President's Message | Winter 2008

It's Time to Get on Board

This issue of *Clearwaters* is focused on sustainability in the wastewater industry. Sustainability describes activities that meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. It includes the effects of three integrated dimensions: environmental, social and economic. The New York Water Environment Association (NYWEA) and its members can and must be leaders in promoting sustainability in our professional and our everyday lives.

"It is every man's obligation to put back into the world at least the equivalent of what he takes out of it." – Albert Einstein

You will find articles in this issue on water conservation and water reuse, energy conservation as well as energy production at wastewater treatment plants, green infrastructure, partnerships to promote sustainable practices, and state-of-the-art systems to promote efficiency and funding programs. I encourage you to read these articles with the goal of adopting these concepts and technologies in your operating facilities, your planning and design projects and in your personal lives. I also encourage our regulatory community to consider sustainability when developing and implementing new and existing regulations.

"When the well's dry, we know the worth of water." – Benjamin Franklin

This year at the Water Environment Federation Annual Conference and Exhibition (WEFTEC) several presentations and entire sessions were devoted to sustainability, particularly green infrastructure. We are experiencing healthy competition among US cities to be the greenest cities in the country. The WEFTEC host, the City of Chicago, showcased its green infrastructure in a workshop and technical sessions. Philadelphia shared its experience and future plans with green infrastructure for stormwater control and the reduction of CSO (combined sewer overflow) volumes. Closer to home, Onondaga County, New York, the home to NYWEA headquarters, is aggressively moving forward with green infrastructure as an integral part of its long term control plan for CSO abatement. New York City's Mayor Michael Bloomberg has implemented PlaNY, a sustainable program that focuses on five key dimensions of the city's environment: land, air, water, energy and transportation. The primary goal of PlaNY is to help ensure a higher quality of life for New Yorkers for generations to come.

"The Future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams." – Eleanor Roosevelt

In my office, our young professionals have taken the lead in an office wide sustainability initiative to challenge our staff to become more sustainable at home as well as at work. Our young professionals are leading the way with sustainable lifestyle changes and habits.

With all these exciting environmental and social initiatives well underway, the economic dimension of sustainability may well be the most challenging of the three dimensions. In order to be sustainable, our infrastructure must be maintained, upgraded and at times replaced. New energy efficient technologies, building upgrades or new buildings and new equipment will be required to meet the goals of sustainability and energy independence. Funding for infrastructure generally comes from one or more of three sources – local user fees and taxes, state funding and federal funding. It will take a combination of all three to maintain, upgrade and replace our infrastructure in a sustainable manner.

Local government officials are faced with doing more with less, and the public should be educated and kept up to date with regard to how its money is being spent and why it should support these expenditures. Local governments should be paying close attention to sustainability through asset management, energy conservation, selection of buildings, structures and equipment with long life expectancy, and maintaining a top notch work force through education and training and competitive salary and benefits packages. But local governments need financial support from state and federal sources and this support must be more consistent year in and year out than it has been since the end of the construction grants program. ***Local financial planners, managers and elected officials need a more robust and consistent funding program if we expect them to sustain our infrastructure.***

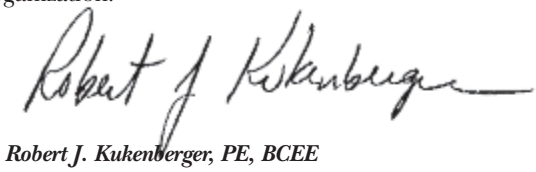
NYWEA Initiatives

In each issue of *Clearwaters,* I have shared our progress on major NYWEA initiatives. I am happy to report the following:

Education: The annual Watershed and Science Technical Conference held on September 16 and 17, 2008 at the Hotel Thayer on the grounds of the West Point Military Academy was another successful and educational conference. This conference was attended by 284, and included two panel discussions on emerging contaminants and seven technical sessions covering a wide range of watershed issues. Planning is nearly complete for our 81st Annual Meeting to be held on February 1-4, 2009 at the Marriott Marquis in NYC. Please join me along with over 1,200 expected attendees for what will be an excellent technical program and networking with our peers.

Regulatory Relationships: We are happy to inform our members that NYWEA has been named a member to Governor Paterson's Clean Water Collaborative (CWC), an environmental and government collaborative formed to help tackle the water infrastructure crisis in New York State. The CWC will focus on funding solutions for the state's mounting wastewater and water infrastructure needs. We look forward to a long and beneficial relationship with the CWC, Governor's office and NYSDEC. (See pages 20-21 for more information.)

Once again, I want to thank all of our dedicated volunteers and our Executive Office for making NYWEA a successful educational organization.



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