

A New Chapter For Vermont Rural Water

by Liz Royer, Executive Director

Hello everyone from my new role as Executive Director. Many of you know me from my work as the source protection specialist for VRWA for most of the last 15 years.

Related to the industry, I am also the Williston Commissioner of the Champlain Water District and serve on the AWWA Source Water Protection Committee. Most recently, I was appointed by the governor to the Vermont Pesticide Advisory Council.

Prior to my employment here with VRWA, I also worked at Vermont DEC in the Lakes and Ponds program and for the US EPA Office of Compliance in Washington DC. I received a B.A. degree in Biology and Environmental Studies from Ohio Wesleyan University and an M.S. degree in Natural Resource Planning from the University of Vermont. My graduate research focused on incorporating local knowledge from farmers and loggers into basin planning efforts in the Lamoille watershed.

Outside of work, I have been involved in the rugby community and Habitat for Humanity since attending college in Ohio. I am currently retired from playing rugby and have been doing some coaching at the high school and

(Continued on page 9)

Washington DC Rally

A report from Board Members Rod Lamothe and Margaret Dwyer

A major responsibility of the Vermont Rural Water organization is to promote the organization and this is in full display each year at the Washington DC Rally. Each of the National Rural Water State organizations arrives in Washington DC with a troop of delegates for briefings and updates about Rural Water. Then the state delegates fan out across the capitol to meet with their respective legislative representatives in the House and Senate. Lucky for us Vermonters that we have two Senators (Sanders, Leahy) and one House Representative (Welsh).

For Vermont Rural Water, this year was a surprising series of events due to unanticipated circumstances.

The typical year, our delegation consist of the Executive Director (ED) and two of the Board members. This year, Liz Royer, our new ED, had doctor's orders not to fly, leaving the task up to Board members Margaret Dwyer (Stratton) and Ed Savage (West Rutland). Ed is the Board president and also Vermont's representative to the National Rural Water Board. We truly rely on Ed to be at all of these meetings, as he always has in the past.

This year, just a few days before the rally, Ed took a nasty fall which temporarily incapacitated him. (Hope you're feeling better Ed)

Margaret left Albany for DC on Monday morning. Her flight went smoothly and she was able to check into the rally, deliver the winning Vermont Water Tasting sample from Hinesburg, get in a run to see the sites and then attend the Rural Water Welcome Social.



Rod and Margaret (centered) meet with representatives for Senator Sanders

Rod was asked to fill in at the last minute. He reports "My sense of duty and obligation immediately kicked in. A check of the weather in DC was 65 and sunny, so that helped. On February 5th I

awoke at 4 AM, drank coffee and headed to the airport for a 6:05 departure from Burlington to Ronald Reagan Airport in DC. Because I was going south, I left my warm clothes, boots, hat and gloves in the Burlington Airport. Wearing the minimum, I headed south on my non-stop flight to DC. I arrived and navigated my way to the Metro station for the subway ride into the Capitol. It was 40 degrees and sunny."

(Continued on page 4)

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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Richard Desautels, Colchester FD#2
Margaret Dwyer, Winhall-Stratton Fire District
Jon Thornton, Bradford Water & Sewer Commission
Rod Lamothe, Castleton Meadows
Ed Savage, Town of West Rutland
Eric Blatt, VT DEC Facilities Engineering

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Letters

I am writing this letter to let you know how much I appreciate the services VT Rural Water Association has provided the Town of North Troy. Specifically I would like to thank both Elizabeth Walker and Wayne Graham as they have been instrumental in keeping the wastewater facility in compliance during the transition from Marcel Mayhew to myself as a brand new operator of this facility. Wayne was an incredible help most recently when having to clean the aeration tanks and clarifier. He came in on a Sunday and worked tirelessly in horrible conditions for 4 days. The work in the clarifier required extensive repairs and fabrication. He has also been very helpful in working with me on confined space entry and getting pumps going as needed. He has been a great teacher as well for the Sac course.

Elizabeth Walker has been extremely helpful with many administrative requirements such as getting my operator in training certificate, working through the eDMR submissions and reworking and streamlining the WR-43's making reporting much more efficient. She has been working hard for the town with respect to meeting the new phosphorus requirements, getting jar testing done, helping with purchasing equipment at a more reasonable cost and developing a phosphorous optimization plan. Both Wayne and Elizabeth have been proactively working with the selectboard in making sure they understand the process from both an operational and regulatory standpoint.

On the water end Liz Royer has been helpful with updating the source protection plan and Paul Sestito has been a great help with leak detection and valve locating.

These kinds of services have been a great benefit to this small community with limited resources and I want to thank you for being here for us.

Sincerely,

Curtis Laramée
Operator In Training, North Troy

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News on Tap

Annual Conference and Trade Show

May 8-9, 2019, 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 on 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 Eighteenth Annual Golf Tournament will be held on Wednesday, May 8, the day before the main conference. Come join VRWA team members, directors and others from the industry for an exciting round! The tournament begins at 12:30 pm.

Drinking Water Taste Contest

VRWA and the Drinking Water Week Committee are joining forces to bring you the Water Tasting Contest, to be held the morning of May 9th.

Trade Show

More than 50 industry vendors will display their products and answer questions from 8am-3pm on May 9. Keep an eye out for door prizes! In addition, VRWA will be offering a special prize drawing and giveaways offered by vendors in attendance.

Luncheon & Membership Awards

Our awards luncheon and Annual Meeting is the perfect chance to talk shop with your peers. Our keynote speaker this year is VOSHA manager Dan Whipple.

Training Sessions—Thursday May 9th

Training contact hours for water and wastewater operators will be awarded. Earn up to 3.5 TCH in the following sessions:

- Controlling Your Plant with SCADA
- USDA and FED Funding Review
- Management Issues in the 21st Century Roundtable
- Canaan Water System Upgrade
- Navigating Procedures on the Office of Professional Regulation (OPR) Web Site

For More Information



Call us at 800-556-3792 or visit our website.








Congratulations to VRWA's Wayne Graham (on left) and Wayne Elliott (on right) from A+E on receiving awards from New England Water Environment Association. Wayne Graham received the Wastewater Operator Award which recognizes an individual who has shown a high level of interest and performance in wastewater operations and who has made significant contributions to the wastewater field.

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He met up with Margaret and they began their rounds. They had three appointments at two hour intervals at three different locations around the Capitol. Security was very tight. Police were on every corner. They passed bomb sniffing dogs working the capitol grounds. This was the day of the State of the Union address and security was really amped up. There were so many police, Margaret was reluctant to J-walk. They first went to Senator Sanders' office where they met with Katie Thomas. Katie is a real friend to the Rural Water community and they had a wonderful conversation. Katie was dressed all in white as an act of solidarity with other women celebrating the suffragette movement and their gains in the House of Representatives. Their next stop was at Peter Welch's office, where they met with his staff member Mark Fowler. They reviewed materials with him and he also indicated that we have Congressman Welch's support. Their last stop was at Senator Leahy's office where they met with Andy Bahrenburg.

Andy is new to the Leahy staff so they spent some time with him explaining all of the services that we offer and the dedication of those in our water/wastewater community.

They believe that all of the staff they met understood the important role that water and wastewater operations play for our health and the environment. Everyone was supportive of our/your work and pledge to continue their helping us in the future. They did not get to meet with any of our Congressmen directly, which was a little disappointing. But all in all it was a successful trip.

Rod reports "Now we must have walked 5 miles and my nice looking dress shoes left blisters on both toes. Margaret still had time to squeeze in a long run while I relaxed in the hotel lobby. We had dinner with the New Hampshire delegation that evening. I boarded the return flight at 9:55 pm and arrived home shortly after 1 am. I was back at work for 8:00 am Wednesday morning."

Margaret boarded an early flight from DC Wednesday at noon in anticipation of bad weather predicted that evening, so was not able to stay for the Taste Test Contest.

The New Hampshire delegation reported to her that none of the New England samples made the finals. Disappointing, guess the rest of the country just isn't used to our particular flavor!

Rod says "So if you asked me if Tuesday the 5th was a busy day....yeah pretty much. Was it worth it? Very much so! This is a great organization and folks in DC they know it."

Margaret agreed commenting "Such a great organization with an important mission and message. Luckily clean water is a fairly easy sell and all the folks we met with were on board with our requests. It was a successful Rally and wonderful opportunity." ●



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Looking for the Leak: Leak Detection Basics

by Paul Sestito, Water Systems Specialist

The harsh New England climate can wreak havoc on our underground infrastructure. Water leaks occur throughout the year, but the cold of winter and seasonal changes tend to be especially harsh on our critical assets beneath the surface. Leaks can often be difficult to detect and locate, but knowledge of the system, preparation, and planning can aid in locating leaks.

Some signs that a water leak may exist can include: drop in reservoir level, high meter reading(s), increased pumping rates, customer complaints or concerns regarding water pressure or quality, surfacing water, increased flows at municipal wastewater treatment facilities, and other changes on the surface (melting snow, changes in vegetation). Frequently the potential presence of a leak can be observed by checking these areas. However, a change in any one of the above items does not necessarily mean that a leak exists. For example, surfacing groundwater or excess water use can often times appear as though it is a water leak, when it actually is not.

If it is determined that a leak exists, an organized approach can help save time in locating the leak. Often, the first step taken is to walk the system, taking time to visit the trouble spots in the system—places where leaks have previously occurred or where there is a concern for the condition of the infrastructure. Another relatively simple first step is listening directly to easy access points in the system, such as hydrants or valves and sometimes this approach can eliminate the need for further searching if a leaking hydrant or valve is the culprit. This is not always the case, however, so further searching may be required.

If the leak location is not obvious, further detection can be performed using equipment such as a ground microphone or correlator. In these instances, it is important to know the specifics of the underground infrastructure (location, material, diameter, etc.) All of these factors are extremely helpful in gaining a more accurate location of a leak. Having reliable, accurate maps of the system can go a long way in helping to find the location of a leak. Also, logging the location of leaks can help justify and plan for future system improvements.

The last, and most important, aspect of leak detection is safety.

As we are all well aware, leaks don't always occur at convenient times of day or in convenient locations. When searching for a leak, always wear appropriate high-visibility gear and be aware of your surroundings. Keep yourself and your coworkers safe!

Leak detection can be difficult and often puzzling, and it doesn't always work out like we planned or hoped. More often than not, however, detecting and locating leaks is a learning experience. As for me, I know I learn something new every day from the professional and dedicated operations specialists in the field. ●

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Spreadsheets and Water & Wastewater Operations

By Matt Guerino, Training Coordinator


I have a hammer at home. It's not significantly old, and was given to me by my father, so it holds sentimental value. I consider it a great reliable tool but I don't use it every day. I suggest that a computer can be viewed in the same way I view my hammer, or any other tool. A computer is a tool, it helps us complete otherwise tedious or mundane jobs quickly. However, it is only quick if you know how to use the tool.

When teaching our basic Excel course most operators admit they would rather be working with their hands than sitting at a computer. For some operators, they use computers as little as possible, if they even have a computer available. There are a large population of operators that are afraid of spreadsheets and how to use them. The evaluations and comments that operators offer during this class substantiates the fear. Most of the anxiety stems from reporting and record keeping and understanding that these reports are thought of as legal documents. Operators are expected to be able to use spreadsheet applications and this is where VRWA hopes to help.

I am not suggesting that operators will need to become IT specialists because they own and use a computer. I don't consider myself to be a skilled carpenter because I own a hammer. I am only recommending that you dust off your keyboard and sit down and use the applications available to make your life easier. A computer is there to make your life simpler, so open up your spreadsheet program and start using it! You can calculate average flow rates or compare temperature changes and turbidity. Once you are comfortable using spreadsheets, the sky is the limit in what you can do.

The basic Excel course offered by VRWA is meant for everyone, and there will be more classes offered in intermediate and advanced Excel over the next few years.

The goal of these courses is to become comfortable in building and using spreadsheet documents specific to water and wastewater operators. You will learn how to build spreadsheets and how to search for help when you can't remember how to create something on the spreadsheet.

Water and wastewater operators need to become more comfortable with reporting via computers. Over the next few years VRWA will be working to demystify computer applications and using computers as a tool to help save you time in your otherwise hectic work schedule. Finally, I suggest you not use your computer and your hammer at the same time, although it might be tempting. I hope to see you at the next Excel course! 

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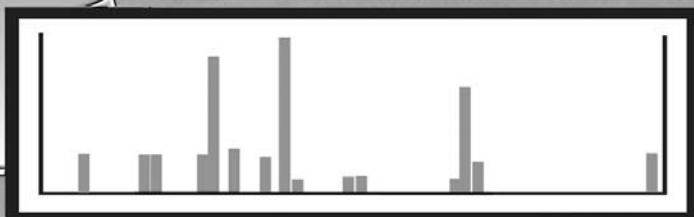
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Public Relations in Public Works

By Aaron Perez, Water Systems Specialist

Do you have a public relations strategy? If you answered no, you are like most other small water systems throughout the state. Water system managers are so often only interacting with the general public during times of frustration and stress. For example, you might only see customers when you are shutting off water due to missed payments or there may be a system leak which has caused a water boil order. The truth is, most systems that I work with only communicate with customers during emergencies which leads to strained relationships and often avoidable confrontation.

Developing and implementing a public relations plan builds mutually beneficial relationships between your system and the general public. Strategic communication increases shared awareness and understanding between your team and the community.

There are many ways that your water division can actively and positively engage with the community during non-emergency situations.

Developing a water education program is one great way engage with the community. You can host classroom presentations and develop outreach educational information. Other ideas include attending community-wide school events such as science fairs, career days and Green Up Day events located within your district.

In the community you can participate in panel presentations, speak at town meeting, and set up information tables at community events. Another low-key public relations strategy is offering water system tours.

Community educational outreach events allow you an opportunity to keep customers in your service area up to date on water use information, and provide the customer a forum to discuss concerns or to offer recommendations.

It takes time to build relationships, trust, and credibility, but the efforts will pay off with more positive results with your community in the long run. While many public relations efforts may be hard to directly measure, its impact will be apparent as the strain of challenging community relationships are eased over time.

VRWA staff are happy to work with you to help you create information and materials to help you get a public relations program going in your district. ●

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"I hope to nurture our partnerships at the local, regional, state and federal levels and advocate for drinking water and wastewater systems in the state legislature and with our congressional delegation."

"A New Chapter" continued from cover

adult club levels. I enjoy traveling and have written in NewsLeaks about several volunteer trips over the years, including one to Haiti with Pure Water for the World.

But enough about me, I am very excited and honored to continue to work with the Vermont Rural Water team, board, and all of our member systems. I plan to maintain our current technical assistance and training programs and potentially expand our services in coming years. I hope to nurture our partnerships at the local, regional, state and federal levels and advocate for drinking water and wastewater systems in the state legislature and with our congressional delegation.

I want to say thank you to Shaun Fielder for his leadership over many years with VRWA at the state and national levels. As everyone keeps telling me, I know I have big shoes to fill and will do my best to learn from Shaun's optimism, energy and enthusiasm.

Let me know if you have any ideas about other ways that Vermont Rural Water can help your systems and your communities now and in the future! ●



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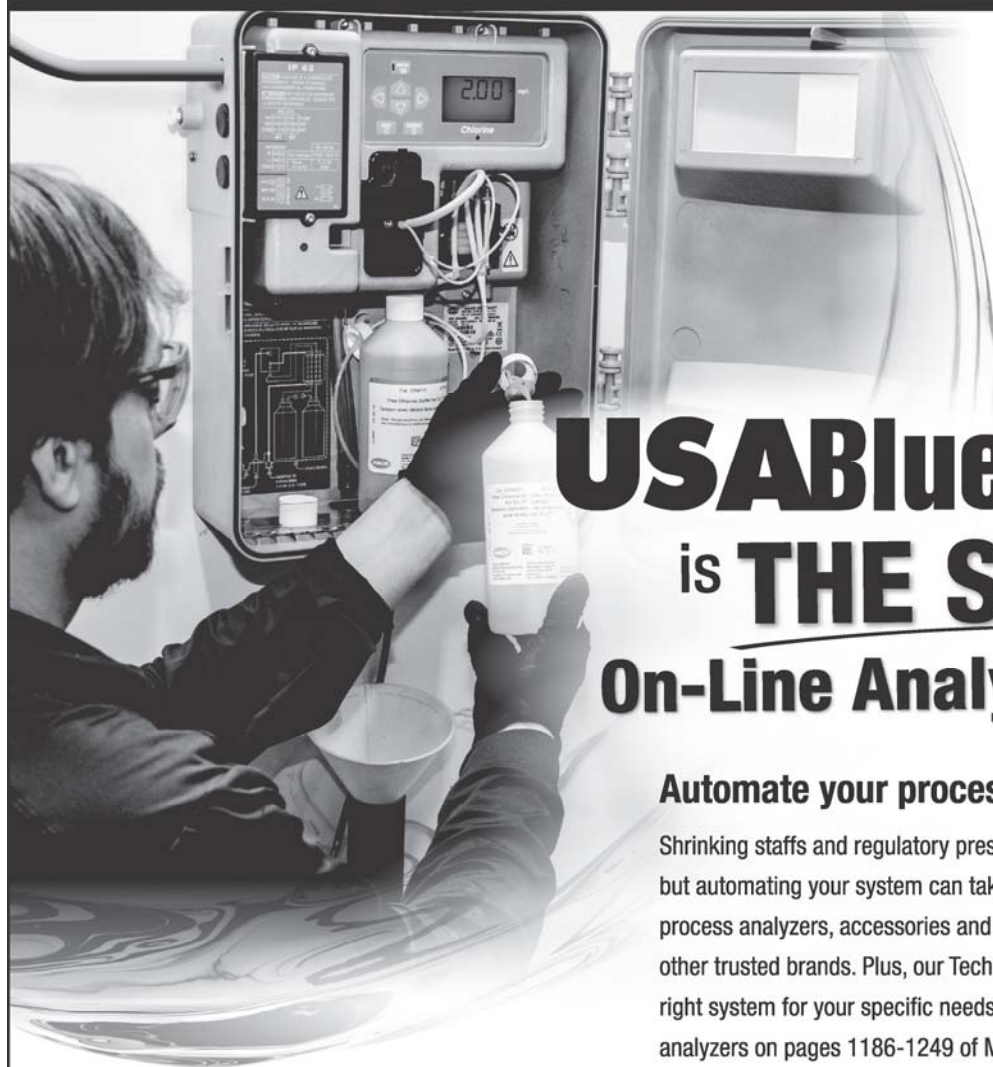
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