

The City of Carlinville's path to clean water

Nobody knows for sure how long drinking water has been a topic of conversation in the city of Carlinville, but it's been at least 50 years. Newspaper clippings from 1978 reported the city of Carlinville had voted to build a new water tower on the north side of town at a total cost of \$545,699. At the same time, the city was negotiating with a local property owner to purchase property to enlarge Lake Carlinville. Until an additional \$1, 250,000 in improvements and the issue of the outdated water plant could be resolved, the water engineer for the city recommended not allowing any new taps to be made to the distribution system. In 1995, Carlinville purchased an additional lake that is still utilized by its water treatment plant today, and the city is still operating the same outdated water plant. Carlinville's current water treatment plant has surpassed its effective design life, and in recent years, mechanical plant issues and raw water quality problems have plagued the city. By 2008, the state agencies were warning Carlinville officials their current water source may not be able to sustain a significant drought. Dredging the lake was an expensive on-going proposition as was the building a new water plant with a source water that was deemed unsustainable.

Around 2014, the city of Carlinville contracted with Mecco Engineering Company to perform a Groundwater Assessment Study. The purpose of the study was to look at multiple options for improving the city's water treatment operations and assess the feasibility and potential costs for Carlinville to utilize groundwater. Fortunately for the city of Carlinville, other water systems in the area were also looking at what other water options were available to them.

In October 2016, Mecco Engineering Company completed a Preliminary Engineering Report that evaluated the potential of forming a regionalized water supply, treatment, and transmission main to serve the city of Carlinville, the city of Jerseyville, Jersey County Rural Water Company and Fosterburg Water District. The report concluded that a regional concept to address the water issues, not only in Carlinville but for other water users was feasible. Eventually, the Illinois Alluvial Regional Water Company was formed and began to pursue funding for a regional water plant. Although the entities involved have changed from the group that funded the study for the regional concept, the interest in the project has increase significantly. In 2018, the USDA Rural Development approved a total of \$66 million in grant and loan for construction of a water treatment plant and distribution system.

Even though it's taken Carlinville nearly 50 years to get to this point, we look forward to having a clean, sustainable, and affordable water source. Once completed, the city can return the lakes to recreational use and utilize funding currently used for the maintenance and repair of the existing water plant to address other infrastructure needs. The IARWC is a game-changer for the city of Carlinville.