

The North Dakota RATES Program

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The North Dakota Rural Water Systems Association has been providing rate setting assistance for many years. Many systems have taken advantage of this service. Hopefully that includes yours. We would like to think that, due to our help, many systems are much better funded and rate structures are fairer because of our efforts.

But, we will be the first to admit that we have our limits. With all the other services we need to provide there are only so many hours we can devote to rate calculations and rate setting help. Just learning how to do this kind of work at a high level takes many months of training, time we simply cannot spare. Fortunately, there's more than one way to skin a cat (apologies to all you cat lovers).

In January your Association launched the "North Dakota RATES Program," which stands for Rate Analysis and Training for Environmental Systems. That's right; we're "doubling down." We will continue to provide rate setting help like before. But we have added rate analysis and training services on the top end of the scale. Those services will be provided by Carl Brown Consulting (CBC) which is perhaps the best small-system rate analysis firm in the U.S.

You can contact us or CBC; it doesn't matter where you start. Either of us will assess your needs. If they can be handled with basic rate calculations and help, NDRWSA staff will help you. As always, that help will be free of charge, a nice perk of being a NDRWSA member.

If, however, you need higher-level assistance, CBC will scope your needs and give you a service and fee proposal. That's right, high-level analysis is not a freebie. But we're always looking out for our members so we negotiated a special deal with CBC. Already one of the most economical rate specialists around, through the RATES program CBC will give NDRWSA member systems a 25 percent discount on analysis fees.

And then there is the training piece of the puzzle. Mr. Brown will periodically conduct free workshops for Association members. These workshops will cover rate setting issues and related topics to help you get your systems' finances in shape. The membership perks just keep on coming.

Die-hard do-it-yourselfers – Mr. Brown is one step ahead of you. With many articles, a guide, a book, spreadsheets and an on-line do-it-yourself rate calculation program, Mr. Brown has rate setting covered. Visit www.carlbrownconsulting.com and www.gettinggreatrates.com to make do-it-yourself really productive and effective, and mostly free.

If you don't know that your current rates are both adequate and fairly structured, you need to fix that! Just call me at (701) 258-9249 or visit www.carlbrownconsulting.com and click on the North Dakota link at the bottom of the page. Then you'll be on the road to getting great rates.