This past year marked the 30th anniversary for the Southwest Pipeline Project (SWPP) and 25th anniversary for Southwest Water Authority (SWA). Like the years before, 2016 was also a year full of accomplishments, construction, and project completions. As of the first of 2017, SWA serves more than 6,800 rural customers, 33 communities, 26 contract customers, 21 raw customers, two rural water systems, and two raw water depots. To date, the SWPP installed over 5,000 miles of pipeline delivering quality water to nearly 500 new rural customers.

In 2016, construction began on the six million gallons per day (6 MGD) Supplemental Water Treatment Plant in Dickinson. The East and West Center Service Areas were substantially complete with a total of 720 customers turned over for service. Construction of the Halliday and Dunn Center Service Areas is underway with 495 customers turned over for service. Construction continues on the Supplemental Intake on Renner Bay.

The SWPP could not have happened without state ownership and construction costs being initially paid by the state. As we enter into another Legislative session year, it is important to remember the customers receiving SWPP’s quality water are paying back to the state the cost of construction. Together, SWA’s rural, city, contract and industrial customers, are paying back into the Resources Trust Fund (RTF), on average $12,000 per day or about $5 million per year. By the end of 2016, the amount paid back by the customers of SWA was more than $52 million.

This past year, we had two board member retirements: Ray Bieber, Hettinger County and Duane Bueligen, Oliver County. During their terms both Ray and Duane served SWA with unwavering dedication and leadership. On behalf of a grateful SWA Board of Directors, management and staff, we appreciate what both Ray and Duane brought to SWA’s Board of Directors and the SWPP.

Along with all of us at SWA, we welcome Ray Bieber’s successor, Don Schaible and Duane Bueligen’s successor, Mike Tietz.

As we enter into 2017, the SWPP remains a good example of how a partnership between the state and a water authority works. It has worked for 30 years and with support from our legislators – it will continue quality water to southwest North Dakota.
Duane Bueligen, Southwest Water Authority (SWA) Board member representing Oliver County was honored with the 2016 Water Wheel Award at the 53rd Annual Joint North Dakota Water Convention and Irrigation Workshop in Bismarck at the end of 2016. For over two decades Duane has been instrumental in defining the very mission of the Southwest Pipeline Project (SWPP) and SWA. Considered a forefather of SWA and the SWPP, Duane has been passionate about the development of rural water and bringing safe, reliable drinking water to the citizens of southwest North Dakota. The Water Wheel Award is given to someone who demonstrates a commitment to protect and manage North Dakota’s water resources. Duane’s distinctive leadership and perseverance has gone above and beyond in the promotion of the SWPP and SWA. Duane has remained steadfast in communicating the importance of North Dakota’s water resources for the livelihood and enjoyment of its residents. Mary Massad, Manager/CEO of SWA, states “Duane truly is a water pioneer and visionary, and his years of service to the water industry and the undeniable results of his efforts have earned him the Water Wheel Award. Congratulations Duane!”

Accomplishments in 2016
- SWA’s customers paid back over $52 million to the state
- Added over 500 new rural customers
- Delivered over 2.4 million gallons of quality water
- Completed the Finished Water Pump Station
- Added over 300 miles of pipeline

Award Winning Water – Award Winning People
Many have recognized the Southwest Pipeline Project (SWPP) for the quality water it delivers to over 56,000 residents in southwest North Dakota, but it also takes quality people to make that happen. People like Grace Rixen-Handford, SWA Water Treatment Manager, who was recognized by the ND Department of Health for “Outstanding Water Manager, who was recognized by the ND Department of Health for “Outstanding Water and Wastewater Facility Management” in October 2016 at the North Dakota Pollution Control Conference.

Protect Water Pipes From Freezing
It has been a relatively harsh winter so far. The problem with water is it expands as it freezes and can fracture pipes. When the temperature the pipes are exposed to drops below 32 degrees, Fahrenheit (F), even for a short period, the water inside can freeze. It is important to take the following precautions to avoid the pipe fracturing or breaking and then leaking.

- Even if pipes are indoors, any exposure to outside cold air could cause freezing. Make sure your pipes, crawl spaces and vents are well insulated against any cold air.
- Cold air can penetrate through even a small opening or crack. A bathroom or laundry room located above or next to a garage is particularly vulnerable and keeping that garage door closed can make a huge difference.
- Do you have bathroom pipes running along an exterior wall? When the mercury plunges, think about opening a nearby door to bring warmer air to this area. In extremely cold weather, a fan will facilitate air circulation near the pipes — or you can use a portable heater on a temporary basis.

Remember: If you leave home during the winter, leave your thermostat set to at least 55 degrees F.

Board of Directors
During the past year, Southwest Water Authority (SWA) had two board members retire after two decades of service. Ray Sieber, Hettinger County, retired and was succeeded by Don Schallie at the end of 2016. Duane Bueligen, Oliver County, also retired and was succeeded by Mike Tietz, January of 2017. During their terms both Ray and Duane served SWA with unwavering dedication and leadership. On behalf of a grateful SWA Board of Directors, management and staff, we appreciate both of them.

Dollars at Work
With the state’s repayment for construction and the Replacement for Extraordinary Maintenance (REM) Fund for the Southwest Pipeline Project (SWPP), most of the monthly Rural Minimum with average usage of 6,000 gallons and a large portion of the Contract Water Rate usage goes back to the state. The remaining portion is spent on the costs for operations (O&M).