

Press Release - Minnesota Rural Water Association

March 9, 2022

Contact: Lori Blair – Executive Director– 800-367-6792



Minnesota Rural Water Association (MRWA) and Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) present the Small Public Water Supply System Source Water Protection Award to City of Cook.

The MRWA/MDH Source Water Protection Award is given annually at the MRWA Technical Conference to recognize the importance and value of source water protection efforts in Minnesota, and to recognize individuals, public water systems and organizations that have shown long term commitment, initiative, leadership, sharing of successes, and initiation or participation in activities which resulted in the protection or improvement of their source water.

Cook is a city located in St. Louis County on U.S. Highway 53. Cook serves as the gateway to the western half of Lake Vermilion. In 2004/2005, the city of Cook, population 574, replaced its entire water distribution infrastructure to eliminate leaks, dead ends, potential loss of pressure, and to protect the health of its drinking water users. This accomplishment required substantial, dedicated financial support from the City Council. Significant commitments from city staff were also critical to complete this accomplishment. The city effectively partnered with its consultants, contractors, and MnDOT staff to ensure construction was timely and not disrupt the ability for traffic flow.

The city's WHP Plan was approved in 2014, and contains 25 separate implementation activities. Accomplishments include citizen education, management of potential contaminants, and water monitoring plan. The WHP Team committed to allocating the needed resources to meet the implementation timeline. To-date, 21 of the 25 identified actions have been completed, an 84% accomplishment rate! Many partners were required to achieve the city's WHP Plan accomplishments including MDH, MRWA, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), City Council, and city staff.

Citizens and visitors received education about above-and below-ground storage tanks, unsealed wells, proper well management, hazardous waste, BMPs for water quality, Class V wells, and general WHP efforts. The city incorporated WHP education and informational links on the city's website as a mechanism to decrease paperwork and increase accessibility to residents and visitors, and provide up-to-date information. Partners include the Cook *News Herald* local newspaper, MDH, MRWA, MPCA, Department of Natural Resources (DNR), City Council, and St. Louis County.

Congratulations to the City of Cook for winning the Small Public Water Supply System Source Water Protection Award.

Photo above from left to right: Minnesota Rural Water Association Board Vice Chairman Tom Dowdle and City of Cook.