Fiscal stress affects everyone these days -- federal and state governments, municipalities and citizens. Budgets are stretched to the limit by rising costs for energy, materials, and health care, just to name a few areas.

How can costs be controlled, while still providing services to protect health and the environment, and also assure adequate housing for citizens of all income levels?

The answer is cooperation, which is the focus of this issue of From Watershed to Well. Cooperation can occur in many ways, at many levels, and the net result is not only financial savings, but the opportunity to build networks across local and regional boundaries.

Cooperation also cuts through the red tape of bureaucracy, and can significantly shorten the time to get things done. For example, have you ever heard of WARN? Tom Essig’s article outlines this nationwide program, where communities voluntarily pledge to assist each other during times of crisis that affect their municipal infrastructure systems. WARN has already proven to be invaluable over several hurricane seasons on the Gulf Coast. (Page 12)

Were you aware of the potential for co-funding among federal and state agencies to construct drinking water and wastewater systems? (Page 9)

Or about the opportunities for community cooperation in Massachusetts in a tough real estate market? (Page 14)

These and other topics are covered in our current issue. Read on, learn, and start to think about ways to work in cooperation with funding agencies, non-profit organizations, and your neighbors.

You will save time and money, and enhance the social fabric of your community (and maybe even have a good time doing it!).
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What’s New at RCAP Solutions

Cooperative Educational Initiative:
Visit to the Massachusetts Statehouse

On Tuesday, February 12, 2008, ten RCAP Solutions staff members visited the Statehouse in Boston to participate in the Massachusetts Non-Profit Housing Association’s (MNPHA) Annual Legislative Day.

The day started off with presentations to both elected Representatives and Centers describing the work RCAP Solutions does with the funding that the state provides.

After these presentations, our staff divided up into three teams to visit the thirty-one representatives and senators who serve central Massachusetts. The primary focus of the visits was to let them know who we are or, in most cases, to visit the offices of people who know us well. We explained what is currently happening in the programs. The visits provided opportunities to answer questions and to let staff in the representatives’ offices know that we are available to address constituent concerns. The legislative staff were pleased to have a place to refer housing problems.

RCAP Solutions teams were well received in each of the offices and left information on both RCAP Solutions and the MNPHA. The programs highlighted included:

- Housing Consumer Education Centers (HCEC)
- Rental Assistance to Families in Transition (RAFT)
- Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP)
- Moving to Economic Opportunity Housing
- Home and Healthy for Good

RCAP Solutions does not operate the last two, but they are part of our budget proposal through MNPHA.

RCAP Solutions Community Support Holiday Online Auction
- A new tradition

Kimberly Thomas, Communications Manager

To increase awareness and develop additional resources for our programs to help people and communities, RCAP Solutions held its first online auction from November 1st through December 15th -- with great success. With eleven sponsors and one hundred twenty one donors contributing items, the web-based auction raised close to $20,000.

Winning bidders received their items in time to give as gifts over the holidays.

Plans for the 2008 auction are already underway.

If you are able to donate an item or want to become a SPONSOR, please contact Kim Thomas at 978-630-6653.

This auction provides excellent opportunities to bring YOUR name and organization before new national audiences as well as valued customers, while helping RCAP Solutions fulfill its mission to serve those in need.

Come visit us :

Upcoming Tradeshows are a good way to keep up-to-date on emerging technologies, ways of managing your business, and renewing your relationships with RCAP Solutions.

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<th>DATE</th>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday, May 7, 2008</td>
<td>Fairlee</td>
<td>VT</td>
<td>VT Rural Water Association Conference</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunday, May 11, 2008</td>
<td>Hershey</td>
<td>PA</td>
<td>PA State Association of Township Supervisors’ Conference</td>
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<td>Monday, May 19, 2008</td>
<td>Kerhonkson</td>
<td>NY</td>
<td>NY Rural Water Association</td>
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<td>Tuesday, May 20, 2008</td>
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<td>Sunday, June 8, 2008</td>
<td>Seven Springs</td>
<td>PA</td>
<td>PA State Association of Boroughs Annual Conference</td>
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<td>Sunday, October 12, 2008</td>
<td>Pittsburgh</td>
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The nature of RCAP’s environmental work in communities has evolved over 40 years from hands-on, one-on-one technical assistance with small system municipal boards and staff, to include more formalized education and training activities with specific outreach to rural and underserved populations.

Below are a few examples of successful collaborations that have advanced our educational initiatives. We are looking to move forward by forging additional partnerships as well.

**Financial Management/Best Practices**

RCAP Solutions has developed a series of 10 financial-managerial board training modules with funding from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection as well as assistance from the Pennsylvania State University Environmental Training Center and Small Public Water System Technology Assistance Center.

These modules are self-contained and portable. They are geared towards water board members and other decision-makers, but staff such as secretaries and operators can benefit as well. Topics range from Water Supply System Basic Operations to the Basics of Accounting and Finance for Small Water Systems to Bidding, Purchasing, and Leasing and Project Management.

**Education of Small Systems about Appropriate Technologies**

Mis-management, or lack of management of wastewater systems can be catastrophic. Standard approaches to solving wastewater issues may not always be a reasonable option. Through cooperative networks, RCAP Solutions staff offer various educational sessions in partnership with Canaan Valley Institute of Davis, West Virginia on decentralized approaches to wastewater treatment. Other training partnerships in this critical field have been with the South Western Regional Planning Agency (SWRPA) in New York and with other regional planning groups in New England.

In addition, RCAP Solutions Community Development Specialist, Candace Balmer, currently serves as the Chair of the New York Onsite Wastewater Treatment Training Network (OTN) and Vice Chair of the OTN’s curriculum development committee. OTN represents various industry professionals, including specialists from the New York State Department of Environmental Education, New York State Department of Health and the Department of State (NYSDOS) who provide hands-on training to those involved in the onsite industry. The OTN training workshops and Candace’s long-time experience in education as well as community development have assisted numerous rural communities with practical steps towards solving water and/or wastewater problems.

**Recognizing the Value of Asset Management**

RCAP Solutions has been a leader in promoting the importance of and training communities in the implementation of Asset Management practices. Maine State Lead,
From Watershed to Well  
Spring 2008

Arthur Astarita, has been circulating across the State of Maine, thanks to funding from the Maine Department of Environmental Protection, providing training to communities and systems in that region. Please see article on page 10 on the merits of performing Asset Management.

Safety and Security:  
**Being Prepared Involves Education and Partnerships**

You cannot pick up a newspaper or listen to radio and TV news programs without hearing tales of one catastrophe after another. Not all of them are man-made! Helping communities become prepared in the event of hurricanes, floods, ice storms and, yes, even tornadoes involves training, mentoring and knowledge about networks that are available. RCAP Solutions has been in the forefront of developing strategies and assessment tools to move this process forward.

**Geographic Information System (GIS):** Age, and old-age at that, is characteristic of the infrastructure in the Northeast. “As built” drawings often don’t exist, or are incomplete, or are just plain inaccurate. RCAP Solutions has been using GIS, and finding partners to help execute GIS mapping, as a way to help communities plan, prepare, and repair in cost-effective ways. GIS can also be used to explore options when considering decentralized approaches.

**What Makes for a SUCCESSFUL Collaboration?**

In considering the effectiveness and barriers inherent to collaboration, models of involvement and the promotion of change, I am reminded of a document titled “Changing Roles, Changing Relationships: The New Challenge for Business, Nonprofit Organizations and Government” that was the outcome of a collaboration among The Conference Board, the Council on Foundations, the National Academy of Public Administration, National Alliance of Business, and the National Governors’ Association. The piece was first shared with members of these organizations in 1999 and while collaboration is the necessity for today, it is nothing new. You may review it at [http://www.independentsector.org/programs/leadership/changeroles.pdf](http://www.independentsector.org/programs/leadership/changeroles.pdf).

The analysis states that several factors are necessary to make collaborations successful: (1) a common goal; (2) a convener; (3) a structure to organize and manage the core talents of each participant; (4) awareness of the geographical dimension: national, state, and local institutions working on global, regional or neighborhood problems; (5) effective communication; (6) periodic assessment for establishing accountability and generating information; and (7) trust and confidence.

**RCAP Solutions Seeks Additional Collaboration Partners**

RCAP Solutions is committed to delivering educational programs and facilitating partnerships that empower underserved individuals and communities. We are a comprehensive community and people-based organization. RCAP Solutions uses a holistic approach with individuals and communities to prepare people and communities for the future. Addressing the needs in affordable housing, jobs with living wages, community infrastructure and environmental health, the scope of our services at RCAP Solutions is quite broad, attempts to be flexible, and is based on collaboration.

RCAP Solutions has assembled a talented staff of professionals committed to helping communities meet their goals of achieving a safe and healthy environment and developing reserves for future infrastructure needs. We are also proud to have had the benefit of a variety of collaborations over the years, which has helped us to move forward in education and training.

One example of the benefits of partnerships is the cooperation between the Center for Environmental Education, Conservation and Research at the InterAmerican University of Puerto Rico (CECIA-IAUPR) and RCAP Solutions to introduce in Massachusetts a post-secondary certificate program focused for English and Spanish speakers on the technical operations of public drinking water systems. We will be beginning an outreach program to identify potential students and participating utilities.

If you or your organization has an idea or goal to reach increasing numbers of individuals and/or communities through effective education and training programs, we encourage you to consider partnering with us. Please contact Sukhwindar Singh via email at ssingh@rcapsolutions.org or call 814.861.7072 to share your ideas and your aspirations about this or any other partnership opportunities.
“Education” is a constant central issue in conferences, symposia and workshops on the subject of providing and/or funding potable water for small (or all) systems. Whether it’s education of the management/administration of the system, the operator of the system or the people who will have to pay for the system, we all agree – at conferences – that education is key.

Discussion can take the form of ‘we have to educate operators’, ‘we have to educate responsible public officials’, ‘we have to educate administrators and managers’ and probably most interesting of all, ‘we have to educate our users’.

Certification

There have been many, many initiatives to address specific portions of the problem. Some of these have resulted in constructive improvements, although there are still areas of weakness.

The American Water Works Association (AWWA) has tried to “professionalize” our members for most of the last 30 years, with some success, including the certification process, started over 50 years ago. But we have to guard against ‘teaching to test’.

Many, many polities and utilities have taken advantage of the certification process to structure compensation for operators. We need to be sure that we’re not paying for the answers to a test but have truly developed expertise.

Voluntary administration/management training has been ill attended. Mississippi has seen managerial improvements after making training mandatory for Board members.

Obtaining Respect for What May be ‘taken for granted’

We agree that we have let our product – water and wastewater treatment – be undervalued. In the face of an apathetic public, how do we engage them enough to educate them? The public at large needs to understand the value of water – and come to value their most important asset.

Atlanta

The Honorable Shirley Franklin, Mayor, worked hard and long to convince the city that the $4 billion effort now currently underway was actually needed. More importantly, she taught Atlanta the value of investment and that the cost of the repairs and renovation undertaken by her administration were the result of neglect and misunderstanding by generations of Atlanteans.

Mayor Franklin accomplished this not in a negative way, but by emphasizing that administrators need help from their constituents, while difficult, educating your public about the real needs of your community makes asking for the needed resources easier.

The request by Atlanta’s Municipal Administration for over $25 billion in funding passed with 87% of the voting public endorsing the issue.

Public Awareness

Community meetings are sometimes well attended when the issues involve quality/quantity and/or an increase in rates. Despite these issues, in some communities public attendance is small. Attendance at these meetings can be increased with sufficient time and enough effort. People are not apathetic about things that matter. We have to make water matter.
Educators need to understand the need for educated, reasonably paid operators and relate their value to the community. Agencies need: (1) to focus on capacity as the road to compliance and (2) to understand the handicaps – and the strengths – that small communities have. The media should be made aware of the value of a water system, so they can understand when someone is fabricating deficiencies.

The RCAP Paradigm

We see what there is to do – why don’t we do it? There is a one-word answer: time. Here is how RCAP invests it:

- Building cooperation locally.
- Capacity-building – we believe the members of our communities will understand the problem and can fix their own problems. A subsequent question, of course, is can we afford to wait for them to engage?
- “Return-ism” – recidivism is an active verb (we go there a lot, and over and over) and we build trust over time.

Freeport, Massachusetts

One of the most satisfying of the projects presented here affected an isolated, poor hamlet located almost exclusively along Braley Road in the town of Freeport, Massachusetts. The situation was so horrendous that collectively users had sued the water commission for insufficient supply and pressure and had lodged a formal environmental justice complaint with Region 1 of the US EPA. Mostly Cape Verdians, these residents felt alienated from their community water supply.

The Commission’s response to complaints evinced overwhelming negative and concerning statements.

The customer base involved is approximately 25% of the estimated 8,000 town residents. Townwide there are two disparate systems served by neighboring public water supplies.

RCAP Solutions has invested over 5 years working with the commission on budgets, rates and operational issues. Like many long-serving independent boards, these commissioners had lost a little of their “edge” in dealing with their community. A survey of all of the service customers in the area asked about the degree of the problem with pressure supply.

A team of RCAP Solutions technical assistance providers supported by Federal funding conducted a field analysis of the problem area and were able to recommend solutions to the physical pressure and supply problems.

An intensive, two-year long program of executive and public meetings with the Commission, users and, finally, commissioners and users resulted in a solution agreeable to both parties. Moreover, the outcome (1) created a renewed understanding on all parts of their joint interests in the provision of safe drinking water and (2) resuscitated community trust in their government and that government’s commitment to its citizens.

Patillas, Puerto Rico

This project provided technical assistance and financial aid to remote, poor communities on the Island through the joint efforts of CECIA, the Environmental Institute of Interamerican University of Puerto Rico, and RCAP Solutions. It was integrated into the work plan of the Environmental Justice Demonstration Project “Secure Drinking Water for Rural Puerto Rico,” as part of a nationwide collaborative process.

Achievements in the project are being published to the Interagency Working Group of federal agencies, therefore expanding the effect of the project. It is expected that the strategy implemented in this project will be used by agencies in the group in their future planning.

For the first time in Puerto Rico, 13 members of communities operating their own independent water system were able to take the Operator Certification test offered by the Puerto Rican Department of State. Seven were certified as potable water plant operators at the highest level. Each of these also took and passed the wastewater treatment plant operators exam, on their own, and became certified WWTP operators, as well.

This project not only increased the safety of non-PRASA water systems, but also had a profound economic impact. Of the 31 persons (between 35 and 18 years of age) enrolled in this project, all but one was unemployed at the inception of the program. All are now employed, almost all in water or wastewater system operation or administration.

Conclusions

Lessons learned here point to the value of exercising courage and creativity to partner with other concerned organizations, drawing from each expertise and resources in a complementary fashion – to further the welfare, wealth and safety of many beyond the capacity of any one of them to have accomplished on their own…and the key is EDUCATION.
Since beginning my tenure at RCAP Solutions ten years ago, I’ve been a participant in meetings held three times a year in the New Hampshire State Capitol, Concord. The New Hampshire Engineers’ Liaison Committee convenes to foster cooperation and communication for the benefit of all parties concerned with improving the public health through better water and wastewater systems. In a state with a small population (1.6 million) and a relatively small state government, it’s not an exaggeration to say that every water and sewer project – be it proposed, in-progress, or completed – is represented at some level by one or another of the participants. At the Liaison Committee meetings, the people in federal and state government who process applications from communities proposing infrastructure improvements get together with engineers to discuss issues that arise during the course of bringing the projects to reality. RCAP Solutions’ role has been to bring the community perspective to the table. Non-profit agencies working with communities, such as RCAP Solutions, are also present, which further strengthens community involvement in the discussions.

Agencies at the Table

The NH Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) is responsible for developing and applying the state regulations under the umbrella of state law. NHDES might be familiar with the need for a project at a very early stage, perhaps due to the finding of a sanitary survey, or a complaint from a customer.

The funding agencies, including USDA, NHDES, and the New Hampshire Community Development Finance Authority are brought in to the projects as they become developed. They actively participate in the planning process to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the community’s eligibility for their programs. Engineers who have been retained by the communities to plan, estimate costs, and design the project, are able to get feedback from multiple sources, (including engineering peers).

Adjunct state agencies, such as The New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources, also participate and give input on their perspective.

RCAP Solutions’ contribution has been to bring the community perspective to the table. All agree that this valuable perspective adds to the mix, and we are always happy to be invited to participate.

An Example of Positive Outcomes

By the turn of the Millennium, a trend had been developing in New Hampshire (and elsewhere): more than one funder would be necessary in order to provide the resources for a community to implement an improvement project. However, prior to 2001 each funding agency used their own set of contract documents for the administration of projects for which their funds were being used. For the most part, each of these documents were similar in intent, but not necessarily in actual details. This often presented a challenge for each project because, in practice, there were some items in each of the contract documents that actually conflicted. A working group was formed to meet and go over the documents, with emphasis on the wastewater sector. The intent was to generate a list of where the documents differed. During the early period of its work, Liaison Committee meetings were lively, especially when the specific items of contrast were brought up for discussion.

Finding Common Ground and Building on It

Findings were brought to the attention of senior management at the funding agency.
Continuing Good Work

The Engineers’ Liaison Committee has continued to meet, and is considered a valuable forum for engineers and government workers to meet outside of their day-to-day dealings. As a witness and participant, I can say that I have seen communities benefit from this enhanced communication and cooperation. I encourage anyone reading this to contact RCAP Solutions and find out how they can participate in the Committee’s meetings.

RCAP Solutions is available to work with agencies and other partners in states in our region to set up a Liaison Committee, if there is not one currently active. The benefits, in terms of fostering a cooperative atmosphere, are enormous.

The owner of the Wayside Mobile Home Park in Westborough, MA wanted ‘out’. In fact she had a purchase and sales agreement in hand. It was written with an organization called the Wayside Management Company and it stipulated that she would sell her 5 acre 49 site facility mobile home park for $1,050,000. As required by law, she notified her tenants. The tenants had 90 days in which to match the offer or live with the consequences of the sale.

The tenants matched the offer on October 12, 2007, but HOW would they actually raise the necessary funds? RCAP Solutions had a possible answer.

RCAP Solutions Offers a Hand

The RCAP Solutions Massachusetts Manufactured Housing Park Program initiative has three major components. The Wayside Mobile Home Park tenant situation related to all of these.

1. Park Conversion: Converting investor-owned manufactured housing parks to resident-owned communities.

2. Loan Funds: Securing and marketing funds for site acquisition and improvement loans for parks that convert from private ownership to resident ownership.

3. Advocacy for Park Residents: Advocating for residents of manufactured housing communities who are not aware of their rights.

The tenants at Wayside moved forward and organized themselves as the Turnpike Park Cooperative, Inc.

In December, 2007, they applied and were approved by RCAP Solutions for a $10,000 pre-development loan. This allowed them the ability to hire an engineering firm to evaluate the property so as to prove that it was, in fact, worth the money being paid for it and to identify what repairs were necessary, if any.

Coordination and Cooperation Make Things Possible

On January 9, 2008, the Turnpike Park Cooperative accepted financing from TD BankNorth, RCAP Financial Services and The Co-op Fund of New England to purchase the park. It is anticipated that the closing will take place around April 10th and that the residents of the park will become the owner, set their own rent and determine their own destiny.

Conditions Are Not Onerous

The Turnpike Park Cooperative is prohibited by statute from selling the park and making a profit. If they ever decide to sell the park and dissolve the corporation, they must give any profits to another non-profit housing cooperative.

Benefits of Being a Non-Profit Cooperative

The proposed conversion would allow everyone living in the park to become a member of the cooperative, if they wished to, without a prohibitive down-payment or share. The tenants at Wayside moved forward and organized themselves as the Turnpike Park Cooperative, Inc.

Lending a Helping Hand

Patrick Pinkson-Burke, Community Development Specialist
Donna Warshaw, Executive Director, RCAP Solutions Financial Services, Inc

Prestando Ayuda

El dueño del Parque de Casas Rodantes de Wayside en Westborough, MA quería venderlo pero ¿Cómo los residentes podrían levantar los fondos necesarios? RCAP Solutions tenía una posible respuesta. Surgió un arreglo de pareo de fondos que incluía a un banco, una organización prestamista sin fines de lucro y RCAP Solutions. Ahora los residentes de la comunidad se han convertido en los dueños, establecen su propia renta y van a determinar su propio destino.
Co-funding of Water and Wastewater Projects in New York State: Millions Leveraged for Water and Wastewater Projects

The ability of the New York state Revolving Funds to provide additional subsidy in the form of lower interest rate loans -- often down to interest-free loans to small projects based on financial hardship criteria -- makes co-funding the practical route to follow. An interest-free loan substantially increases a community's borrowing capacity, thus decreasing the need for what is often the limiting factor – grant availability.

Coordination

Some projects can proceed with a loan only from a single agency, but grants from Rural Development, HUD Community Development Block Grant program through the NY Office for Small Cities, and Appalachian Regional Commission are crucial to co-funding.

Decision-making and autonomy of each funding agency is retained while project information is shared through frequent communication and regular co-funding coordination meetings.

Results

With no shared staff, the accomplishments of the Co-funding Initiative are impressive: providing information to municipalities on project financing options, sharing project information, holding annual workshops around the State, minimizing applicants' duplicative efforts and cooperating to make more projects happen. Communities are also referred to other ways to reduce project costs such as energy efficiency assistance through the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority.

Co-funding is why so many New York State small communities with financial hardship have been able to proceed with construction of their water supply and wastewater projects. However, public support for user fees at full-cost pricing is the essential factor to keep these environmental infrastructure projects functioning well and sustaining good water and wastewater services.

In fiscal year 2007 alone, USDA Rural Development funding in New York State leveraged an additional $53 million for small community water supply and wastewater projects. That this was more than Rural Development’s own annual funding shows how much co-funding of projects in New York State is doing to make more projects possible.

Co-funding Expands Lending Opportunity

The desire of Rural Development staff to figure out how to make crucial projects happen in the smallest and poorest communities from the Northern Adirondacks to the Appalachian Region of the Southern Tier initiated combining interest-free loans from the New York State Revolving Funds with USDA grants and loans. This occurred for many years before signing of a formal Memorandum of Understanding by six funding agencies in 2001 and was the culmination of informal coordination that had been ongoing for years.

(The Assessment of State Infrastructure Coordination Models by the EPA Region 4 Environmental Finance Center lists this 2001 MOU as the inception of co-funding.)

Millones Pareados para Proyectos de Agua y Alcantarillado

Algunos proyectos pueden ejecutarse con el préstamo de una sola agencia, pero donativos de “USDA Rural Development”, “HUD” Programa de Donativos en Bloque para Desarrollo Comunitario a través de la Oficina para Pequeñas Ciudades de NY, y la “Appalachian Regional Commission” son cruciales para el pareo de fondos. Los logros a través de la iniciativa de Pareo de Fondos son impresionantes: proveyendo información a los Municipios sobre opciones de financiamiento de proyectos, compartiendo información de los proyectos, sosteniendo talleres anuales a través del Estado, minimizando la duplicidad de esfuerzos de los solicitantes y cooperando en lograr que se logren más proyectos.

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EPA Announces Environmental Infrastructure Financing

In the next 20 years, cities, counties, and tribes will need to spend billions of dollars to improve capital assets to remain in compliance with federal environmental laws. EPA’s Office of Compliance has created the Financing for Environmental Compliance website to provide a step-by-step financial planning process that can help communities determine capital asset technical and financial needs and find specific air, waste and water resources to meet their compliance goals. See http://www.epa.gov/compliance/assistance/financing/index.html.

If you have specific questions or comments, please contact Cassandra Rice at 202-564-4057 or rice.cassandra@epa.gov.
Every year, it seems, small water systems are being required to meet yet another regulation, to attend another training course, and to keep current with technical publications. What is the latest “flavor de jour”?

Do you view these as a proverbial ‘pain in the neck’ -- or have you learned to leverage the seemingly ever-changing sets of rules/regulations to your advantage?

Living in a Shifting Environment

Knowledge about the world around us is expanding exponentially, and it is critical that those of us in the water/wastewater business stay on top of new developments. New regulations and the mandated trainings help us do just that. For example, the new regulations on microbial and disinfection byproducts reflect how the science of water is evolving.

- Research on our immune system is producing better understanding of our tolerances of the various contamination levels. Consequently, we can expect maximum contamination levels (MCL) to change in the future.
- Equipment detection levels will also become more sensitive to identify ever-smaller concentrations and therefore, inevitably, testing costs will increase.

There also seems to be a never-ending pipeline of planning and management training “suggestions”. In addition to social and political changes, 9/11 seems to have altered our utility “lifestyle” as well. Emergency response planning and vulnerability assessment were, and still are, the hot topics for compliance.

And, we hear:

- “Small systems know who to contact and what to do in an emergency”, don’t they?
- “We can’t cut off access to this recreational area even if it is our water source”.
- “All this “planning stuff” should be for large systems and should not burden the small systems” that are just trying to “make ends meet”; right?

Let’s Be Realistic

How will your system “in the heat of a crisis” approach and handle various types of emergencies? We are talking about a service line break, failed pump, contaminated water source, or a whole system failure from a Katrina-type event.

Now, EPA is asking water and wastewater systems to voluntarily join a WARN (Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network). These networks of ‘utilities helping utilities’ are being created in every state. See a profile of Pennsylvania’s method of organization on page 12.

In many rural areas, mutual aid is a “handshake” agreement. However, does each party truly understand each other’s material and labor costs?

What Benefits Come to the Community

Formally crafting, accepting, and signing a WARN agreement will help protect your

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1 Small systems are defined by EPA as those with less than 3,300 customers. RCAP targets assistance to such systems but experience shows that our “small systems” are usually less than 500 customers.
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The Check-Up Program for Small Systems

For the past year, RCAP has been working with EPA to develop an effective computerized asset management tool. This spring EPA will be introducing the Check-Up Program for Small Systems (CUPSS). CUPSS is a desktop computerized asset management program designed for water and wastewater systems you run on your C-Drive. It’s pretty cool!

The word “system” implies a group of interacting, interrelated, or interdependent elements forming a complex whole. To effectively manage a water or wastewater system, it is paramount to understand each interdependent component of the system. Making accurate assessments of the condition and probably life span of each system asset can be difficult and time-consuming but it is a necessary part of our job.

It is widely recognized by RCAP students that information about the condition of various components of an infrastructure system can be invaluable not only in placing a value on the remaining life of the components, but also in establishing a critical-path maintenance schedule. Such asset understanding can also help in an emergency knowing what to tell supply houses or neighboring systems the exact piece of equipment you are trying to replace.

A completed asset management plan shows you have evaluated, priced and prioritized every critical piece within your system. Such a document serves as a business plan to support your appropriation requests from system users, municipal council, and/or federal and state funding agencies. For any business to borrow money, a business plan is required. With asset management you have such a plan. You can proudly demonstrate your active management and financial prowess of your system since no one else knows the system as you do!

We are convinced, asset management is vital to the overall “Capacity Development” elements of the Safe Drinking Water Act.

The Check-Up Program for Small Systems

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Systems input their assets, prioritize them, and rate their condition and probably remaining life. You can even create a system schematic. The program will show asset risk matrix and capital improvement program with replacement dates. There will be a calendar to show what maintenance or repairs are scheduled for the month!

The word “system” implies a group of interacting, interrelated, or interdependent elements forming a complex whole. To effectively manage a water or wastewater system, it is paramount to understand each interdependent component of the system. Making accurate assessments of the condition and probably life span of each system asset can be difficult and time-consuming but it is a necessary part of our job.

It is widely recognized by RCAP students that information about the condition of various components of an infrastructure system can be invaluable not only in placing a value on the remaining life of the components, but also in establishing a critical-path maintenance schedule. Such asset understanding can also help in an emergency knowing what to tell supply houses or neighboring systems the exact piece of equipment you are trying to replace.

A completed asset management plan shows you have evaluated, priced and prioritized every critical piece within your system. Such a document serves as a business plan to support your appropriation requests from system users, municipal council, and/or federal and state funding agencies. For any business to borrow money, a business plan is required. With asset management you have such a plan. You can proudly demonstrate your active management and financial prowess of your system since no one else knows the system as you do!
Warn Steering Committee: Many Partners, Much Success

Thomas W. Essig, Jr.,
State Lead for Pennsylvania

The initial focus of the PaWARN was primarily on water systems, but it is equally important for wastewater systems to participate. By taking advantage of gravity for their collection systems, wastewater treatment plants are often prone to flooding and could affect downstream water intakes should they go offline for prolonged periods of time.

High Return On Investment

The WARN program provides many benefits for small water and wastewater systems. There is no cost to participate in the program which is completely voluntary. The member utility is not committed to respond to an event if it cannot do so. It provides increased planning and coordination to emergency situations and expedites the arrival of aid. A single agreement provides access to all member utilities statewide and a pre-established relationship to share resources and specialized equipment. It is anticipated that all states will have an active WARN program and are currently in various stages of development.

Coordination is Critical When Time is Short

All WARN programs are consistent with the National Incident Management System (NIMS). Established by Presidential Directive, it helps incident managers and responders from various agencies to better respond and recover from disasters through a unified approach to incident management. This includes standard command and management structures, communications, and formalizing mutual aid networks.

NIMS and Incident Command System (ICS) certifications are required for all water and wastewater systems. ICS is a standardized on-scene emergency command structure to organize field level incident management operations. NIMS implementation allows for eligibility to apply for and receive federal preparedness grants and training. Certified operators have received first responder status because of the importance of getting
these utilities back on line after a disaster and should be trained in NIMS and ICS.

**The Players**
The steering committee compromised a diverse group of entities that included representation of a good cross section from the water and wastewater industry. These include:

**Associations:**
- **American Water Works Association (AWWA)** - the designated Pennsylvania Lead for developing PaWARN. This included establishing the steering committee, mission statement, policy formation and website development.
- **RCAP Solutions** - served as an advocate for small systems in policy formation. Research was conducted in marketing PaWARN to small systems and input was provided on developing the equipment list for systems to identify equipment available for helping other systems.
- **PA Rural Water Association** – another voice for small systems including marketing the program to member systems and providing a more operator technical perspective.
- **PA Municipal Authorities Association** – hosted a PaWARN meeting and has been very supportive of the program with their members.
- **PA Water Environment Association** – active on steering committee and provides recruiting ties with wastewater systems joining PaWARN.

**Government:**
- **Environmental Protection Agency** – conducted initial training on the WARN program for the state steering committees and is coordinating the national effort for mutual aid networks among states utilizing similar agreements.

**Department of Environmental Protection** – PA regulatory agency provided seed money for the implementation of PaWARN and the website.

**Public Utility Commission** - supportive of the program through mailing PaWARN brochures to systems and in recruiting.

**PA Emergency Management Agency** – supports PaWARN and mutual aid programs.

**Municipal Systems:**
The PaWARN steering committee was well represented by large, medium and small systems from across the state. Small systems had difficulty attending meetings due to staff and fiscal limitations. Special thanks to the State College Borough Water Authority for hosting several steering committee meetings.

**For-profit Systems:**
United Water, Aqua PA; York Water Company, and PA American are active steering committee members that offer a vast amount of resources for disaster response and brought a more business like approach to the program and policy formation.

**The Website**
This is the heart and sole of the PaWARN because it is the mechanism that a system uses to request assistance. Here is how it works:

- Equipment lists from member systems are available for the system seeking assistance to analyze and determine which system has the equipment or manpower that it needs.
- The system seeking help can enter their zip code and search for member systems by a 10, 50 or 100 mile radius.
- An e-mail can be sent to that system or there is a phone number for an emergency contact that is available 24-7, allowing contact to be made during typical non-business hours. A system is required to respond to the request only if they can provide assistance. [Other WARN states utilize mass e-mails to all member systems as the request process.]

**How to Reach WARN Elements Easily**
RCAP Solutions and PaWARN have reciprocating links on our websites to provide quick access to our programs and demonstrate RCAP Solutions’ commitment to PaWARN. It is anticipated that the website will be enhanced to provide security related news, alerts and weather updates that could affect utility systems and operations. In addition to the website, PaWARN is also promoted through a color brochure that explains the program and benefits.

**What’s Next**
The steering committee will turn the program over to a board comprised of a water and wastewater system from each of the six regions in the state and a representative from the DEP. When it becomes its own entity, PaWARN will be member driven and move forward developing its own policy and direction. Also, ongoing marketing of the program to increase utility membership to all systems will be a priority.

**Conclusions**
The diversity of the steering committee member organizations, their niche markets and their work contributed greatly towards the success of the PaWARN.

“Any chance of succeeding regionally and nationally required that the various associations come together and support the PaWARN” said Mike Snyder, AWWA and designated lead for PaWARN development. Often seen as competitors for funding and program development, these associations have worked in harmony for the better good of the state and industry.
Three significant trends are challenging Hubbardston Elderly Housing, Inc., located in Hubbardston, Massachusetts. RCAP solutions manages this facility, which was opened in 1986 as independent housing for low-income elders in the Greater Gardner, Massachusetts region.

Facing the Challenge
Because residents have been happy at Hubbardston House, as the facility is affectionately called, many are aging in place. Consequently they need assistance with activities of daily living to remain in their living environment.

Obvious Solutions May Not Be Simple to Pursue
We knew that an elevator would solve some of our occupancy issues. As a result, residents who were no longer able to manage stairs began to age out of Hubbardston House, although they would have preferred to stay. In addition, our admission trends showed an increasingly older applicant pool. This severely limited our ability to rent second floor apartments. Hubbardston House began to suffer significant vacancy problems.

Creating a New Paradigm
In order to meet the needs of our residents, RCAP Solutions has responded with an ever-increasing array of service initiatives, including expanding the facility to include assisted living services. Some of the existing structure has been converted to this new programmatic effort.
Hubbardston House, an existing Section 202 development, contains two 2-storey buildings that house a total of 36 apartments.

Conversion of the units in Building “A” to both assisted care and more independent assisted living has been funded through two Assisted Living Conversion Program (ALCP) grants applied for under the HUD 2005 NOFA. A total of $4.1 million was awarded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development for this entire project. The first grant supported converting 7 of the 19 units in Building “A” to assisted care. The work scope of the second grant includes the conversion of the remaining 12 units of Building “A” into assisted living units.

Renovated units will be located on both the 1st and 2nd floors of the North wing of the structure. In addition to the apartment renovations, the project’s scope includes adding on to the current structure to provide for additional building services such as a dining room, kitchen space, laundry, and salon area.

All 19 accessible assisted living units comply with all current federal and state accessibility guidelines, including HUD “UFAS” regulations, the State of Massachusetts building code, the State of Massachusetts Accessibility Code, and the State of Massachusetts fire codes. In addition, they will meet or exceed the Fair Housing Accessibility Guidelines of the Federal Fair Housing Amendments Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

The target population we expect to serve in the newly converted Assisted Living Facility (ALF) will consist of the following:

- Elders currently at Hubbardston House and needing assisted living services.
- Residents who currently live independently within our other Section 202 projects that are aging in place and may eventually need ALF services.
- Elders who, at present, live in the community in their own homes but will need access to affordable assisted living services in the future.

Some of the supportive services that will be provided to our residents include:

- An onsite meals program providing a minimum of 2 meals per day;
- Onsite 24/7 nursing assistance that will help residents with medication therapies and other medical issues;
- A Resident Services Coordinator to provide advocacy for the residents; and
- An onsite small beauty salon for residents.

The construction phases include the addition of the dining/kitchen/salon/laundry areas as well renovation of all living units to provide greater accessibility for the residents. The main components of the living unit renovation work include the installation of roll-in shower units and removal of barriers in the kitchen/living room area. The completed living units will be much more user friendly and will retain a kitchen to allow the residents to continue to prepare meals if they desire.

**Progress Report**

Construction completion is scheduled for June 30, 2008 and work is on schedule!

RCAP Solutions is beginning marketing activities. Given the community needs, and support generated by our successful program at Hubbardston House over almost twenty years, RCAP Solutions has every reason to believe this low-income assisted living project will be a huge success.