



I would like to welcome all of our members to a new year of *Clearwaters* magazine and all of the great articles and information it contains. This issue focuses on the Erie Canal and Central New York.

There is an article on the history of the Erie Canal, which is quite interesting. If you are ever in Syracuse and are driving on Erie Boulevard, you might not realize that this is where the canal used to be. You can stop by the Erie Canal Museum, which used to be a

weigh station, and see how the canal boats were weighed so they could pay their toll. This was the first "Thruway." This is only some of the many interesting pieces of information in the museum.

As much as the canal did for the development of upper New York State, there were also water quality issues then as there are today. Please look into the articles on how the canals are maintained today and what water quality issues must be dealt with now. This issue also contains information on a \$10 million initiative started by former Governor Pataki for an Erie Canal Greenway.

In addition, this issue of *Clearwaters* has wonderful articles on the delisting of Oswego Harbor, canal-related initiatives in the Buffalo and Rochester regions, an overview of the Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge, and a shrub willow biofuel project. I hope you enjoy the articles and my thanks to all of the contributing authors.

It seems appropriate that since this issue has a Central New York focus, that our Spring Meeting is being held in Syracuse this year at the Sheraton University Hotel. I would like to extend an invitation to all NYWEA members to attend the Spring Meeting and if you can, bring or encourage someone who is not a member to attend as well. The theme of the meeting this year will be Onondaga Lake. Please plan to join us June 4-6 for a strong technical program, Operations Challenge events, vendor displays and some very enjoyable events and a few surprises. You will find more about the meeting and Onondaga Lake in this issue.

Top Initiatives

As president, I have set my focus on a number of initiatives. The first is our Awards Committee and Program. This committee does a great job of putting together the necessary items to recognize the work and accomplishments of our members, but they need your help. Many times awards go without a recipient. Please take the time to consider a colleague, co-worker, client, regulator, and others who may be worthy of an award. In addition, self-nomination is both acceptable and encouraged. Nomination forms can be obtained from the NYWEA website or by calling the office.

Another initiative is our Scholarship Program. I would first like to thank all of the people and organizations that have and continue to

participate in the program. However, we are only at 50 percent of our goal of \$1 million by 2010. This is a very worthwhile program and encourages the growth of individuals who will help protect our water quality in the future. Please consider a pledge or renewing your pledge this year. Forms for the program are included in this issue.


Our voluntary collection system training and certification program has begun and has provided collection system operators and their supervisors a verifiable level of competency for their knowledge and experience. Please consider registering for this program or volunteering to serve on the committee or the certification board.

A new initiative this year is the "Just One More" Membership Program. The idea is to have each member reach out to the people they interact with and find just one more new active member. In addition, NYWEA will provide an incentive as a "thank you" to you and the new member. You should have received a brochure in the mail explaining the program. Additional information can be obtained from the NYWEA office and on the NYWEA website.

There are many life members of the NYWEA who have been involved for 40 to 50 years. The past presidents are looking into a more formal and substantial recognition for our members for their years of service.

The Strategic Planning Committee is at the start of another strategic planning cycle. They are developing initiatives to address top priorities that our leadership has identified for the future. The priorities are: Low Cost Training, Outreach to Public and Local Municipal Officials, Branding, and Regulatory and Legislative Influence. The committee will be reaching out to all the impacted stakeholders for their input and providing updates on the progress of these important initiatives.

As one of our past presidents, Ken Skibinski, once said, "We are an organization whose people have purpose, passion, and principle." I am asking for your help in making these initiatives a success. Remember, together we can make a difference!


Thomas Lauro, PE

