



the
**Wisconsin Wastewater
Operators' Association**



I'm sitting here inside on a lovely fall Sunday. Nice as it is outside, I'm in here feeding my sports fanatic bug. NASCAR going on right now with the Brewers just about ready to start their NLDS game one that will (See, I'm really an optimist!) start them toward their second World Series. And our beloved Packers go for a 5 – 0 start later.

Sitting here, decompressing from an enjoyable but hectic week at the just-concluded state conference and thinking about what transpired.

WWOA business first and last – and some in the middle, too. Monday's board meeting includes the usual round of committee reports. Conference planning all set

and ready to go, of course. Too late if not! Wade Peterson, et.al. did a lot of groundwork so we can enjoy our time in LaCrosse.

Planning for the Government Affairs Seminar and Spring Biosolids Symposium are coming up shortly, and the events themselves are only a couple months away by the time you read this. While registration materials are likely not ready yet, you might at least find teaser articles further back in this issue. Be sure to check the web site and watch for the mailings for these always informative days.

Then there are the financial items. Year-to-date financial and voucher payment reports. And the first draft of the 2012 budget prepared by our executive secretary, Richard McKee. While the 2010 financial report that was presented to the members at the annual meeting later in the week again showed a negative balance, the membership fee increase approved by the members in 2010 and the increase in conference fees to keep that self-sustaining are bearing fruit. Barring some sudden catastrophic occurrence, 2011 should end in the black, and the 2012 budget should project a positive balance as well. I know fee increases can be painful but we do our best to maximize your "bang-for-buck" factor.

Tuesday is the meeting with the regional officers and the board. The regions submit their annual reports. These all reflect regions that are doing a great job putting on three or four one-day meetings, with the help of the host communities, that meet our organization's primary goal of providing educational opportunities to the membership. By now, I think everyone knows my feelings about the regions. While the state organization and its board is the titular senior partner, the regions are the heart and soul of WWOA. There are about 2000 WWOA members, and in a given year only about 700 – 900 are able to attend the annual conference. This means that for over half the membership, the regions are their primary contact.

(Sport update 1, Wisconsin's Matt Kenseth finishes fourth, moving two places up in the standings to fifth and twelve points out of the lead. Was hoping for better, but will settle.)

Thursday was the annual meeting. Besides the financial report mentioned above, highlights were the salute to Leo Templeton (Happy Ninetieth, Leo!) and the election of officers. Kevin Freber is your new Vice-President. After working with Kevin on the board and on Government Affairs planning for these last three years, I have confidence Kevin will do a great job putting together the 2012 conference. I look forward to working with the directors, hold-overs Kelly Zimmer and Lyle Lutz and newcomers Sharon Thiesen, Jim Bergles, and Jeff Bratz. This led to my first mad scramble and difficult task as President, deciding (in less than 24 hours!) which committee assignments best suited each of these talented individuals.

The core of the conference is the technical program. Two pre-conference workshop sessions Tuesday preceded the conference proper. The Keynote Address Wednesday morning by Scott Friedman got things off to a flying start. Despite my wife's assertion that I have the lovable curmudgeon bit only half down, I am a firm believer in the need for humor in work and life.

Thirty-five talks filled the fourteen technical sessions on Wednesday and Thursday. This included an entire day in one room of three sessions and seven talks on the hot issue of nutrient regulations and removal. I don't know about you but my biggest problem during the conference was deciding which of the talks to attend in any given time slot.

(Sport update 2, Brewers 9, Cards 6. A great start but it is a 7 game series! And even time to take an early evening walk with my dachshund Otto and enjoy the remains of the day.)

Of course, I managed to find time to cruise the exhibition area. I got to visit with many people I already knew and met some that I didn't. Got a few leads for alternate suppliers and such as well. These exhibits are just as important a part of the WWOA educational experience as the technical talks, just in a different format. And many of these representatives from the manufacturers, suppliers, laboratory, engineers, and consultant communities are the ones that provide their expertise to the technical program. In addition, the exhibit fees they pay help us keep the registration fees for the individual members to the low levels we enjoy compared to many other events available to us all.

So a large thank you to all these people and firms.

We finished up with the farewell breakfast Friday morning where I had the privilege of introducing DNR Secretary Kathy Stepp. Secretary Stepp gave a short address, then stayed to take over a half hour of questions from the audience on a wide range of topics. I know some of you may not have warm and fuzzy feelings about the current administration, especially the policies and attitudes toward public employees. However, I thought the Secretary was honest and straight-forward in her views that while the department is a regulator that must enforce the statutes and rules, that the way this is done was just as important. She emphasized the need for working with both the regulated community and the environmental activists with a goal of reaching consensus on the best, most practical, and least expensive routes to achieve the goals. I am committed to doing my best in the next year to see that we do our part in this process, within the mandate of our bylaws as an educational, and not a lobbying organization.

(Sport update 3, Packers 25 – Falcons 14. This is a great time to be a Wisconsin sports fan.)

When I joined this organization in 1988, I expected I would have opportunities to earn the CEUs I needed to keep my operator's certificate current. I expected to learn some things along the way, both in basic knowledge and in keeping up with new regulations and new technologies. And I expected to have the opportunity to network with my peers, meaning of course all you good members of WWOA. WWOA has met these expectations and more.

What I didn't expect was the friendships I would make in these 23 years since. And that is perhaps the most enjoyable part of the conference experience. As much as I

learned and accomplished last week, I also got to see all my friends, some that I get to see a few times in between and some I might only see this one time every year. Some I get to have a good long chat with and some I might only have a chance to give that Scott Friedman “head-bob” to. I'm not going to start naming names because I don't have the space and wouldn't want to leave anyone out. But they come from all corners of the state, from Prairie Farm to Pleasant Prairie, and from Dickeyville to Marinette.

I hope all of you that attended had as good a time as I did. I hope to see many of you this next year, as I fulfill my goal to attend a meeting in each region. As I said in my President's Address, “This is a **great** organization, and I am honored to serve as your President.” (...and) “I want to thank all you members of WWOA for putting your trust in me to be the steward for WWOA this next year.”

Epilogue:

Well, it's a couple weeks later as I polish this message and get it off to press. Our Brewers went down in flames in game seven of the NLCS, and I have to listen to my Missouri relatives crow about their world champion Cards. There is always next year. Matt Kenseth won at Charlotte and sits second in the standings. And the Pack continues to roll, as the only undefeated team at 7 – 0.

Meanwhile, the Government Affairs planning group met in late October. I've seen the tentative agenda and it looks like another good mix of both subjects and speakers. I leave the details for final confirmation and publication, but phosphorus, thermal and stormwater rules and user rates are planned topics, along with DNR and EPA updates. The Spring Biosolids Symposium is also progressing with their planning work. Our other work proceeds apace as well. We are working to improve the web based conference registration, something we realize has been a problem area. Once, we can get that straightened away, we hope to be able to offer that option for other meetings as well.

So until February, may your effluent flow to discharge and your biosolids get spread without a hitch!

Sincerely,
Randy Thater
WWOA President