



2025 Annual Report



*Excellence in Training
and
Technical Assistance*

www.mrwa.com
218-685-5197

Message From Leadership We work for YOU!



Minnesota Rural Water Association (MRWA) is a non-profit association governed by a Board of Directors. We are staffed with 26 full-time personnel trained to offer on-site technical assistance and training to water and wastewater system personnel in managerial, financial, operation and maintenance of systems, and source water protection. MRWA is funded through grants, contracts, and memberships to allow us to offer our services at no charge to community water and wastewater systems, tribal systems, and rural water districts with populations under 10,000.

The services provided by MRWA are critical to Minnesota's drinking water and wastewater utility systems, working to maintain compliance with stringent rules and regulations designed to protect human and environmental health. MRWA provides cost-effective services to rural utilities as staff assist as many as 250 systems each month.

Our mission is to provide the latest information, education, and technical assistance to protect our public waters and improve the quality of life in Minnesota. Decisions made today will determine your system's future! Contact MRWA today and allow us to assist you!



We've been busy...

Training is what we are all about! MRWA provided classroom, on-site and online training to water and wastewater systems and governing personnel on the most up-to-date methods of efficient operations and management techniques.

YEAR 2025 HIGHLIGHTS

3,089

Total Number of On-site Visits

79

Total Number of Training Sessions Held

4,233

Total of Personnel Trained

31,300

Total Number of Certification Hours
Earned

1,010

MRWA Memberships

429,313

Total Miles Driven



MRWA Technical Conference 2025

2025 Technical Assistance Visits by District

MRWA visits systems in all 8 Congressional Districts with a focus on small rural areas with populations under 10,000. MRWA's technical advisors help systems to assure the most effective use of scarce funding is being utilized, ensures problems are being solved for the least expense, and assists in better communication and cooperation between local officials.

Senators Amy Klobuchar & Tina Smith

3,089 technical on-site assistance & 4,233 personnel trained.

District 1—Rep. Brad Finstad

388 technical on-site assistance & 576 personnel trained.

District 2—Rep. Angie Craig

101 technical on-site assistance & 285 personnel trained.

District 3—Rep. Kelly Morrison

54 technical on-site assistance & 244 personnel trained.

District 4—Rep. Betty McCollum

149 technical on-site assistance & 332 personnel trained.

District 5—Rep. Ilhan Omar

18 technical on-site assistance & 93 personnel trained.

District 6—Rep. Tom Emmer

377 technical on-site assistance & 720 personnel trained.

District 7—Rep. Michelle Fischbach

1163 technical on-site assistance & 1070 personnel trained.

District 8—Rep. Pete Stauber

839 technical on-site assistance & 830 personnel trained.

Water & Wastewater Training Programs

MRWA provides classroom and on-site training to water systems and governing personnel on the most up-to-date methods of efficient operations and management techniques. MRWA hosts Safe Drinking Water Act training sessions under the EPA Water Training & Technical Assistance program and Wastewater training session under the EPA Clean Water Act Training & Technical Assistance Program.



Training Sessions Held: 17
Training Session Attendance 580

Circuit Rider Program

Minnesota Rural Water Association's Circuit Riders are experienced operations specialists/technicians/teachers that travel the entire state, day-in and day-out to provide on-site, hands-on technical assistance to small systems and USDA Rural Development water system borrowers and potential borrowers.

Total Contacts 2025: 1,060
Total On-site Hours 2025: 1,474



Disaster Response Circuit Rider Program



Disaster Response Circuit Riders assist rural and small community water and wastewater utility systems with 2022 Presidentially-Declared Disaster areas with assessments and funding assistance for projects related to disasters and emergency response.

Total On-site Hours 2025: 357.50
Training Sessions Held: 3 Training Sessions Attendance: 78

Wastewater Program

MRWA provides classroom training to wastewater systems and governing personnel for wastewater issues. MRWA's Wastewater staff are experienced operations specialists and technicians that travel the entire state to provide immediate on-site, hands-on technical assistance to small systems & USDA Rural Development wastewater system borrowers and/or potential borrowers. Training consists of Wastewater Operation & Maintenance and PFAS/Sustainable Management Workshops.

Total Contacts 2025: 658 **Training Sessions Held: 11**
Total On-site Hours 2025: 895.50 **Training Sessions Attendance: 407**

FSA Source Water Program

The FSA Source Water Protection (SWP) Program works closely with state and federal agencies to identify priority areas where local pollution prevention efforts are needed to protect drinking water supplies. Local teams are created to help guide the creation of SWP plans which are written to promote clean water in the local community. SWP Specialists help develop and implement source water protection plans in an effort to protect drinking water supplies. **Onsite: 517 Hours**

- Developed Wellhead Protection Plans for public water suppliers: **872 hours**
- Coordinated implementation efforts between state and local agencies to create more efficient funding and greater protection for drinking water supplies.
- Secured perpetual easements to protect drinking water supplies.
- Partnered with federal, state, and local agencies as well as non-governmental entities to advance programs & land use practices that advocate the establishment of perennial / alternative crops in sensitive wellhead protection areas.
- Implemented and advocated for nitrogen best management practices with landowners across the state to reduce nitrate levels within public drinking water supplies.

Wastewater Assessment Program

Minnesota Rural Water Assessment program provides technical assistance to high priority decentralized wastewater systems in need of technical assistance.

- On-site with Systems : **129.25 hours**
- Assessments: **497.75 hours**

Energy Efficiency Program

Minnesota Rural Water Association's Energy Efficiency Program assists rural and small community water and wastewater utility systems in evaluating their energy needs, consumption and costs; recommending measures to reduce energy consumption; and identifying potential funding sources for improvements.

- On-site with Systems : **107 hours**
- Developing Energy Assessments: **1168.50 hours**
- Outreach and Researching Energy Assessments: **99.75 hours**



Apprentice Program

Developing Apprenticeship and Workforce Standards in Minnesota to develop a systematic approach to training the next generation water/wastewater workforce with a focus on technology and innovation. In 2021, MRWA's Apprentice Program was approved by the Minnesota Department of Labor. Minnesota Rural Water Association currently has **8** registered apprentices in our program.

- Specialized Training for Clean Economy Occupation Attendees: **61**



Lead & Copper Technical Assistance Program

Minnesota Rural Water Association offers technical assistance and training to water operations specialists and systems in Minnesota on the Lead & Copper Revised Rule (LCRR). We also provide free of charge training sessions on the LCRR, and also on asset management training sessions.

- Training Sessions Held: **11**
- On-site Hours: **364.50**
- In-Person Attendees: **230**
- TOTAL CONTACTS: **300**



NM & NTNC Technical Assistance Programs

Minnesota Rural Water Association offers technical assistance and training to non-municipal and nontransient/noncommunity water suppliers in Minnesota. Minnesota Rural Water Association provides free of charge training sessions for nonmunicipal and non-transient/noncommunity water systems, including asset management training sessions. This program also conducts water asset management training and technical assistance for small systems. MRWA also expanded to offer remote training and technical assistance opportunities when in-person assistance was not possible.

- Training Sessions Held: **9**
- Online Training Attendees: **341**
- Asset Management Training Attendees: **47**
- In-Person Attendees: **196**
- TOTAL CONTACTS: **570**



Wastewater Asset Management Program

Minnesota Rural Water Association provides technical assistance and training to wastewater systems with asset management plans and NPDES permit and assists with preparing and implementing asset management plans.

- On-site with Systems : **343 hours**

Source Water Protection Program

Minnesota Rural Water Association's Groundwater/Source Water Protection Specialists offer an opportunity for public water suppliers to develop Wellhead Protection Plans to protect the quality of drinking water using local community resources. They work with implementation of those plans and are available to provide information and training for city councils, boards, utility commissions, other local community leaders. MRWA also expanded to offer remote meeting and training opportunities when in-person assistance was not possible.

- On-Site Visits: **532.75**
- Hours Developing Wellhead Protection Plans & Source Water Protection Plans: **1,423**

what our systems say...

Organizations such as the Minnesota Rural Water Association (MRWA) are a critical tool in our toolbox. MRWA staff provide access to technical subject matter experts that small cities like ours simply cannot maintain in-house. **Their assistance has been essential in areas such as wellhead protection planning, emergency response planning (including security vulnerability and cybersecurity requirements), asset management for infrastructure and equipment, and numerous training courses needed to maintain required water and wastewater certifications.** In addition, MRWA training and support in safety, MS4 stormwater compliance, and general public works topics have been invaluable in helping us stay current and compliant as regulations continue to change. MRWA has also been an important partner in community outreach.
--Lisa DeMars, Public Works Analyst
City of Medina

MRWA's Technical Assistance program is an extremely valuable partner to our City and we truly appreciate their knowledge and services provided. Infrastructure and compliance issues are critically important to our City. **The assistance that MRWA has provided us over the years by advising and guiding us through many issues as they come up is outstanding.** Most important to our small City is the help they provided us with our Wellhead Protection Plan. Their expertise saved our City valuable time and money, helping us accurately generate this plan by directing us to appropriate agencies when we did not know who to call for help. Thanks to MRWA's Technical Assistance team, with Robyn Hoerr at the helm, our Wellhead Protection was thorough and accurate, and the collaboration with the team through the process was outstanding. They made an intimidating and difficult project so smooth and seamless. We simply could not have completed the plan without them!

--Jane Burgess, MCMC, City Clerk
City of Village of Minnetonka Beach

There are plenty of times where we have used MRWA as a resource in dealing with our infrastructure to keep our town going. **Not only do they have to knowledge to deal with some of the problems that arise, but they also have the materials as well.** We have used them to televise sewer lines for blockage or repair; locate sewer lines due to poor mapping and other minor problems we cannot complete because we do not have the equipment. They have assisted in locating water lines and shut-offs. They have assisted in locating an underground water leak. They have given assistance in our wellhead protection plan and our emergency response plan. They have evaluated the energy consumption at our wastewater pond treatment facility, which saves us money each month. They are helping assist in the Lead and Copper Revised Rule that is in effect. They are knowledgeable on the PFAS regulations and how to deal with them. They may have connections to equipment we do not have when in time of need. They help us find funding and grant programs that are out there to assist our city. Some of you may be familiar with the flooding in southern Minnesota. I know MRWA has people in that area assisting with emergency disaster relief, and they have the connections to find help, borrow equipment and the knowledge on what steps to take to clean up the mess. The big take away I get from MRWA is the training and education. I was new to the Public Works water and wastewater department and I came into this role uneducated and overtime have learned and will continue to learn from them. They offer great hands-on training programs as well as classroom education.

--Kyle Trout, Water/Wastewater Operator
City of Perham

MRWA is the gold standard for assisting communities in Minnesota. Their "super highway" of knowledge is an essential resource for these communities. Whenever a situation arises that I'm unsure how to handle, they are just a phone call away. They are always ready to help in any way possible. MRWA is the best tool I've got access to working for the City of Lynd. Wither I need some input or direction or hands-on help with a project. Recently we did a Utility Emergency Response/Risk & Resilience/Security Assessment with Terah Rinerson at MRWA. **This gave the city a look at things we are doing good and more important the things we could be doing better to improve our utility systems such as security, surveillance and operating procedures.** Our wastewater system is under capacity and thanks to Marcus Weikert at MRWA we are able to start moving forward with a plan to help improve the city's sanitary sewer system to handle our current population and future expansion. If it wasn't for MRWA assisting us in this process, we would not be as far along as we are.

--Dillon Schultz, Public Works Director
City of Lynd

MRWA is a very good organization. They provide excellent trainings to help my staff and I with our required contact hours for water and wastewater licenses. They also provide great technical support when we have problems in our water treatment, water distribution system, and collection system. **I recommend to provide more funding to MRWA so they can continue to provide a great service to Minnesota.**

--Craig Nelson, Director of Public Utilities
City of Sauk Rapids

MRWA Staff have helped us out in the past year. The explanations may be brief but **their expertise and technical support they offer are second to none and truly appreciated.**

- Circuit Rider Ben Oseien helped us find several underground water distribution leaks, **which totaled 23,000 gallons per day. This saved the city approximately \$84,000 in operational and treatment costs and lost revenue,** more importantly this saved a critical natural resource and the environment.

- Source Water Specialist Aaron Meyer helped us implement our Wellhead Protection Plan; he notifies us of Source

Water Protection grant funding opportunities and assisted us with securing some of those funds in the past. He tracks the progress of our WHP Plan Implementation annually, **this year he and Source Water Specialist Mike Strodtman searched for abandoned municipal wells within the city's Drinking Water Supply Management Area to help eliminate potential ground water contamination if they were not sealed properly.**

- Lead and Copper Technical Advisor John Nelson assisted us with copper exceedances at two of our Lead and Copper sample sites, **he gathered information about our distribution system and water treatment facility and helped come up with an OCCT Plan.** His expertise and technical support helped us with following the Federal LCRR established by the EPA. If it wasn't for **ALL** Minnesota Rural Water Association Staff and important Federal Funding, many systems and operators would be lacking the knowledge and qualifications to maintain a pollution free environment and safe drinking water to the public.

--Kyle Mattson, Public Works
City of New York Mills

MRWA has assisted our city in locating water lines and valve boxes, identifying sources of inflow and infiltration (I&I) in our wastewater system, and supporting us when we needed to have sewer collection lines televised—**something we could not have done without their help.** Their technical staff provided both on-site and follow-up support during and after our infrastructure improvement projects. A specific area of support that has been especially valuable is their on-site technical assistance related to the proper installation of tracer wire. MRWA representatives have not only emphasized to contractors the importance of correctly installing tracer wire to ensure future locate accuracy, but they have also been available to provide on-site training and guidance whenever issues arise. Their proactive approach ensures that infrastructure is installed according to best practices, which will benefit the city for decades to come. In addition to field support, MRWA has provided essential administrative and planning assistance. As a City Clerk, I've personally received help with developing an Asset Management Plan, completing a water and sewer rate analysis, and preparing the necessary documentation to secure project financing. They also provided training and guidance to our city council, helping us understand the long-term planning required to maintain and sustain our systems. MRWA continues to offer certification and continuing education training that helps small municipalities like ours stay in compliance with USDA Rural Development and EPA environmental regulations. **These trainings are not only essential for maintaining operator certification, but also serve to build local knowledge and capacity, strengthening rural communities from within.**

--Melissa Stenson, City Clerk
City of South Haven

I would like to extend my deepest appreciation for the prompt assistance I received during the severe rain event on August 18, 2025. When approximately 9 inches of rain fell in a short period, I contacted the Minnesota Duty Officer and requested help from MNWARN. I was grateful when Paul Plaetz from MRWA and an operator from Windom arrived with an extra pump. In my two and half years in this field, I have never encountered a more dedicated and helpful group of professionals. **Your team consistently provides exceptional support and treats me with the utmost respect, like family. Thank you for always being there to assist me and answer my questions.**

--Andrew R. Dorschner, Public Works Director
City of Dunnell

I am so thankful for Paul Plaetz at MRWA. Recently, he helped myself and a city council member locate a sewer line hookup for a new build in our little town of Granada that we were having difficulty finding. In addition, he helped calibrate our lift station and ensured I was using the correct formula in my computer program to tabulate the flow. **Plus, the city council was able to utilize his expertise in small-town sewer operations as we consider what would be best for a new treatment plant.** I am so thankful your funding was renewed for another year. MRWA is a tremendous service to small communities like Granada to help us stay on track with maintaining our sewer and water systems.

--John Schofield, Class D Sewer and Water Operator
City of Granada

We contacted Minnesota Rural Water Association. We told them of our situation, they listened, they came out, they took notes. Soon after they set a plan into place. I am so impressed with the staff, they have gotten more things done in the last few months than we have done in the last 9 years. They are a god-send for the knowledge they have, where to look for information and what to ask. **If it weren't for them, the City of Tamarack would be broke from all the fines.** I have called them on so many issues. I just want to give them all A's.

--Kathy Haugse, Clerk/Treasurer
City of Tamarack

The training I'm currently attending in Pipestone is very informative and worthwhile. MRWA water and wastewater sessions are, and have been, the primary way knowledge in our industry is disseminated out to the communities of rural Minnesota. **Without this resource, there would be a void created that will lead to expensive and public safety issues.** Thanks for what you do,

--Jeff Larson, Public Works Director
City of Marshall

We'd like to express the major importance of the Rural Water Technical Assistance programs to our small community. During the past year technical assistance has been provided to us to assist with the Lead Service Line Inventory requirements and how to not only navigate the requirements but how to apply for funding to assist with this inventory. **Something we would never have been able to accomplish on our own with the limited resources we have available.** Our Public Works Supervisor was able to attend training and exam testing to become a certified water operator. Our monthly water quality testing became our responsibility as of 2025, previously completed by the City of Duluth, so this was necessary to add a second certified operator in the absence of the other certified staff. We hope you will continue to support these programs as they are a critical need for small communities like ours and many others in Minnesota.

--Robin Murphy, Deputy Clerk/Utilities
City of Rice Lake

2026 Minnesota Rural Water Association Board of Directors

What We Do: MRWA employs full-time technicians and specialists who act as “circuit riders” visiting water and wastewater systems in Minnesota. We assist communities and systems in complying with complex regulations to protect public health and the environment by providing on-site technical assistance and specialized training. We provide technical assistance in areas of state and federal regulations, fiscal management, system operation and maintenance, system development, groundwater wellhead protection, source water protection, leak detection, line locating, sewer televising, smoke testing, water audits, rate studies, security vulnerability assessments, and emergency response plans, and so much more! We provide unique, hands-on, and classroom-style training for certified water and wastewater operations specialists. MRWA hosts the largest water and wastewater technical conference and exhibition in Minnesota.



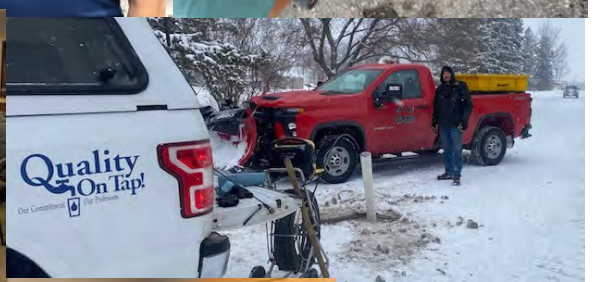
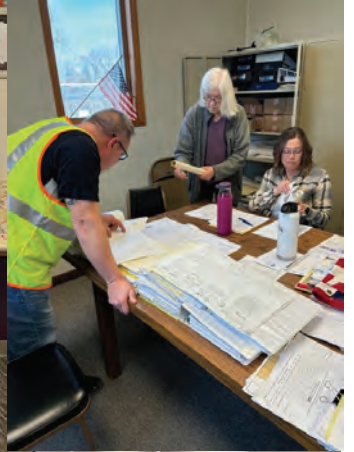
(Bottom row, left to right) Director Jan Moen, Lincoln Pipestone Rural Water; Director Al Rutter, City of Cyrus; Chairman Tom Dowdle, Kittson Marshall Water;

(Top row, left to right) Vice Chairman Ryan Holtz, Rock County Rural Water; Director Paul Bergeron, Marshall & Polk Rural Water; Director Tracy Bergh, Kittson Marshall Water; Director Mike Carlson, Red Rock Rural Water System; Director Steven Lyseng, City of Fosston

MRWA Mission Statement

“To provide the latest information, education, and technical assistance to protect our public waters and improve the quality of life in Minnesota.”

MRWA would like to thank our members for their strong support and their continued participation in Minnesota Rural Water Association’s activities. This truly is your Association!



Minnesota Rural Water Association Contact Us!

Decisions made today will determine your system's future!



Minnesota Rural Water Association
217 12th Ave SE
Elbow Lake, MN 56531
218-685-5197
Email: mrwa@mrwa.com
Web: www.mrwa.com



Excellence in Training and Technical Assistance