

## Tightening the Belt One More Notch

Shaun Fielder, Executive Director

All of you should be aware at this point we have experienced another program reduction here at VRWA. Our sole remaining source protection program, as managed by Liz Royer, ended back in January. Liz wrapped up work with VRWA on February 24 on good terms and all of us wish her the best. For any of you that we assisted on source protection plans over the past 10 years, one of Liz's last assignments was to prepare and distribute an electronic copy of the most recent plan we have assisted your system with. It is rewarding to note VRWA distributed these to over 160 systems via mail. Remember, updates to source protection plans are due every three year period and even though we don't have an individual specifically dedicated to source protection plan work, VRWA is still able to offer certain source protection planning services including processing of updates on a fee basis. One other staffing change is that Paula Jackson ended work with VRWA on April 2.

In regards to our other team members and programs, our USDA circuit rider programs as managed

(Continued on page 6)

## Lessons from Irene

Aaron Perez, Water Systems Specialist

On August 28<sup>th</sup> 2011, as Vermonters we faced the worst flooding since 1927. The infrastructure in most of our towns has grown substantially since then, which has increased our vulnerability to this type of natural disaster. During the weeks following Irene, I spoke with a number of water operators around the southern part of the state. Their experiences, while all different, had many common lessons that can be used to help prepare us for future disasters.



With just about every town having multiple water lines running alongside—or over—rivers and streams, the need for accurate mapping as well as a strong maintenance program has never been greater. In some towns, the sudden loss of a single river crossing was enough to create a total loss of pressure to their systems. Being able to locate and shut down these lines was critical to returning service quickly.

Knowing where all of your system valves are located and having mapping that is accessible and easily read by someone who is not familiar with your system is essential. Wastewater operators, highway workers, private contractors and others all contributed to helping get some of these systems up and running, so having information that can be shared in a easy-to-use format is very important.

Knowing that river crossing isolation valves in your system all work properly is important. However, in some cases, the isolation valves themselves had been washed into the river, so you need to know that *all* the valves in your system work properly. I know there are many towns that are hesitant to work old valves in fear that they may cause problems. During disasters like this, you have to be able to isolate portions of your system quickly and possibly for a long duration. Just remember that creating a problem by working on an old valve under conditions in your control is far preferable to doing so in an emergency. ●



## Who We Are

Since 1982, Vermont Rural Water Association has supported water and wastewater systems across the state. We provide many services, including training, source water protection planning, and onsite assistance.

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News Leaks is the official publication of VRWA. It is published quarterly for distribution to operators, owners, managers and board members of water and wastewater systems in Vermont, as well as to association members, water and wastewater service providers, regulators, and other friends. Opinions expressed in the newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of VRWA.

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# Letters

GRANITEVILLE FIRE DISTRICT #4  
P O BOX 206  
GRANITEVILLE, VERMONT 05654  
FEBRUARY 17, 2012

Vermont Rural Water Association  
20 Susie Wilson Rd. Suite B  
Essex Jct. VT 05452

Attn: EPA Admin. Lisa Jackson

This Fire District has been a member of VRWA for over twenty years. We utilize the continuing educational offerings and the technical services provided by the Association.

The Fire District is a full service water system that serves a population area of approximately 700 people in Barre Town, Vermont.

Each year, we have a need for technical support to locate leaks in water lines on two to five occasions, and the VRWA has specialized equipment to assist in this process. We also have staff training provided by VRWA. Another area of technical support is service on instruments at our water treatment plant, such as chlorine pumps, turbidity meters, water meters, etc. Without these services, we would have to invest in very expensive equipment and staff that is used infrequently.

The funding support to VRWA is very important to the continued services we receive.

Sincerely,

Andre Rouleau, Operator and Prudential Committee Member.



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# News on Tap

## VRWA Support Letters to EPA

Thanks to all of you who provided letters of support requesting that EPA direct previously allocated funding back to rural water for much needed training, technical assistance and source protection planning services. VRWA received over 200 support letters from Vermont systems supporting rural water program funding via the EPA budget.

## Annual Conference

Our Annual Conference is set for May 2 and 3 at the Lake Morey Resort. All of us at VRWA look forward to another successful event starting with our annual golf tournament on the afternoon of May 2 and training and vendor show on May 3. We are pleased to an-

nounce that Rusty DeWees, aka The Logger, will join us again this year to provide our lunch time entertainment on May 3.

A registration form has been included in this issue (see page 5). Please copy for each attendee and submit with payment by April 15th to take advantage of the early-bird rate.

You may also register by visiting us at [vtruralwater.org](http://vtruralwater.org)

## Newsletter Changes

News Leaks will now be produced and mailed three times annually. The second and third issues will arrive in the mail early August and October, respectively. As always, we continue to post the latest news and announcements on the home page of our website: [vtruralwater.org](http://vtruralwater.org)

## VT DEC Forms Advisory Committee To Review Wastewater Certification Rules

The Watershed Management Division has set up a group of industry representatives to assist with review of the wastewater certification process. Wayne Graham is representing VRWA in these meetings. The primary objective of the committee is to review the wastewater certification process, therefore protecting the integrity of the wastewater profession.

On another note, the Watershed Management Division has decided to allow certain web-based trainings to be accepted for wastewater credit hours. Preapproval by Andy Fish (802) 338-4838 will be required.



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# What is a “Good Price” for Water & Wastewater Service?

Shaun Fielder, Executive Director

The question comes to us more and more these days; what is a “good price” for water or wastewater service? In fact this was a key point discussed at the recent Budgets and Rates course we offered in conjunction with Aldrich + Elliot, PC down in Hartford, VT in early March. The costs and fees associated with providing water and wastewater service are as varied as the systems across our state. The variation in pricing is significantly different based on the number of factors. These include information such as connections served, complexity of the system including treatment and distribution network, capital improvement needs, consulting fees, testing fees, and many other factors as examples.

This hopefully isn't news: if the income from rates covers expenses for the budget year, then the rates are likely set accordingly. Let's not forget that your planning process should incorporate the future needs for your system, not just the one year look ahead. Recognizing there are many standards in regards to financial processes for a given water and wastewater system, having some reserve and covering future capital improvements should be a goal each budget year. As an aside, the money dedicated to future improvements is sometimes referred to as a sinking fund.

*(Continued on page 6)*



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# Vermont Rural Water Association Annual Conference & Trade Show

May 2-3, 2012

Lake Morey Resort, Fairlee, Vermont

## Who Should Attend

Operators, managers, directors and other representatives of water and wastewater systems, as well as regulators and industry vendors.

## Location

Lake Morey Resort, Fairlee, Vermont. Fairlee is near the Vermont–New Hampshire border about 20 miles north of White River Junction. Directions: From I-91, take Exit 15. The resort entrance road is just west of the exit.

## Golf Tournament

Our Eleventh Annual Golf Tournament will be held on Wednesday, May 2. Come join VRWA team members, directors and others from the industry for an exciting round. The tournament begins at 12:30pm.

## Luncheon & Annual Meeting

Our awards luncheon and Annual Meeting is the perfect chance to talk shop with your peers.

**We are also pleased to welcome back *The Logger - Rusty DeWees!***

## Sessions

**The early-bird session will begin at 8:00am on Thursday, May 3.** Other sessions will take place throughout the day beginning at 9:30am. Topics tentatively scheduled to include:

- Irene Lessons Learned
- Regulatory Roundtable
- FEMA Contingency Planning
- Leak Detection
- Bio / Nutrient Removal

Training contact hours for water and wastewater operators will be awarded. Earn up to 3.5 TCH.

## Trade Show

More than 50 industry vendors anticipated to display their products and answer questions from 8am-3pm on May 3. Keep an eye out for door prizes. In addition, VRWA will be offering a special prize drawing and tee-shirt giveaways.

## Lodging

The resort's overnight package includes your hotel room and dinner on May 2, a full breakfast in the dining room on May 3, and use of all resort facilities. Rates are \$162/night (\$234/night for double occupancy), plus 9% Vermont rooms & meals tax and a 19% service charge. Reservations should be made directly with Lake Morey Resort by April 2; call 800-423-1211 and mention Vermont Rural Water.

## For More Information

Call us at 800-556-3792 or visit our website for updates: [www.vtruralwater.org](http://www.vtruralwater.org)

# Register today!

Mail this form, call 800-556-3792,  
or visit [www.vtruralwater.org](http://www.vtruralwater.org)

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## Registration Form

Duplicate this form for multiple registrations.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

System/Business \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

**Questions? Call us at 800-556-3792 or 802-660-4988, extension 305.**

**Cancellation policy:** A full refund will be issued if cancellation is made by April 15, 2012.

For office use only:

Date received \_\_\_\_\_ Check # \_\_\_\_\_  
Check amount \_\_\_\_\_ By whom \_\_\_\_\_

Registration rates for One Attendee & Lunch for May 3

**Rates on or before April 15, 2012**

\_\_\_\_ \$55 Member

\_\_\_\_ \$65 Non-Member

**Rates after April 15, 2012 or at the door**

\_\_\_\_ \$70 Member

\_\_\_\_ \$80 Non-Member

**Golf Tournament** (5/2 at 12:30pm)

\_\_\_\_ \$50 if overnight resort guest

\_\_\_\_ \$70 for day attendees

**Dinner** (5/2 at 6:30pm, separate charge for those not staying at the resort only)

\_\_\_\_ \$40

\_\_\_\_ **Total Enclosed**

Make checks payable to VRWA.

Mail this form with your payment to:

VRWA, 20 Susie Wilson Road, Suite B  
Essex Jct., VT 05452-2827



# Tightening the Belt One More Notch

(continued from cover)

by Brent Desranleau, Wayne Graham and Aaron Perez remain in place. They continue to offer services at no direct cost to those systems eligible for Rural Development funding. In addition, Phil Acebo continues full time work on various water operator training. While we await word on national program funding, we hope to secure several other sources of training program support to keep the full complement of continuing education training coming to all public water system operators. We recently determined in 2011 that VRWA provided 68% of all water operator continuing education training in the state. We are doing our best to keep those low-cost training opportunities coming to you.

All these recent program reductions have been very challenging for sure,

and our efforts to secure other funding support is ongoing. This includes our most recent visit to Washington, DC to meet with Vermont's Congressional delegation. Congressman Welch, Senator Leahy and Senator Sanders continue to support rural water and we



L to R: Shaun Fielder, Congressman Welch & Ed Savage (VRWA President)

are hopeful final appropriations levels for rural water program funding for FY 2013 will lead to reinstatement of several of our recently lost programs.

All of you out there know the value

brought to the table by various services we have assisted your system with over the years. In regards to that value, we thank all of you that took time out from your busy schedules to provide a letter of support to be specifically directed at EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson requesting EPA to direct already allocated funds to rural water programs. As of press time, we have received over 200 letters of support. The comments on the value and need of the services VRWA has offered through various programs are very much appreciated. We are in contact with NRWA to determine final strategy to deliver all these items to EPA and to strengthen bid opportunities for related work at the national level. ●

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**“...if that price covers system costs in order to keep safe drinking water flowing to the tap and/or the toilet flushing, that is a good price.”**

*“What is a ‘Good Price’ for Water & Wastewater Service?” continued from page 4*

I suggest not using this term due to the negative connotation it projects. This could be interpreted to mean we are putting money aside for a project that is sinking. Not the best way to promote a future needed improvement on your system.

**Some of the additional pointers discussed in our Hartford training by Wayne Elliot and Don Phillips (Don came out of retirement to assist us and we thank him).** In this time of tight budgets and cost increases, all of us in the water and wastewater industry need to do a much better job promoting the value of the commodity and services we provide. One simple effective approach is to compare our prices with other utility costs on a month per month basis. I know promoting a monthly cost is not currently the industry standard. Most systems charge on an annual, semi annual, or quarterly basis. Promoting the monthly cost will involve some extra effort but the cost comparison will be powerful.

Consider the monthly fees we all pay for phone, internet service, satellite or cable TV, and electricity. I know in many Vermont households each of these commodities run \$50 to \$100 per month. The majority of the water and wastewater systems in Vermont have monthly fees that are well below these other utility costs.

To answer the question, what is a good price? Sorry there is no quick and easy answer. I suggest the following: if that price covers system costs in order to keep safe drinking water flowing to the tap and/or the toilet flushing, that is a good price.



**Contact  
VRWA  
Executive  
Director  
Shaun  
Fielder at  
802-660-  
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**or [sfielder@vtruralwater.org](mailto:sfielder@vtruralwater.org)**

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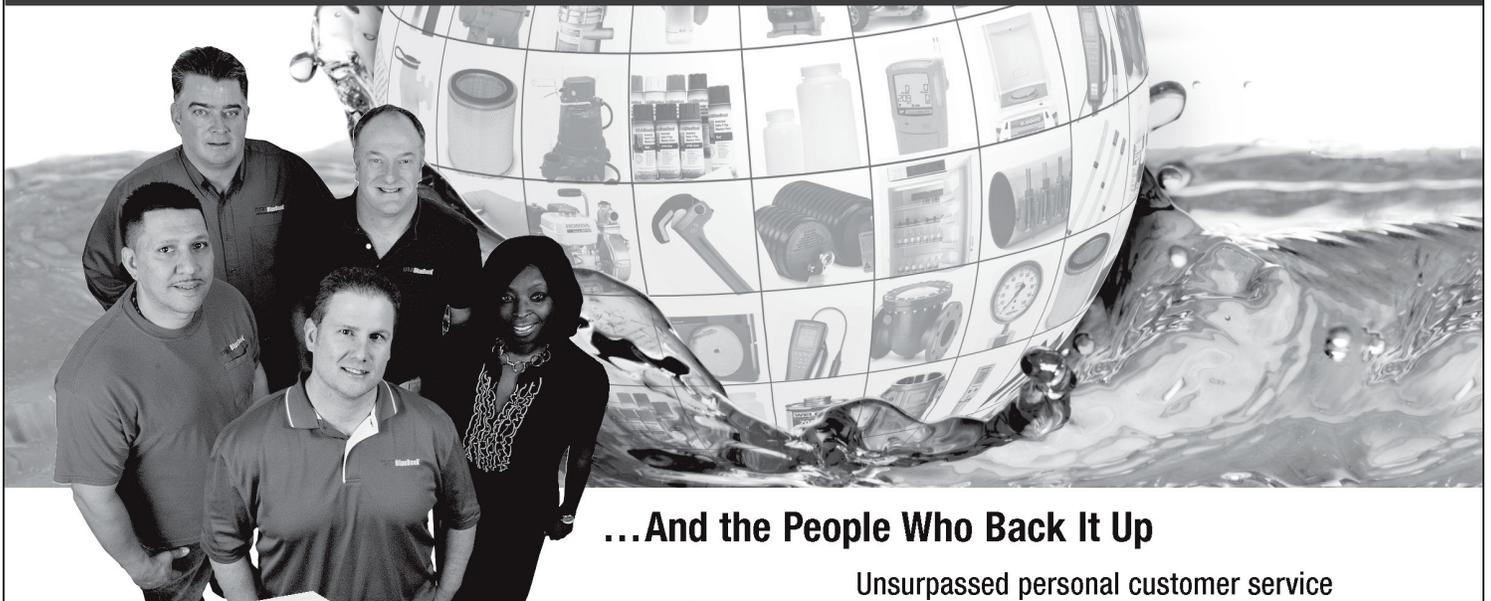
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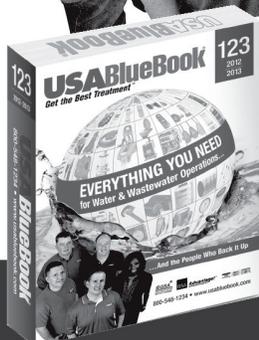


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