

WaterPro[®]

Conference

National RWA's Showcase Event

The National Rural Water Association (NRWA) held its annual WaterPro Conference September 13-16, 2021 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. KRWA directors Bill Shroyer, Scott Robertson and Patricia Shaffer attended as did KRWA staff members Charlie Schwindamann, Doug Helmke, Stewart Kasper and myself.

WaterPro is the annual conference and showcase event of the National Rural Water Association. It's designed to bring together water and wastewater utility systems. Those attending are from both large and small municipal and rural water systems. Conference topics address issues in operations, management, board leadership, and governance.

As I mentioned, several KRWA employees who work under NRWA contracts attended this year's conference. The staff who attended were Charlie Schwindamann and myself as Wastewater Technicians. Others were Stewart Kasper who is heading up the Energy Assessment Program and Doug Helmke, one of two KRWA Source Water Protection/Water Rights Specialists.

The NRWA and KRWA relationship

The Kansas Rural Water Association was incorporated as a non-profit organization in 1966. The National Rural Water Association (NRWA) was formed in 1976. Kansas was one of the original 8 charter states to form the National Rural Water Association. KRWA currently operates contracts to provide training and technical assistance that are administered through the NRWA. The contracts include funding for two Wastewater Technician positions, three Circuit Rider positions for public water supplies, two Source Water Protection positions, an Apprenticeship Program Administrator and an Energy Audit staff person. NRWA also provides funding to cover some of the costs associated with training. That contract is funded through



Wastewater Tech Jason Solomon discusses current affairs with Bill Simpson, NRWA Legislative leader in Washington, DC.

US EPA. KRWA can only use the funds for training items annually reviewed and approved by the EPA and the Kansas Dept. of Health and Environment.

Why NRWA?

The NRWA was founded because many of the original EPA standards were written for large metropolitan water utilities, and many smaller utilities did not have the resources to meet those standards. Prior to that, rural and small utilities, with populations of 10,000 or less (comprising 92 percent of our nation's community water supplies), had little, if any voice in legislative and regulatory issues.

Today, NRWA through its State Rural Water affiliates like the Kansas Rural Water Association, is the nation's largest water and wastewater utility membership association with more than 31,000 members. The strong grassroots advocacy fights to ensure adequate funding, and its availability, through the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Environmental Protection Agency, State Revolving Loan Funds, along with other federal agencies and private entities. NRWA maintains a legislative affairs team headed by Bill Simpson in Washington, DC.

WaterPro session highlights

The WaterPro conference provided a unique setting with many of the nation's top leaders of the EPA, USDA, NRWA, and industry experts. Panelists provided the opportunity for questions and comments from those in the audience.

US EPA regulatory outlook session

During the regulatory outlook WaterPro attendees had the opportunity to hear directly from Andrew D. Sawyers, Director of the Office of Wastewater Management (OWM) at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in Washington, DC. Mr. Sawyers oversees the management of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES). Attendees also heard from Jennifer McLain, Director of the Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water. Each official outlined the direction each program intends to head over the next year.

The speakers were available for direct questioning or comments from anyone in attendance. No comments are shunned as one newly-hired water district manager pleaded his case for the EPA to use less enforcement through fines and be understanding of individual situations as with his water district in West Virginia.

Also, during the question and comment of this session a representative from Florida Rural Water Association brought to the attention of the EPA that there is a real potential for a shortage of treatment chemicals for the water and wastewater treatment systems in Florida. It was discussed that at no time in history has a Section 1441 of the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) form been submitted to the EPA. Section 1441 provides

a mechanism by which the Department of Commerce can issue an order to a vendor to provide the necessary amount of the chemical or substance to a Public Water System (PWS) or Publicly Owned Treatment Works (POTW).

Under SDWA §1441(a), a PWS or POTW applies to the EPA Administrator for a certification of need when the amount of a "chemical or substance necessary to effectively treat such water is not reasonably available" or "will not be so available when required." If EPA issues the certification, the Agency will forward it to the Department of Commerce Undersecretary for Business and Industrial Security for implementation. Persons or companies subject to the order are given a reasonable opportunity to consult with the Department of Commerce concerning the implementation of the order.

If any Kansas water or wastewater systems are having supply chain issues for receiving water treatment chemicals, please contact KRWA for assistance ensuring all criteria are met before filling out the Application to Request Action Under SDWA Section 1441 to Address a Shortage of a Water Treatment Chemical.



Emerging contaminants – manganese and PFAS session

Manganese was on the first Contaminate Candidate list when EPA created the list in 1998. In 2005 two PFAS, PFOS and PFOA were added.

During the session, a new high filtration rate catalytic filtration was analyzed for manganese removal.

For the removal of PFAS a comparison of the use of granular activated carbon (GAC) vs. Anion Exchange as a removal treatment was analyzed.

New or proposed changes of the classification determination of a contaminate like manganese and PFAS coupled with new technology will likely involve more treatment processes at an increased cost to the water producer. Once the final rule and limits are established, KRWA staff will be available to assist systems with interpreting what is required of your system.

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NRWA highlights two programs at WaterPro Conference

Two programs highlighted at this year's WaterPro Convention were NRWA's Energy Efficiency Technical Assistance Program and NRWA Apprenticeship Program

The NRWA Apprenticeship Program has provided the guidelines to states that lay a firm foundation for the apprentices to thrive upon completion as a water and or wastewater operator. With little to no cost, apprentices attend an approximate two-year training program through Kansas Rural Water Association. From classroom instruction and on-the-job training, apprentices are provided the tools necessary to be a successful operation specialist in your community. Anyone interested should Monica Wurtz (email monica@krwa.net) for additional information about the Kansas Apprenticeship Program.

NRWA's Energy Efficiency Technical Assistance Program promotes energy-efficient practices in small water and wastewater systems. Funded through a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Utilities Service, the program performs energy assessments and recommends energy-efficient practices and technologies. The program provides documented results. Technical support includes assisting with presentations to governing boards, evaluating cost and benefits, and training.



Attending conferences to stay "caught up"

The staff at KRWA strive to provide the best quality technical assistance available with a cognoscente effort toward affordable compliance techniques. By attending the WaterPro conferences, KRWA staff get a firsthand look at new treatment technologies and gain valuable information about new and updates to existing regulations. The same is true for the Kansas Rural Water Association's Annual Conference & Exhibition,. Attending helps put people on the front lines of water and wastewater treatment and technologies.

KRWA staff are working on the program and planning for the 2022 Annual Conference & Exhibition, March 29 -31 at the Century II Convention Center in Wichita, Kansas. The program booklet will be in the mail about January 1 and posted online. A listing of hotel room blocks is posted on the KRWA website www.krwa.net and then under the "conference link". I hope to see you there.

Jason Solomon works primarily as a wastewater tech at KRWA. He previously was District Environmental Administrator at the Kansas Department of Health and Environment southeast Kansas office in Chanute, Kansas.



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