

Robeen and Painter Decide to Turn off the Water Pressure

After volunteering since the early 1990's to help run hundreds of miles of water lines in Greene and Calhoun counties, long-time chairmen Mike Painter and Curt Robeen have decided to turn off the water pressure and retire.

Painter, who has been supervisor of White Hall Township in Greene County since 1993 was also the chairman of a steering committee with the mission of extending water lines to families in rural areas. Dean Heneghan from Heneghan and Associates, P.C. participated with the steering committee. Painter said another group of volunteers first initiated the effort in the late 1980's. Painter praised everyone involved with the steering committee who helped to make good things happen in rural areas.

Painter also recognized others. "Although there were 12 committee members, many others helped," Painter said. Painter and Robeen credited the many volunteers who worked and are still working to extend water lines to families in rural areas. Painter added working with the engineering firm, Heneghan and Associates, P.C., attorney Bill Strang, and funding representative Rob Maschoff from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) played an important role in the success of extending water to rural areas.

Painter said when committee members decided to create Greene County Rural Water District (GCRWD), the question was placed on the ballot and approved by 90% of the voters. In 1994/95, GCRWD became official with designated boundaries. From there it was a matter of establishing funding sources, developing projects, soliciting first-time users, and turning public doubt into public confidence.

"After the first phase, people were happy with the outcome and it just ballooned from there," Painter said. In fact, it ballooned into more than 200 miles of water lines for the GCRWD, covering more than half of Greene County. Approximately 720 out of a potential 2000 users have been served.

"It's rewarding to hear positive comments from people about how happy they are with their rural water," Painter said. Heneghan agreed, "One of the biggest rewards is knowing that you've helped others to be able to have sufficient water to supply their daily needs."

In 1991, shortly before the creation of GCRWD, Calhoun County Rural Water District (CCRWD) was created. Like GCRWD, CCRWD also formed a steering committee comprised of about 12 volunteer members. The bids for the first project were solicited in 1992. Robeen said the first phase of CCRWD was different from GCRWD as it consisted of constructing a water treatment plant and 2 wells.

"We had our challenges during the first phase as we contended with the 1993 flood." Robeen said. Despite the challenges, Robeen had a personal interest in extending water to rural areas. "I had an orchard and I got tired of hauling water. I knew first-hand about the need for water."

There have been three additional phases for a total of 4 phases. There is at least one more phase to complete. The CCRWD tapped into Heneghan and Associates when Dean Heneghan called to ask about the district's interest in rural water. To date, there have been approximately 350 miles of rural water lines constructed for a total of 1300 users. Total possible water users are about 1600.

Robeen also feels an accomplishment from serving the CCRWD for so many years. "I feel proud to have served for such a worthwhile project for the residents of the county." Robeen also served as the Calhoun County treasurer until he resigned in December 2006.

Robeen and Painter both said the goal was to keep the water rates low and that goal has been met. Painter concluded, "It's important that when you tell the public something or promise something, that you do it. Be honest with the public."