitary sewer in the right of way was only solving part of the problem. Significant I/I was attributable to private service lines and sump pumps. The city implemented an ordinance to require the replacement of deficient sanitary sewer services and implemented an aggressive inspection program. Over several years, deficient sanitary sewer services have been replaced. The city has continued to televise the remaining sewer services to verify the existing condition with the goal of having all the deficient services replaced in a few years.

The city has also aggressively pursued sump pump connections; they have required they be disconnected. Once disconnected, they do random follow-up inspections to verify compliance. The city's efforts have been recognized by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) as a model for addressing private I/I sources. This approach has been presented at the 2021 Annual MPCA Wastewater conference and the 2021 MRWA Annual Conference. With the program, the city has avoided wastewater bypasses.

Chad Zimmel was nominated by both his engineer Widseth & MRWA since he has continued to push the entire program, the televising of services, and continuing compliance inspections. Chad and the city implemented this program, educated the public, provided a funding mechanism, worked to have non-compliant services replaced, and then committed to routine follow-up inspections.

Congratulations Chad Zimmel, wastewater superintendent, city of Graceville, from the Minnesota Rural Association Board and staff.

Photo above from left to right: City of Graceville Wastewater Superintendent Chad Zimmel (left) and Minnesota Rural Water Association Board Vice-Chairman Tom Dowdle (right).