

June 17, 2020

A Message to our Members,

The Board of Directors of Montana Rural Water Systems Association has decided to cancel the 2020 MRWS Annual Conference and Exhibition Show scheduled for July 14-16 in Great Falls at the Heritage Inn and Convention Center. This was a difficult decision in these unprecedented times dealing with the effects of COVID-19. The decision to cancel centered on protecting our members' physical and economic health. A lot of the board discussions dealt with the Governor's decision of when to "open-up" Montana under phase 3, travel plans for vendors/speakers and operator training to earn Continuing Education Credits.

The uncertainties surrounding the logistics of hosting an annual conference with attendance of 400 in our exhibit hall and 200+ people in general sessions and at meal functions led the board to make the tough decision for cancellation. As of now, gatherings are limited to 50 people in Montana and we have no idea when those restrictions will be lifted.

MRWS is required by its bylaws to conduct an annual business meeting and we will accomplish this requirement by written communication. If you are familiar with our business meetings you know that our year is summarized in reports on MRWS training and technical efforts, other association programs and projects, and the overall financial status. It is also the time when the annual operating budget is approved by the membership and board elections are conducted. At the conclusion of the delegate assembly membership meeting, the newly elected board convenes and elects its officers for the coming year.

At this time we would also like to encourage any of our members that may be interested in serving on the board, or if you know of a member that would be interested in serving on the board to send a short bio so we can include their name on the ballot. We ask that this information be returned to the office by June 26, 2020 so we can get the ballots out in the mail shortly after the 4th of July.

To reduce the number of refund checks, we are asking our members to rollover their conference fees to the 2021 conference. This would also include our vendors who have paid for their registration booth fee. MRWS will follow-up with additional information on this subject later. If you had hotel reservations at the Heritage Inn please do not call the front desk, they are working with reduced staff. I have talked to the reservations manager and they are also going to roll any reservations over to March 2021. If you have concerns about your reservations you can contact Kim at reservations@gfheritageinn.com.

We have been offering remote on-site technical assistance plus weekly "GoToWebinars". MRWS is working closely with the Operator Certification Program and they have extended the operator CECs biennium through the end of August. As the staff continues to work out the logistics of the MRWS Annual Business Meeting and other possible training opportunities, we will keep our membership informed as to our plans.

Thank you for your membership and understanding during these times. Please know that we always try to make decisions in the best interests of our members and the operators of Montana! If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me or Tanya Shadrack at the MRWS office.

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