

New Users and Ellis Consolidated RWD 1 Benefit From KAN STEP Project



It's drier than dry as Darrell Gross fills a trench on July 29 on a section of new pipeline in Ellis Cons. RWD 1. Darrell is a volunteer on the project and will receive water service from the addition. He has hauled water to his farm for six years and is ready to turn on the rural water tap. Sparkplug Bernie Leiker steadies the valve riser.

This summer, I've spent a substantial amount of time helping out the volunteers on the KAN STEP project at Ellis County Consolidated Rural Water District No. 1. The district is located south of Hays. The RWD was awarded a \$299,685 KAN STEP grant through the Kansas Department of Commerce to make improvements to the district's water system and to also allow the connection of eleven new customers along the eastern edge. Volunteers are expected to donate \$262,350 in labor or services. Several local contracting firms also donated trenching services for up to five miles of the project.

As I write this in early October, I'm pleased to report that the project is nearly complete. The project has gone remarkably well, in spite of several cut fiber optic lines and several hits on the rural water district's existing pipelines.

There were some anxious moments including one when the system was out of service and had to issue a boil water advisory because of a valve that pushed off after several inches of rain fell and filled a trench that was partially open. In spite of that inconvenience, the farmers and residents around Hays have been prayerfully grateful for the rains that were received in late July and August.

Ellis Cons. RWD 1 serves 160 rural patrons. The district purchases water from neighboring Trego County RWD 2 which produces water from several wells. The interconnection between the two water districts is six miles west of Hays.

The improvements that have been installed involve twelve miles of new pipeline ranging from 6-inch to 2-inch. Additional valves have also been installed. Ernie Leiker and Laren

Leiker were the sparkplugs on the project. Contractors and suppliers on the project include Municipal Supply Inc. of Nebraska and M & D of Hays, Inc. The project consultant is Stuart Porter from Schwab – Eaton, P.A., Beloit, KS. Grant Administration was provided by Corina Cox of the Northwest Kansas Planning and Development Commission, Hill City, KS. And as on other KAN STEP projects, the Kansas Rural Water Association provided inspection services and assistance. Members of the RWD board are Harvey Ruder, Chairman and directors: Rikki Betts, Tom Denning, Elaine Pfannenstiel, Amy Befort, David Leiker and John Moeder who also serves as operator.

The new users who are being served have waited for many years to gain access to rural water. Originally, the new users were each requested to pay



It was 108 degrees on July 9, 2013 but volunteer Laren Leiker has pulled the throttle to the stop and is headed east. From 7:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. the volunteers installed 1.5 miles of 4-inch pipe including tie-ins on a road crossing.

approximately \$35,000 towards the project. The cost of benefit units in the district is \$5,000. The KAN STEP project eliminated the costs of the installation. The new users each paid \$5,000 for a membership in the RWD. The RWD gained eleven new customers, added \$55,000 to their balance sheet and also improved the system to better serve existing customers with the installation of several miles of new 4-inch pipeline. It was a win-win situation for everyone.

There's a mix of emotions for me and other KRWA staff who have worked on this project as it draws to a close. First, working with the volunteers, including several days back in July when the temperature was 110 degrees, has been rewarding. Ernie and

Laren and Sue Leiker made sure that volunteers had some of the best home-cooked meals this side of Boulder! It's not every day that volunteers are treated to cherry cheesecake dessert for desert after a big meal, but Sue Leiker did that and much more. The district's operator John Moeder and I discovered that some of the original project (1970's) as-built drawings were inaccurate. It was only when the backhoe uncovered those lines that we really knew what was buried where – and on a couple of occasions, we found out sooner than we expected. Anyone working in a water system would understand what I mean.

The KAN STEP program is working to help numerous other water systems and improve community facilities in

smaller towns in Kansas. The Kansas Department of Commerce, the engineer, the project owner, grant administrator and volunteers make it happen. KRWA is proud to be involved to help ensure that the projects are installed properly. Volunteers on the Ellis Cons. RWD 1 project deserve a big pat on the back for doing good work. In the twelve miles of new pipeline, there was no pressure loss during the pressure testing – and we made sure that the pressure and time under test exceeded the specifications.

If your community or RWD is interested in making improvements, I encourage you to check the KRWA Web site at www.krwa.net and then under "Technical Assistance" for the link to KAN STEP. There are many photos posted of the 80-plus KAN STEP projects. And for information about the program, contact Salih Doughramaji at the Kansas Department of Commerce or you can also call KRWA and you'll be directed to the right sources.

Doug Guenther has worked as Technical Assistant for KRWA for 11 years. Doug worked for the City of Oakley in the Water and Electric Department for 8 years. He has also worked several years for an industry supplier. He is a



Class II Certified Water Operator.



A total of 13 volunteers gathered on July 8 for another great noon lunch in the Laren and Sue Leiker farm shop. Irvin Hazelhorst, left, and his grandson Austin Hazelhorst are in the forefront. "If we keep eating this good, we'll need a nap!"



Board members Elaine Phannestiel and Chairman Harvey Ruder share a laugh with KRWA General Manager Elmer Ronnebaum following a pre-construction meeting of landowners held in the church basement in Antonino in late May 2013.