



## ***Rural Water Systems***

### ***Defining the Issue***

Small and rural water and wastewater utilities - those serving under 10,000 people and/or producing under 20 million gallons of water per day - make up the majority of the nation's systems. Along with their larger, urban counterparts, they face a variety of challenges including replacement of aging infrastructure, addressing potential drought and water scarcity, as well as water quality standards and regulations. Moreover small and rural systems often serve areas with lower population densities, higher than average poverty levels and areas lacking personnel with full work experience or expertise.

While support for these systems can come from the USDA Rural Utility Service and other resources, more work needs to be done to support infrastructure and equipment preservation, staff training, and regulation compliance, all while maintaining customer expectations and satisfaction.

### ***AFBF Policy***

**Water Use** - Water is one of our most vital resources. We support the construction of water storage, funding of water conservation and efficiency programs, the streamlining of permitting of storage projects and state and federal cooperation in building multi-use water systems anywhere feasible consistent with state water laws. More attention should be given to the long-term effects of such plans, such as the advantage of building structures of sufficient strength to take care of likely future agricultural water needs.

**Rural Water Systems** - We support the concept of rural water systems organized and operated in accordance with accepted principles and practices as well as funding for rural water and sewers, including projects in unincorporated service areas, through the rural development program of USDA. Moreover, we support the US EPA to cooperate with state agencies to safeguard water quality, while at the same time, encouraging the agency not to initiate costly and unnecessary regulations, which could only drive up the cost of rural water.

**Underground Water** - We support state laws that strive for the protection, development and administration of groundwater to protect the rights of overlying landowners; and continuing research on groundwater recharge and on making more efficient use of our water resources. Such research should be designed to develop a conservation program with emphasis on individual, local and state participation

### ***OFBF Policy***

**Water Supply** - We oppose mandates for landowners to use a particular water supply.

**Water and Sewer Rotary Fund** - Under the Farmland Preservation Act, city councils must act upon agricultural districts within the city limits. City councils may disapprove them because a water and sewer assessment cannot be collected. Therefore, we strongly recommend that adequate funds be maintained in the water and sewer rotary fund for use by municipalities so they can approve agricultural districts within the city. A review of the water and sewer rotary fund should be conducted to determine its role in the farmland preservation movement.

**Public Utilities** - We support the payment, by stockholders rather than consumers, of those costs of service that can be identified as the result of poor management decisions. Utility companies maintaining their lines, including adequate depths. Maintenance should include clearing of impediments in right-of-ways to maintain integrity and visibility of utility services.

### ***Discussion Questions***

1. How many of your council members maintain their own on-site water and waste management systems and how many are served by water and wastewater utilities? If access were available, would those members having on-site systems be interested in hook-up? Why or why not?
2. What concerns for water quality or quantity do you have in your area of the state? How should these concerns be addressed? Can they be addressed by creation of utility systems in your area?
3. What strategies should be in place to help rural resident check the integrity of their on-site water and waste management systems, as well as ensure integrity of the local utilities?
4. How could your county Farm Bureau explore these issues further, and how could your council support these efforts?