



Message from Don Christianson, former MRWA Technical Advisor

Hello everyone! Some of you may have heard that I have had illness issues this past year. Complications from surgery have caused my employment with the Minnesota Rural Water Association to end. I want to talk about some of the great opportunities that I have had during my 16+ years as Technical Advisor.

First of all, working as an employee with MRWA has been a great experience. My previous experience was as a city employee. I started out in 1975 looking for a job. The city of Pelican Rapids had an opening and I was hired. There I did all kinds of tasks including operating a wastewater trickling filter plant and an iron removal water plant. During the winter of 1975 and 1976, I attended a 12 week wastewater training session at the Wadena technical school. This entailed going to one night class a week. John Thom was the instructor. He must have been a good teacher because I passed the D wastewater exam.

In July of 1976, I was hired by the city of Rothsay as the Water and Wastewater Superintendent. Again I attended a water training session over a 12 week period, one night a week, conducted by Bruce Shorter in Fergus Falls. I passed the D water exam.

In October of 1979, I started employment with the city of Walnut Grove as the Public Works Superintendent. After 3 years I became disillusioned with municipal work and decided to try self-employment. During a 4 year period I contracted with some cities and performed various private work.

I started working for the city of Perham in July of 1987 as Public Works Superintendent. During my 5 plus years there I was introduced to many additional job duties that I hadn't previously performed including a municipal natural gas system.

Late in November of 1992, I started as the Water Superintendent of Crookston. Again, new job duties also included Safety Coordinator and Geographic Information System work.

I began employment with the Minnesota Rural Water Association on May 18, 1998. Robyn Hoerr and I started the same day. We were given some overall guidance, a credit card, cell phone, laptop computer, and keys to a car. That began the 16 years of a Water Circuit Rider (Technical Advisor).

During those years with MRWA, I've had a chance to be involved in many rewarding functions and projects. The Annual Technical Conference has always been a highlight.



It has always amazed me at how well everything goes there. Much of that is to the credit of Ruth Hubbard and the office staff. They do an incredible job.

I have estimated that I have been a part of approximately 250 training sessions. One of the most difficult parts of that is trying to come up with new topics or different ways to talk about old topics. I have to mention my “partner in crime”, Jennifer Koenig. She has been great to work with and I think the small system operation specialists would agree that she does a great job too.

There are many people to thank for the excellent working environment with MRWA. It starts with the Board of Directors. There have been several people that have held that position over my years, but as a group they have tried their best to support the organization and the employees. So, thank you past and present board members for your efforts and dedication.

I want to thank the office staff for their help and professionalism. Those of us in the field can't perform our duties without those in the office. Sometimes their contribution is overlooked or taken for granted, but I haven't. Thank you!

I also want to thank the rest of the field staff. Many of us don't see each other very often. It is usually at staff and board meeting and the Annual Conference when we work together. Each of you brings a unique quality to the organization. Thank you and best wishes to all of you.

Last but not least, there is Ruth Hubbard. In my opinion Ruth is Minnesota Rural Water. She has been a wonderful Executive Director. I have appreciated her guidance and support over the years.

I have had the opportunity to do things that I never otherwise would have been able to have done as a MRWA employee. There are too many to list or go into detail. I want to mention the Minnesota Department of Health though. I have fulfilled a grant that MRWA has with MDH these 16 years. There have been many staff members that I have worked with. I have enjoyed working with everyone there. Best wishes to all of you.

In closing, I still hope to be relevant in the water and wastewater field and don't plan to disappear. I've enjoyed a 40 year career in this field and am greatly appreciative to have had the opportunity. I hope to see many of you down the road somewhere, sometime. Keep learning and keep trying to be the best you can be.

By for now,

Don Christianson