



THE SPIGOT

from the NORTH DAKOTA RURAL WATER SYSTEMS ASSOCIATION

NDRWSA Leadership Retreat: *A Mixture of History and Education*

By Lisa Schatz



The Rough Rider Hotel and Conference Center in historic Medora hosted the North Dakota Rural Water Systems Association's (NDRWSA) Leadership Retreat in July. Nearly 100 people attended the event, which consisted of informational sessions presented by North Dakota water leaders. Board members, rural water managers, and operators took note of financial and oil activity endeavors and the vision of water being implemented not only within their service areas, but throughout the state. Presenters from several government branches addressed the group with various topics of discussion.

North Dakota Department of Mineral Resources Public Information Officer Alison Ritter discussed the future of oil activity and the current status of oil development. She said regardless of the uncertainty within the oil industry, one thing is certain, the willingness to promote, develop, and utilize the production of oil to its full potential. Following Ritter's presentation, North Dakota Rep. Jim Schmidt, chairman of the legislature's Water Topics Overview Committee, gave an update on the committee's activities, including current studies and water project prioritization.

The discussion of water projects continued as State Water Commission member George Nodland updated the audience about the Water Commission's adopted policy to support the development of water-related projects. He said with the uncertainty of the 2017-19 financial budget, requests for funding will be categorized based on low, moderate, high, or essential priorities.

Marvin Nelson, the Democratic candidate for governor and Brent Sanford, the Republican candidate for



lieutenant governor took time out of their busy schedules to visit with rural water leaders and shared their visions for North Dakota.

After a break from the discussion, Shannon Farmer and Shelly Howay of Rural Water/Municipal Impact hosted a web-based presentation entitled, "Smart Websites for Smart Water Systems." This presentation showed attendees how customization and usability is essential when developing a website to provide information and service to customers.

Thursday's kickoff began with North Dakota Sen. Rich Wardner speaking about his focus for the vision of water in North Dakota and the financial picture for 2017-19. Wardner encouraged attendees to get involved and use their voices to further their visions for rural water. He said that as the demand for water increases, so should the demand for information and education.

Last but not least, Clay Jenkinson, a cultural commentator known for his portrayal of President Thomas Jefferson, entertained the crowd with a portrayal of the history of water in North Dakota.

A new activity this year was a tour for retreat participants. Stops included Theodore Roosevelt National Park, Dakota Refinery, Baker Boy, Bakken Oil Express, and Southwest Water Authority's Dickinson Water Treatment Plant and finished water pumping station.

The retreat wasn't all work and no play. Attendees had the opportunity to play in a golf scramble at the beautiful Bully Pulpit Golf Course, which is ranked one of America's 100 greatest public golf courses. Congratulations to the winning golf scramble team of Jason Slater, Brian Reilly, Jerry Blomeke, and Jamie Slater. A special thank you to AE2S for sponsoring this well-attended event.

Following the retreat's scheduled events, many attendees took in the attractions Medora has to offer. The picturesque Badlands and roaming elk were among the topics of discussion as dinner was being served at the Tjaden Terrace. The opportunity to attend the "Greatest Show in the West," the Medora Musical, was considered the "icing on the cake," many participants said.

"On behalf of the board of directors and NDRWSA staff, I would like to thank our sponsors for their generosity and dedication to promoting leadership training among rural water systems" says NDRWSA Executive Director Eric Volk.

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