

## City of Rushford Named 2009 Community Conservationists

The **City of Rushford** has been awarded the MASWCD/MPCA **Community Conservationist Award**. The award was presented to representatives of the City at the 73<sup>rd</sup> Annual MASWCD Convention held at the Duluth Entertainment Convention Center in Duluth on December 7, 2009.



Pictured above left to right: Glenn Skuta, MPCA; Jeff Copely, Public Works Director; Windy Block, City Administrator; and Mayor Les Ladewig

Since the floods of August, 2007, while working to solve many difficult flood related problems, the City of Rushford has become a leading advocate for identifying and sealing private wells within well-head protection areas after their experience with this issue following the August 2007 floods that severely damaged their city and water supply.

When the City of Rushford flooded in 2007, their city water supply became contaminated with bacteria, and it took repeated efforts to decontaminate the system. After some investigation on the part of the City, the sources of the bacteria became clear: sewage water backed up into homes during the flood, and then drained back into private wells, seeping down into the shallow aquifer. Because some residents were still using sandpoint wells from that aquifer as their primary water supply, the sewage-contaminated water posed significant health risks.



The City took an active approach to addressing the problem, however, contacting the Fillmore SWCD. Special flood relief funding was made available by the State Legislature, and the city not only agreed to work with the SWCD to seal the 300 wells that had been found, it also agreed to handle the well sealing funding for the residents, who were already dealing with the loss of their homes and possessions. SWCD Board Members met with the Rushford City Council about the well-sealing cost-share program, and emphasized to the Council the need for enforcing the City's ordinances to assure that the benefits from the well sealing would not be undone by residents installing new wells after the old ones were sealed. After successfully completing the well sealings, the City is now completing inspections on these wells.

And the City hasn't stopped there. To help prevent similar occurrences elsewhere, the City of Rushford has hosted well-sealing demonstrations where representatives from other cities in Southeastern Minnesota were able to learn more about the need for finding and sealing old wells that pose a risk to public water supplies. The City of Rushford staff and contractor have also presented information at several regional and statewide meetings attended by hundreds of city water operators and other water professionals.



By sharing the experience and lessons learned with so many people, they have helped others to take steps to avoid the problems that they encountered.

**Congratulations to the City of Rushford on their  
Conservations efforts within their community!**