

Longford water: better by the bottle

Longford, Kan. is a tiny town of 89 residents. It is located 10 miles north of Highway 18 and is nestled in the beautiful hill country of southern Clay County. I have always been fond of the area ever since the first call I received to assist the city with a chlorinator problem. I remember wondering what kind of town could be along this narrow road. The countryside is truly beautiful with rolling hills and cattle grazing on the lush grasses.

The area boasts some of the best water in Kansas. The city used to display a sign to that effect that promoted the Longford water. The sign said "For Good Health and Longevity Drink Longford Water, Kansas' Purest." They used to compete at the State Fair for the

best water.

Longford was a frequent winner. Like many small towns, Longford has a local elevator, gas station, a welding shop, churches, a grade school, post office, a couple of other small businesses along the main street

and the famous Coachlight Café that features great homestyle cooking and some of the best pie found anywhere. If you ever get the chance, try the raisin cream. Another big attraction in Longford is the famous Longford Rodeo in which some of the top names compete annually.

Longford recently completed an overhaul of the 1936 water

distribution system. The project involved replacing old lines, fire hydrants, valves and the water tower. Water rates are \$16 minimum with no water included and \$3.25/ 1000. The city is

a bottling plant. The new enterprise was nurtured by Ted Hartenstein, president of Mid-Continent Investment Company, Wichita. Ted grew up in the neighboring town of Industry. Kim

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surrounded by Clay County Rural Water District No. 2; its wells are adjacent to Longford's. Clay 2's rates are \$26 minimum and \$2.75/1,000.

There is another attraction that is putting Longford on the map,

and Wava Kramer, both long time Longford City Council members, decided to get into the water business and market some of the high quality water. Kim and Wava operate a 1,000-acre grain and hay farm and also ran the famous



*Jon Steele
Tech Assistant*



Kim and Wava Kramer working the Norland bottling machine in the air filtered bottling room.

and making headlines. It's the Longford Water Company which is putting Longford water through

Coachlight Café for years; they take turns sitting on the city council. They have always known

the water was some of the best tasting natural water found anywhere. In fact Wava's late father Frankie Mullin used to deliver water to the rural area residents in the sixties and

seventies before the rural water district was constructed.

The Longford Water Company sells water within a 50-mile radius of Longford. They actually started the project in December 2004

including installing the bottling equipment. The first water was bottled in May 2005. Donations were taken by the Methodist Church and over 27,000 bottles were sent to the Hurricane Katrina

relief effort. The plant has been bottling up to 40,000 small bottles and 700 1-gallon size bottles per month. Kim says he hopes to double production in 2006. The plant is a manually operated plant that Kim and Wava operate together on bottling days. Maximum production is 600, 20-ounce bottles per hour or 150, 1-gallon bottles per

hour. I recall at last year's KRWA conference Doug Guenther and I bottled 2,000 bottles by hand with a hose attachment but it took what seemed like two days. Even



Above: The "Kiowata" label and logo for Longford's bottled water products.

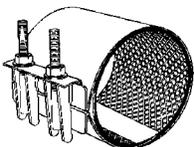
Right: Kim Kramer points out a feature on the new ozone treatment generator used in Longford's Kiowata water bottling process.

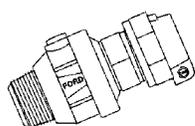


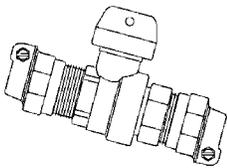
with Kim and Wava and a couple of other area residents setting forms, pouring concrete, erecting walls, plumbing and wiring. Yes they did it all themselves –



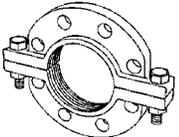
WATER WORKS BRASS AND PIPELINE PRODUCTS

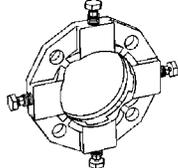






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Longford water . . .

though the plant is not fully automated it is amazing what difference the right equipment can make.

The Honorable Jerry Moran presented a Congressional

“Building Better Communities” Award on May 2, 2005 in recognition of the Longford residents’ hard work and efforts to sustain the community by using private funding.

disinfection, then bottled. The couple emphasizes that the water is soft and good tasting from the source so reverse osmosis (RO) filtration that is used by most bottlers is not needed here. Many



Above: Jon Steele testing the water quality after well treatment at Clay County RWD 2.



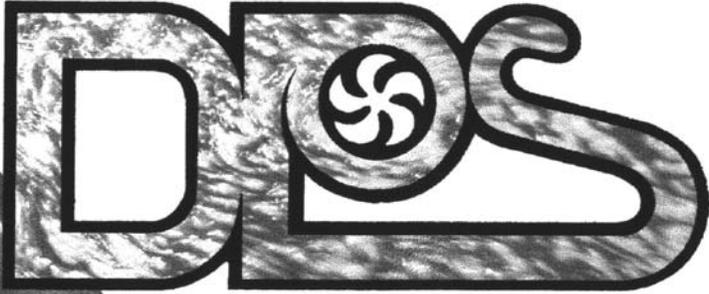
Above right: Dwight Benfer and Jon Steele treating one of the Clay County RWD 2 wells.

The water is nothing more than high quality tap water purchased from the city. The water passes through an activated carbon filter to remove chlorine and then is ozonated for

times bottled water can have a low pH due to the RO treatment.

Kim does all the lab work in the plant. He emphasizes good record keeping and includes bacteriological sampling at least

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weekly TDS, pH, and ozone levels. The plant is regulated and monitored by the US Department of Agriculture. Even the air is filtered in the bottling room and the equipment and floor are



Mainstreet Longford, Kan. Home of KIWATA, a water that some say is the best tasting natural water to be found in the state.

disinfected with a chlorine solution for added protection. I was particularly impressed by the cleanliness, sanitation, attention to detail and overall quality of the entire operation.

Water quality far exceeds all standards. A KDHE lab analysis show chlorides of 3.2 mg/l and that iron is less than .001mg/l; manganese tested at .002 mg/l; nitrate .4 mg/l; sulfate is 16 mg/l; TDS was 88, Total Hardness is 43 mg/l and the pH is 6.8. The water is bottled and marketed as Kiowata, a name taken from the geologic formation it comes from, the Kiowa Formation. They also bottle water under private labels for schools, churches, and businesses.

Clay RWD 2 and Dickinson RWD 1's wells and Longford's wells are all in the same area. Longford Superintendent, Chester Smith and a board member of Clay RWD 2, note that the static water level has declined in recent years due to the lack of rainfall in

the area. Clay RWD 2 is undertaking a new water exploration effort to develop a new source for its 318 customers. Clay 2's wells are producing about 30 million gallons per year. The

water quality is good but the wells have low production rates. Increased demands dictate that the RWD needs to explore for additional supplies.

According to Chester, 22 wells have been drilled around the area and up to five miles west. There is no pattern and

the quality varies greatly when you get very far away from the original well field. Also there is no water in some areas. An example of what was found in one area not far from the existing wells was 510 to 370 hardness and three

hundred yards away no water at all. And some was as high as 2 mg/l iron and manganese. That's a far cry from the existing water. The best they could find was five miles west at 200 mg/l hardness but very low iron and manganese.

It would seem that Longford, Kan. struck high quality gold but in limited supply. There is enough for the needs for now. But without picking up some lower quality water from elsewhere the growth may be limited and the legendary high quality water from Longford may go unnoticed to the rest of the world. Meanwhile, water from Longford, Kan. is helping sustain one small Kansas community.

Speaking of water wells and associated issues, I encourage you to attend the Annual Conference in Wichita March 28 - 30. Mark these sessions: "Water Rights and Water Resource Management" on Wednesday, March 29 and "Well Maintenance that Delivers Extra Years of Service," Thursday, March 30. See you there!



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