



President's Message

Randy Thater
Waukesha, Wisconsin
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Well, it's Tuesday January 3, 2012 – first time I've gotten to type 2012 without looking ahead! I'm decompressing from the holidays and just trying to get back into the normal routine at work. Eating lunch (day-old left over buck burger from Mickey D's - yum) and I realize I have a deadline for my second presidential message into the Clarifier staff by the end of the week.

So I'm doing this (starting off anyway) as a working lunch wondering what to talk about. This seems to be a tough stretch to find something to write about. There is a lot going on and the board members are working diligently, but most of their work is in progress and a lot still needs to be finalized.

We had our first board meeting with our 2011 – 2012 officer line-up in early December. The budget got passed. Even with the membership fee increase, tough decisions had to be made to get a balanced budget. (Does this give me a fresh perspective, and give me new respect for the task our common council goes through each year? Of course not – I'll still carp about it!)

One thing we did was raise the advertizing rates for the Clarifier. It's not something we like doing. Our commercial partners do a lot for this organization. They provide a large share of the technical talks at the state conference and the regional meetings. They pay fees for the exhibits at both of these events. And there is a sponsor fee for any commercial firm with at least one attendee at state, even if they are not exhibiting. But the cost of producing the Clarifier was higher than what we are collecting in ad revenue. Rates had not been raised since 2006. So it was time.

Another item for action involves the operators competition. This event has been a fixture of the conference since before I got involved in WWOA. Those that have been participants in the past always speak positively of the experience. But it has been a challenge getting enough teams to participate the last few years. A minimum of three teams are required to hold the event. Unfortunately, this last year we had to cancel the competition due to lack of firm commitments from enough teams.

Options to solve this problem were discussed at the regional officers meeting last October. Several good ideas were brought up, including the possibility of morphing the event from a competition to a hands-on training workshop. However, we have decided to give it one more college try to hold a competitive event. But we need those commitments

before we finalize the conference program. So if you are interested in participating, be sure to contact your regional officers – the sooner the better.

Speaking of the regions, the winter round of regional meetings should be in full swing as you read this. I see listing for meetings in Wisconsin Dells, Brookfield, West Salem, Kewaunee, and Plover on the WWOA Events calendar. Northwest of course waits until the snow cover gets down to around 3 feet in April or May to hold their first meeting, so that is the complete list. I hope to make two of these meetings towards my goal of visiting all the regions this year. Given the chance of weather, I'll likely hit the Southeastern meeting since it's hosted by the next plant upriver from ours. I haven't decided on my other one yet. When you see me this year, feel free to stop and say hi. Let me know what you think of WWOA, and if there is anything we can do to better serve our membership.

I'm looking at the flyers for the Government Affairs Seminar and Spring Biosolids Symposium. As usual Kevin Freber, et.al. (GAS) and Lyle Lutz, et.al. (SBS) have done a bang-up job putting together interesting and informative programs. Government Affairs has Phosphorus Removal, Adaptive Management, and Stormwater issues among the scheduled topics. Spring Biosolids lists Nutrient Management, Renewable Energy, and Septage topics as just part of the bill of fare. As you read this the GAS pre-registration deadline is likely passed, but you can still attend at the slightly higher on-site price. You should have plenty of time to process your SBS registration, no matter how circuitous your purchasing bureaucracy.

The annual conference is months away, but that doesn't mean there is nothing going on with that. Kevin Freber has the keynote and entertainment wrapped up, and about the time you see this he will be chairing a group of about twenty-odd individuals (and they are twenty of the oddest characters you'd ever want to meet!) known as the Technical Committee. Selection of speakers for the technical sessions, pre-conference workshops and farewell address will be the order of the day.

Continuing education of wastewater professionals is the WWOA core mission and the subjects of the prior several paragraphs - regional meetings, state conference, and co-sponsored annual seminars are the meat of our offerings. We are always on the lookout for the occasional sweet treat, extra special training events that we can offer to our members.

Last year, with North Central region's steering committee spearheading the effort, we were able to offer two sessions on Microscopic Evaluation of wastewater, put on by the incomparable Toni Glymph. One session was hosted by NCL in Birnamwood, and the other was held in Watertown.

This year NC region is looking to repeat the class at NCL as a regional event. We are considering offering a second site again as a WWOA event. Confirmation and details to follow.

These are the kinds of ideas we are always on the watch for, but it's easily said that we should offer more events, not always so easy to come up with ideas, and perhaps more importantly to find the right people to teach the classes. So if you have a good idea for a special events topic, and especially if you have a good lead on a trainer, please get the word to our Operator Training co-chairs Lyle Lutz and Jim Bergles, or any other officer for that matter.

I started off by talking about the budget process. One item that came up again, as it always seems to, is the WWOA Directory. That is that umpty-some page, spiral bound book we put out every other year that everyone either loves to hate, or hates to love. It is one of the treasured assets and valuable tools provided to our membership as part of their fee (or so I'm told). But it also is quickly out of date and it is not cheap. At about \$10 a pop, that is one-fifth of the membership fee. We seem to be endlessly debating whether to keep providing it, or switch to an alternative such as electronic only – and if so how to do so in a manner that makes it easily accessible to our members, while protecting them from unwanted uses, such as it providing an easily pirated mass marketing list. No decisions yet, and we would love to hear input from our members.

Another hot topic with the board has been the WWOA web site. As you may have heard by now, Scott Thompson has decided to give up his position as webmaster. Scott was a driving force behind the establishment of the web site, and has served as webmaster from the beginning. Scott isn't going anywhere – he is still an operator at Green Bay MSD and he has promised to stay active with the organization and a volunteer with the web site committee. Many thanks to Scott for all the work he has put in over the years.

One initiative we continue to work on is expanding the ability to register on-line. We have offered pre-registration for the annual conference on the web site the last two years. As with any new initiative, there are always a few bumps along the way. But we have worked diligently with our web services provider and we believe we are over the hump with this. Now we want to charge ahead and expand our offerings for on-line service. Next up is to allow membership renewal on the web site. Not sure if it will be ready for use with this year's renewal cycle. All current memberships expire on September 1 of the expiration year. It is a two-year membership, so roughly half come due each year.

Down the road we would like to expand the service to offer registration for other state and regional events. You can already register on-line for some events such as the Government Affairs Seminar. That event has registration services provided by a third party but it comes at a price, and would not be feasible for use with regional meeting registration.

We also want to 'freshen up' the web site, perhaps provide some new content or reconfigure the existing content to make it more user-friendly. And with a new webmaster, new web committee chair, and reconfigured web committee we expect to get some fresh ideas. But as always, we would love to hear from you if you have anything to say on this issue. Feel free to contact Jeff Bratz.

Again, I've found nothing to say and spent over 1,500 words saying it. I don't even want to admit to how much time I spent on this. Until April, may you not be standing knee-deep in over-flowing septage!

Sincerely,

Randy Thater
WWOA President