

Small Systems Bulletin

Minnesota Rural Water Association



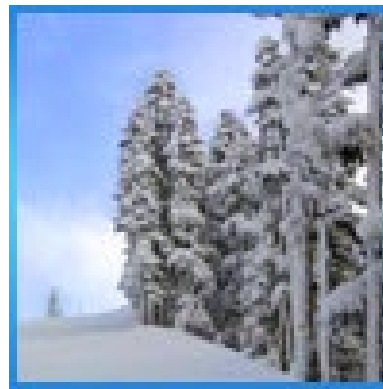
January 2024 | Winter News



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Website**



Dear Lori,

Welcome to this edition of the Small Systems Bulletin. The purpose of this bulletin is to keep you informed on issues concerning your water system. We issue this bulletin quarterly. Topics covered in the bulletin include operation and maintenance, treatment, backflow/cross-connections, regulations, operator training, management, and many others. Dates and locations of future workshops are included.

If you have suggestions about topics that you would find helpful, give us a call at 800-367-6792 or send us an e-mail at kyle.kedrowski@mrwa.com or jennifer.koenig@mrwa.com

Watch for this quarterly newsletter and we'll see you at a future small system training workshop!

Feature Article: Solar Development Friend or Foe?

Aaron Meyer, MRWA Source Water Protection Specialist

When people hear a solar development is coming to town it usually conjures up many conflicting thoughts. It can be thoughts of excitement, since it is clean energy and increased tax base or it can be thoughts of, wow that is really going to limit where we grow or those solar panels are ugly. Many communities are simply indifferent to solar development since they do not know that much about solar. I hear all of these comments as I am working with communities across the state. Solar development is something that is not going away and many communities are encountering solar development opportunities now. There are definitely pros and cons with solar development.

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) is partnering with the Great Plains Institute (GPI), Emmons & Olivier Resources Inc. (EOR), the Minnesota Rural Water Association (MRWA), and other agencies and energy and solar industry stakeholders to explore using solar development to protect groundwater resources by replacing land uses that are historically unfriendly for groundwater quality with practices that are groundwater friendly (pollinators, alfalfa, etc.).

Stakeholder meetings are being held, and the project team has formed an initial steering committee. The committee has begun to identify and prioritize existing opportunities for solar development in Drinking Water Supply Management Areas (DWSMAs), explore potential energy off-takers for the solar development, and identify high-nitrate watersheds and potential pilot project sites. In addition, this project will also compile current interconnection standards, characterize existing market conditions, and identify programs and policy initiatives that affect DWSMA solar opportunities.

Identifying the barriers for large scale solar, that meets Minnesota's habitat-friendly standards, and offers a way to take DWSMA lands out of agricultural production while offering an improved financial return to the landowner is the ultimate goal of this project. Replacing nitrate-producing agriculture with pollinator-friendly solar can bring improved health and safety to the community and substantial cost savings to the public water suppliers while at the same time be economically beneficial to landowners. Payments to landowners who install solar are usually 2-3 times the going rent of agricultural lands.

The first step is to locate some pilot locations to determine if solar is good or bad for protecting groundwater resources (widely thought that it is good; however, it is not documented). If solar is determined to be beneficial for groundwater, then the next step is to help with project planning and solicit funds to help interested communities install solar in the appropriate locations to help protect their drinking water supplies.

We need your help in identifying pilot sites. If you are interested in participating in this project and have a site that would be well-suited for solar development please contact myself at aaron.meyer@mrwa.com.

Training & Technical Assistance Update:

The dates and locations for our upcoming in-person training sessions are listed below. We also have these dates posted on our *Training Calendar* page www.mrwa.com/training/trainingcalendar/.

At the top of that page, please click on the box "Go To Small Systems Training" for our Class E & D training dates and locations. For our in-person training sessions, we will mail notices to operations specialists in those areas approximately one month prior to the class.

In-Person Training:

Class E Training Workshops (8am – Noon)

April 10, 2024

**Nisswa Community Center
25628 Main St
Nisswa, MN**

May 1, 2024

**BENCO Electric Cooperative
20946 549th Avenue
Mankato, MN**

Class D Training Workshops (8am – 5pm)

March 6, 2024

**Best Western/Kelly Inn
University A Room
100 4th Avenue S
St. Cloud, MN**

April 3, 2024

**Lake Elmo City Hall
Lake Elmo Community Room
3800 Laverne Ave N
Lake Elmo, MN**

[Click Here to Register!](#)

Online Training:

We will continue to offer online remote training sessions using Zoom. If you have not received these email invites for the Zoom online training sessions, please email mrwa@mrwa.com and provide your name, public water system name, and preferred email address to us so that we can add you to our email list. If you have received emails from us in the past but not these Zoom notices, please check your Junk/Spam folder. If you use a Gmail account, you may need to check the “Promotions” folder for the email invites.

Once the online training sessions are scheduled we will post these online training session links on our website www.mrwa.com on our [Training Calendar](#) page. At the top of that page, please



click on the box “Go To Small Systems Training” for our online training links. You will be notified via email of the date and time of each online remote training session. An email address will be needed to register for these online remote training sessions.

Each operations specialist must register and sign-in separately on their own device to receive credit for attending the online remote training session.

Online Training:

January 25, 2024 at 10am – “What Wellhead Protection Can Do For Your Water System”

Agenda

Registration

February Date and Topic - To Be Determined

Additional Training Opportunities

Lead and Copper Rule Revisions/Asset Management Training

(6 direct water CEUs available)

More information on these training sessions can be found on our website www.mrwa.com, on our Training Calendar page. At the top of that page, please click on the box “Go To WATER Training” for training dates and locations.

January 18, 2024

Redwood Falls Community Center

Meeting Room 3A

901 Cook Street

Redwood Falls, MN

February 27, 2024

Staples City Hall

122 6th Street NE

Staples, MN

March 21, 2024

Hinckley City Hall

106 1st Street SE

Hinckley, MN

April 18, 2024

Thief River Electric Department

1711 West 1st Street

Thief River Falls, MN

May 8, 2024
Cohasset City Hall
305 1st Ave NW
Cohasset, MN

[Register Here](#)

Technical Assistance

We also wanted to let you know that if you have any questions about training or are in need of onsite technical assistance, please feel free to contact us to set up an appointment.

Thank you so much for all that you do in providing safe drinking water to your consumers!

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