



COMING ATTRACTIONS

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Coming soon(ish) to a theater near you. The blockbuster requirement staring wastewater operations specialists, mayors, town supervisors, clerks, board members and the public. WASTEWATER ASSET MANAGEMENT. You'll laugh. You'll cry. You'll scream in anguish but.....it's not that bad.

DEC has been working on a policy that would require all publicly owned treatment works (municipal wastewater treatment plants) to develop and implement an asset management plan. Given the state of our wastewater infrastructure, this is not a bad thing. In order to be sustainable, we need to properly fund, operate and maintain our systems. Unfortunately, this has not always been the case. Asset management is a way to evaluate our assets (pumps, motors, treatment equipment, etc) and prioritize operation and maintenance activities. It also gives us a mechanism to establish operation, maintenance and replacement funds. By developing the asset management plan, we can evaluate our budget and determine if we are indeed sustainable or if rates need to be adjusted.

The purpose of this article is not to scare you, but rather prepare you, for asset management. Over the next few issues, I will explain the process more in depth. For now, I want you to know this is coming and now is the time to start the conversation between operators and the elected officials.

When I talk to operators about asset management, the overwhelming response is "it's about time". When they put together their budgets, they often include maintenance activities on equipment that is long overdue. All too often those requests are cut from the final budget leaving equipment long overdue for maintenance. When that piece of equipment finally fails, the municipality is faced with trying to find funding to make emergency repairs. This is often referred to as run to failure operations and can be very costly, not to mention leading to possible permit violations. The operators make these budget requests because they know the equipment and its condition. It's not a wish request, it's a need request.

When I talk to elected officials about asset management, the overwhelming response is "we can't raise rates". Asset management doesn't necessarily mean raising rates. It's about providing the best service possible and keeping your investment running efficiently in the most cost effective way possible. You

won't know this until you develop a plan. You may find that after developing the plan, a little tweaking here and there is all that is needed to be sustainable. No rate increase. You just won't know until you do this. If your first reaction is "we can't raise rates", then perhaps in the back of your minds you have questions about your rates and sustainability. Why not find out.

The USEPA has developed 5 core components or, minimum requirements if you will, of an asset management plan. These components are:

- What are the current state of the assets
- What is the desired level of service
- Which assets are critical to sustained performance
- What is the best life cycle cost
- What is the long term funding strategy

Again, these 5 core components will be explained more in depth over the next few issues.

EPA has also helped develop free asset management software that guides you through the process. The CUPSS program (Check Up Program for Small Systems) is being widely used in other states to develop asset management plans.

In closing, I would like to offer the following suggestions to begin preparing for asset management:

Start talking with your elected officials. As I said in the trailer, this process is going to require the cooperation and input from operators AND clerks and elected officials.

Become familiar with the CUPSS program. It is available on the EPA's water web page.

Check out EPA's asset management tool box, also available on the water web page.

Plan to attend webinars or classroom training on asset management.

I am available to make an asset management introductory presentation to your board. Please contact me at (518) 929-0987 or Grimm@nyruralwater.org if you are interested in setting up a presentation.

Asset management is not as daunting as it sounds. Do some research before getting all worked up. And when in doubt, don't hesitate to contact us. 💧💧