



# The Technical Assistance Times

## Rural America Needs Investment Now in Water and Wastewater Infrastructure for Coronavirus Relief

\*Small and rural communities have done their part to meet the public's needs during the COVID-19 pandemic by maintaining and restoring customer access to water services regardless of payment. National Rural Water Association (NRWA) estimates small water and wastewater systems will lose \$998 million in revenue due to customer nonpayment alone. This lost revenue will never be recovered by utilities and does not include emergency operational costs.

\*Most of the country's drinking water and wastewater utilities are small. Roughly 80 percent of the country's approximately 17,000 wastewater utilities serve populations less than 10,000 persons. Over 90 percent of the country's approximately 50,000 community water systems serve a populations less than 10,000 persons.

\*Since 1937, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has aided rural communities by providing direct assistance to obtain clean drinking water. The Rural Utilities Service (RUS) is the only federal agency created and supported by Congress to specifically target Rural America with direct affordable financing for water and wastewater services to small communities.

Rural America needs RUS to provide additional financing and servicing tools to address this economic crisis and foster economic development and public health protection by increasing affordable options to distressed communities.

### New Affordable Tools for Rural Water Infrastructure Financing and Sustainability

**Provide 0% and 1% loans through RUS:** Target this funding specifically to communities with limited resources. Low interest loans will help utilities provide necessary, affordable water and wastewater services to their customers. EPA currently has this authority.

**Protect the sustainability of existing borrowers:** Include additional flexibility for "forgiveness of principal and reducing loan debt" for existing borrowers. This is vitally important in communities that have experienced an economic downturn or disaster which has reduced the number of ratepayers.

### Disaster Assistance for Rural Water Utilities With Lost Revenue

**Ensure continuity of operations for water utilities:** Provide RUS the permanent authority to use a portion of grant funding to address utilities' immediate needs for operational expenses. Grant funding is necessary to ensure continuity of essential services during a disaster or emergency when the rate payments are reduced or eliminated as a direct result of the disaster or emergency.

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### Asset Management on the Web!

Download MRWA's Asset Management Template at [www.mrwa.com](http://www.mrwa.com)

*Free, easy to understand asset management templates!*



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# NRWA Affinity Partner: TechRadium / IRIS is offering a free, 30-day trial for MRWA Members



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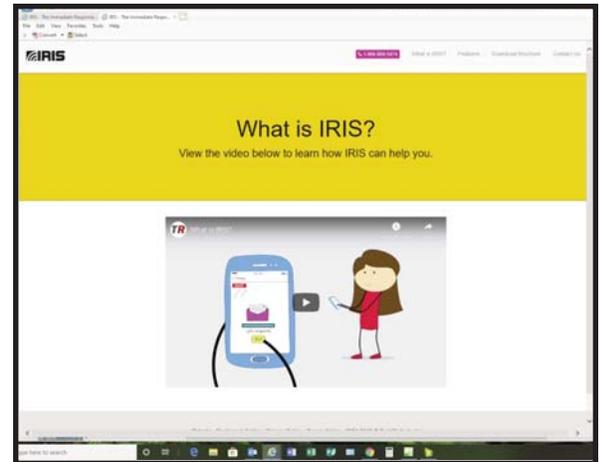
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## You Can Still Request Cloth Facemasks

In May, FEMA shipped 80,000 washable, reusable cloth facemasks to Minnesota for distribution to all Minnesota water and wastewater utilities that request them. To request masks, contact the Point of Distribution (POD) nearest you. Please visit mask information from MnWARN - [www.mnwarn.org](http://www.mnwarn.org) - to find the contact information for your closest POD and for additional details.

**If your system has already received masks, you can request more, especially if your staff are coming close to exceeding the 15 wash recommended limit.** All water/wastewater utilities are eligible; you do not have to be a Minnesota Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network (MnWARN) member to receive masks.



# Construction Moving Full Speed Ahead on Lewis & Clark Project Celebrates Anniversaries

Contact: Troy Larson, Executive Director - 605-368-2400 (work) and 605-310-0560 (cell)

July 6, 2020

**Tea, SD** – The Lewis & Clark Regional Water System is celebrating its 30<sup>th</sup> year of incorporation and this month is celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of being authorized by Congress and signed into law by President Clinton. “As we celebrate these important milestones, we are very pleased that construction is moving full speed ahead this summer,” said Executive Director Troy Larson. Work recently started on three projects and is expected to begin on a fourth in September. Construction is also wrapping up on a fifth project. These five projects represent a combined \$54.1 million in construction.



## Pipeline Contracts:

These three projects are part of the transmission line that will ultimately provide water to Sioux Center, Hull and Sheldon.

\*Carstensen Contracting of Dell Rapids, SD is nearing completion of 11.2 miles of 24 diameter pipe that started at Beresford and headed east. Construction began in the spring of 2019 on this \$9.8 million project.

\*Carstensen is constructing 10 miles of 24 inch diameter pipe starting at Sioux Center and heading west (see attached photo). The substantial completion deadline is December 2020 for this \$8.2 million project.

\*Carstensen plans to begin construction in September on 12.6 miles of 24 diameter pipe between Sioux Center and Beresford, which includes the Big Sioux River crossing. 7.6 miles of the project will be on the Iowa side and 5 miles on the South Dakota side. The substantial completion deadline is December 2021 for this \$19 million project.

## Well Contract:

\*Welfl Construction of Yankton, SD is constructing a radial collector well along the banks of the Missouri River southwest of Vermillion that is expected to produce 16 million gallons a day. By comparison most of Lewis & Clark’s 11 vertical wells each produce in the range of 3 million gallons a day. The substantial completion deadline is April 2022 for this \$10.4 million project.

## Water Tower Contract:

\*Caldwell Tanks of Louisville, KY is constructing a 2.5 million gallon water tower on the southeast side of Beresford that will be 220 feet tall at its peak. According to Caldwell officials, this will be the tallest 2.5 million gallon water tower in the nation. The substantial completion deadline is July 2022 for this \$6.7 million project.

“When these five projects are completed Lewis & Clark will be close to 85% complete. If we continue to receive \$18 million per year in federal funding, which is what was appropriated in FY20, the project is estimated to be completed by 2030. We still have a ways to go, but we can at least see the light at the end of the tunnel,” said Larson.

###

**BACKGROUND:** Lewis & Clark was incorporated in January 1990 and the congressional authorization was signed into law in July 2000. It is a non-profit wholesale provider of water to its member cities and rural water systems in southeast SD, northwest IA and southwest MN. The water source is a series of wells adjacent to the Missouri River and has a treatment plant near Vermillion. Construction began in 2004 and Lewis & Clark started delivering water in 2012. The System is currently serving water to 15 of its 20 members. Members yet to be connected include Hull, Sioux Center, Sheldon, Sibley and Madison.



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NRWA *America's Largest Utility Membership*

Providing RUS these additional tools will enhance and sustain economic development in small and rural communities and offer additional affordable options to communities with limited resources and economies of scale.

**For More Information**

NRWA COVID-19 Resources - [www.nrwa.org/covid-19](http://www.nrwa.org/covid-19)

**National Water Utility Survey: Impacts of COVID-19 Emergency**

Since distributed, 4,915 water and wastewater utilities across 50 states & U.S. Territories responded. Currently, the survey has a 100 percent completion rate.

NRWA estimates small water and wastewater systems will lose \$998 million in revenue by mid-July. Drinking water systems are projected to lose \$817 million; wastewater systems are projected to lose \$181 million. These losses in revenue will not be recovered by utilities and does not include emergency operational costs such as staging additional shifts, isolating staff, modifying procedures for regulatory compliance, purchasing PPE, and additional equipment for remote work.

Survey Results: <https://bit.ly/2YILEzk> | Take the Survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NRWACOV19>

Please contact Bill Simpson, NRWA Director of Legislative Affairs - for more information or questions. [bills@nrwa.org](mailto:bills@nrwa.org) | 202-215-9452