

MORE THAN \$800 MILLION. A study released in 2003 by West Central Initiative (WCI) indicated that communities need that amount to upgrade the aging water, wastewater and stormwater systems in west central Minnesota communities over the next 20 years.

Many of the systems were built in the 1930s with an estimated life of 50 years, and now **communities are living on borrowed time.**

The 2003 WCI study identified the following community needs:

- Adequate funds to meet immediate needs
- Training for personnel
- Information about alternative treatment options
- Advice about setting utility rates at appropriate levels
- Education
- Consideration of permitting in context
- Planning assistance

As a follow-up, WCI is working with a consultant group and three cities to develop tools to help small towns take the next logical steps toward addressing their infrastructure issues.



*Working with Communities
to Create Opportunities*

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- Funded by WCI and The McKnight Foundation
- Cities of Battle Lake, Brandon and Ottertail agreed to take part
- Work performed by Yellow Wood Associates, Inc., partnering with Widseth Smith Nolting and Interstate Engineering
- Product 1: individualized reports for each community, with options for alternative approaches on infrastructure issues
- Product 2: outline of the process we will share all other communities
- Project to be completed by mid-2008

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS BY YELLOW WOOD

(many relate to recommendations from 2003 Infrastructure Study)

- Communities need better information in order to become effective stewards of their water resources.
- Some communities have inadequate centralized water and/or wastewater infrastructure that requires immediate attention.
- Municipalities need assistance in understanding and implementing breakeven pricing that covers replacement costs for water and wastewater infrastructure.
- Maintenance and related costs must be budgeted from the start. Maintenance is key to effective operations of more sustainable systems.
- It's difficult for communities to find the information they need, even from state agencies. High-quality information and technical assistance are available concerning Minnesota water resource regulations, but it is very fragmented. Technical assistance isn't always timely.
- Sensitivity to impacts on water resources should be part of all infrastructure standards and guidelines in Minnesota.
- Communities are concerned about the implications of sprawl and large lot development on the cost of providing municipal infrastructure in the future. There is a lack of understanding of the power of local zoning and options such as clustering and cost sharing that could be used to ameliorate these impacts.
- Water and energy conservation have not been integrated into water use strategies.

Drinking Water

- Biological water treatment offers potential cost savings for small communities. Right now, communities are using chemical treatment systems and there is evidence of byproducts remaining in drinking water.

Stormwater

- Communities need assistance to retrofit existing stormwater infrastructure and to adopt low impact alternatives that reduce/eliminate stormwater at the source. Wetlands are being overused as primary treatment sites and as detention basins.
- Seasonal infrastructure is needed to handle spring rains when the ground is frozen to prevent flooding.

Wastewater

- There is room to improve individual or cluster wastewater treatment system performance through municipal and/or contracted management programs for septic installations.