Wisconsin Rural Water Association

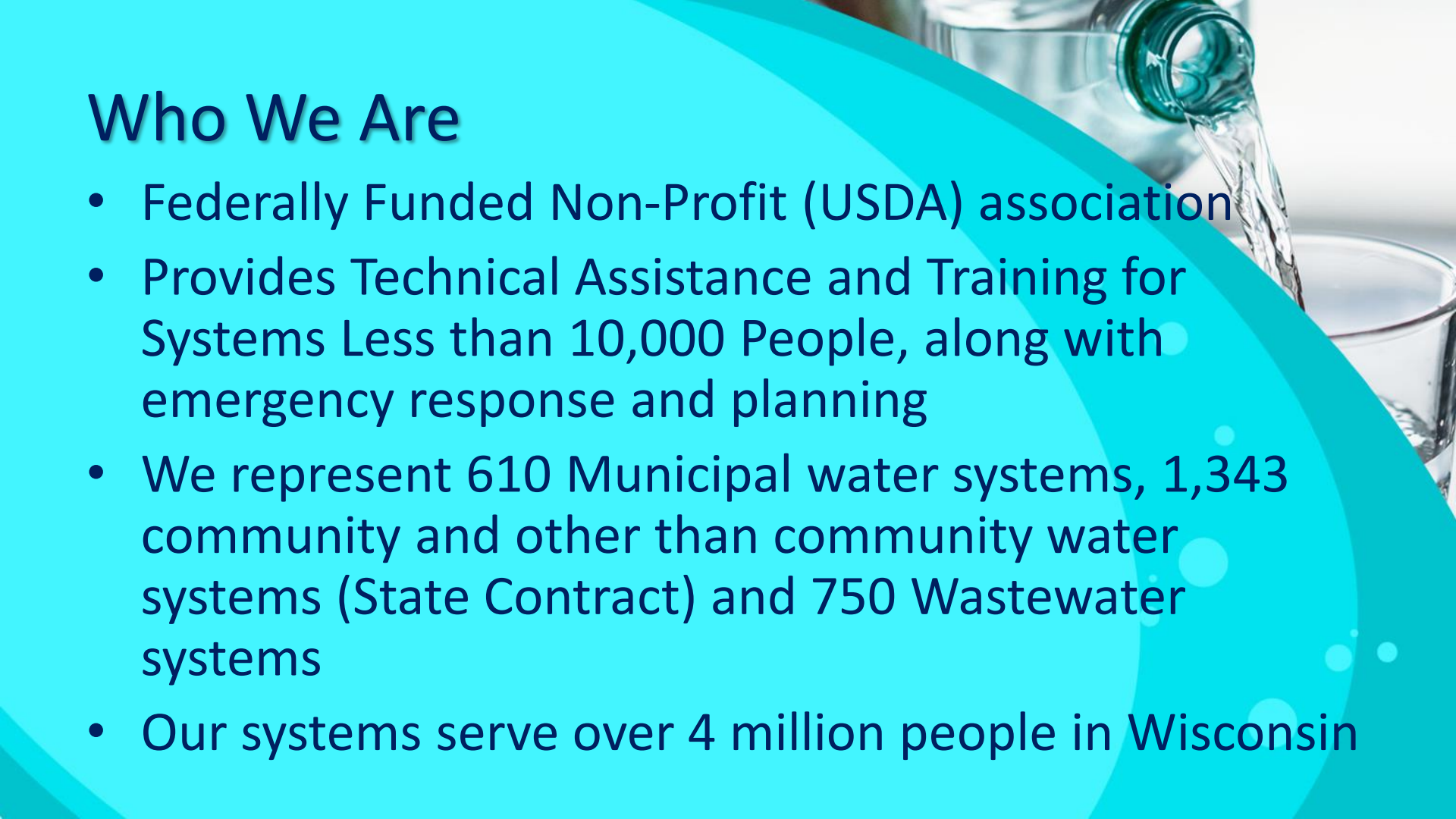
Water Quality Task Force Presentation

Andrew Aslesen

WRWA Source Water Specialist

Who We Are

- Federally Funded Non-Profit (USDA) association
- Provides Technical Assistance and Training for Systems Less than 10,000 People, along with emergency response and planning
- We represent 610 Municipal water systems, 1,343 community and other than community water systems (State Contract) and 750 Wastewater systems
- Our systems serve over 4 million people in Wisconsin



Who We Are

- We are part of a national association: National Rural Water Association
- NRWA provides training and technical assistance through 49 affiliated State Rural Water Associations, and Puerto Rico, that currently have over 31,000 utility system members
- Last year, State Rural Water Association staff delivered over 75,000 on-site technical assistance visits and 150,000 hours of training to more than 37,000 rural utilities
- Rural Water training and technical assistance covers every aspect of operating, managing and financing water and wastewater utilities

What We See

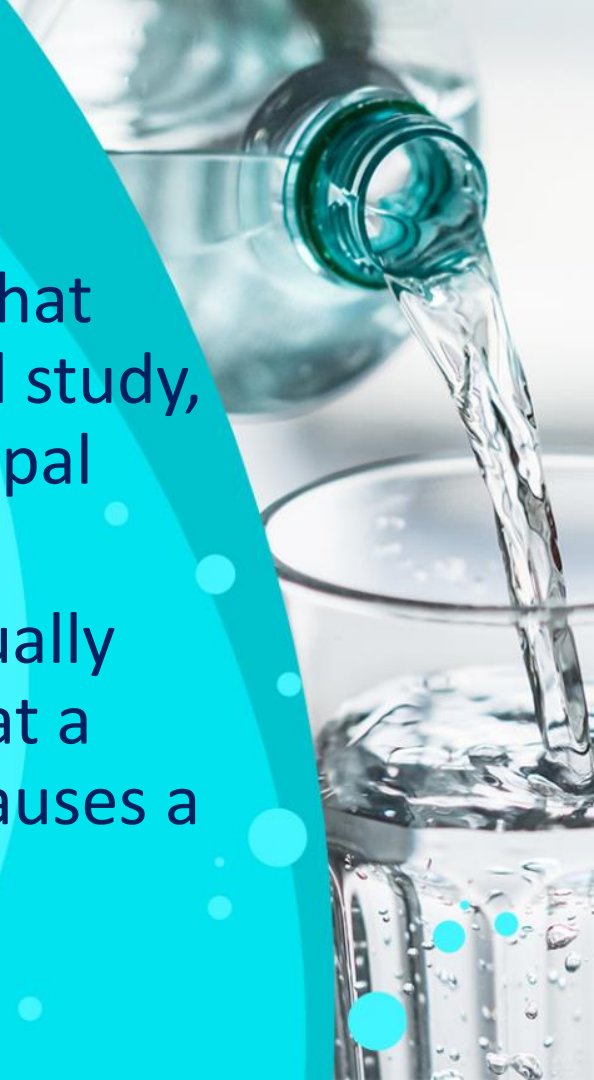
- Our “Circuit Riders” spend a lot of time helping to set up proper sampling sites and procedures
- Help operators deal with compliance issues like disinfection, lead and copper, distribution leaks, wellhead protection
- Keeping water safe for the public and contained in the system

Who We Work With

- We work with State and Federal Representatives towards funding infrastructure, drinking water and environmental protection and continuation of our services to rural America on behalf of our rural base
- We work with both WDNR and EPA on compliance, education and legislative issues that affects rural American water health and safety

Key Issues

- Groundwater contamination, like what was found in the Southwest WI well study, does have an affect on small municipal systems
- Bacteriological contamination is usually taken care of through disinfection, at a cost, but chemical contamination causes a greater issue to resolve



Key Issues

- Lead and copper issues are distribution problems brought on by naturally occurring water attributes, like alkalinity and pH
- Nitrates however, are not naturally occurring in groundwater, so we know that there is contamination coming from an outside source
- Most often agricultural

Key Issues

- Agricultural chemicals also contribute to herbicide and pesticide contamination
- Chemical manufacturers also contribute to other, more innocuous contamination
- PFAs are now the most worry-some and is affecting some Wisconsin communities like Marinette, Peshtigo, Madison and others

Cost Impact on Rural Systems

- Costs of these contaminations to small towns is immense, considering the base of the communities customers is very small and often middle to low income
- New wells, or well replacements, often start at $1.5 million, for a town of 400-500 people this is a major cost for many years

Cost Impact on Rural Systems

- Most often municipalities are paying to clean and supply water that have been contaminated by these other sources
- Wastewater treatment facilities are a very small source of nutrient contamination such as nitrates or phosphorus

Policy Impact on Rural Systems

Base PFAS Standards on Science

- Urges the State of Wisconsin to closely study the issue based on the best available science and not rush to setting a standard
- Municipal water utilities are not responsible for PFAS contamination, we ask that any legislation or rules addressing PFAS provide funding to help offset the costs water utilities are required to bear to remove the contamination

Policy Impact on Rural Systems

Review Re-Write of Water Utility Regulations "PSC 185"

- The Public Service Commission (PSC) has been updating its water utility service rules (PSC 185) for over 9 years.
- The update is currently awaiting final PSC approval before being submitted for gubernatorial approval, and then if approved, legislative review.

Policy Impact on Rural Systems

Review Re-Write of Water Utility Regulations "PSC 185"

- Municipal water utilities are concerned over numerous proposed changes in the last draft of the proposed rule.
- Provisions in the most recent draft will inhibit small water systems from treatment and compliance

Policy Impact on Rural Systems

Phosphorus

- Extremely low phosphorus limits have cost rural WI wastewater systems many millions of dollars while major contributors are not monitored, thus phosphorus problems are not reduced

Policy Impact on Rural Systems

Lead Pipe Resources

- Municipal water utilities support the removal of public and private lead service lines.
- Last session's passage of 2017 Act 137 was an important step forward in providing financial assistance to fund private lead service line replacement, but the lack of initial program funding and the need for PSC approval has limited the use of the program to date

Policy Impact on Rural Systems

Lead Pipe Resources

- More financial assistance options are needed for private lead service line replacement
- This is especially critical for smaller, more rural communities that may just have some clusters of lead laterals
- Additional resources will ensure that homeowners have immediate financing resources needed to remove their portion of the lateral when the municipality is replacing the utility-owned portion of the line.

Conclusion

- All these issues have a much larger impact on small, rural water systems in our state
- It's very important that affordable funding be made available to these systems
- It's very important that non municipal sources of groundwater contamination be held responsible (legally and fiscally)

Thank You

- Our “boots on the ground” approach has made us invaluable to rural Wisconsin water and wastewater systems
- We are always available for information and a practical look at the state of our water issues and answers