



Focus on Microconstituents

This issue of *Clearwaters* is focused on the very important area of microconstituents. Our ability to detect environmental contaminants at lower and lower levels has led to more public awareness of potential adverse impacts on our health and the environment. The low concentration contaminants of concern for drinking water and wastewater are often referred to as microconstituents, pharmaceutical and personal care products (PPCPs), or low level contaminants. Of particu-

lar concern to water utilities and regulating agencies is the sheer number of possible contaminants and the extremely low levels that may cause adverse impacts on human health and the environment. It is believed that a number of these contaminants break down into by-products that also present adverse environmental and health impacts. Studies have shown that most water bodies in the US have some levels of microconstituents of concern at detectable levels.

Microconstituents have become the focus of increasing public and regulatory awareness and it is likely that regulations will be forthcoming. The US Environmental Protection Agency has issued draft water quality criterion for one microconstituent, nonylphenol, and has facilitated voluntary phase out of other compounds. It is expected that regulations will be handled on a state-by-state basis and, in fact, California has established a public health goal for n-nitrosodimethylamine (NDMA), a known carcinogen. Providers of drinking water and wastewater disposal are concerned because many of these contaminants cannot be removed during conventional treatment and the cost of monitoring alone can be a large burden on water and wastewater operations. If future regulations require removal of microconstituents, specialized treatment systems would be required at a significant capital and operations cost.

This brings me to the conclusion that our focus should be on prevention first and treatment only if necessary. Prevention can be implemented with public education, drug take-back programs, household recycling programs and pretreatment programs. The New York Water Environment Association (NYWEA) encourages our members to move in this direction and we are dedicated to assist you with educational and training materials on this topic.

NYWEA Initiatives

My message in each issue of *Clearwaters* includes an update of NYWEA initiatives. We have made progress on several initiatives as highlighted below:

- **Education:** Our Spring Meeting in June was a great success with 243 people attending the 10 sessions and receiving engineering and/or operator training credit. Many thanks to Dave Barnes, Chair of the Spring Technical Conference Committee, for all of his help to make the meeting a success. The Member Education Committee has held nine successful education and training programs during the past 12 months covering topics of interest to both operators and engineers. By the time you read this, the 2008 Watershed Science and Technical Conference will have taken

place. This event offers a broad range of topics relating to watershed science. The Call for Abstracts has been issued for the 81st Annual Meeting to be held at the Marriott Marquis on February 1-4, 2009 and plans are underway for the 2009 Spring Conference to be held at the Hotel Thayer on June 1-3, 2009.

- **Regulatory Relationships:** NYWEA is serving as an advisor to the Office of Clean and Safe Water Infrastructure Funding Initiative. Our Government Affairs Committee (GAC) submitted a report to NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) regarding fair and equitable funding.
- **Strategic Planning:** Our draft strategic plan has been completed and will be presented to the Board of Directors and Membership in the near future.
- **Working with the Water Environment Federation (WEF):** As Adam Zabinski completes his term as President of WEF, I have reflected on how unique the timing was for my term as NYWEA president during the same timeframe that we have a fellow New Yorker and good friend as WEF President. We have used this opportunity to improve our relationships with WEF and to find ways of having more input on WEF governance.

I would like to thank our dedicated members for their volunteer work on various Committees, Chapters and Task Forces, and our Executive Office, led by Patricia Cerro-Reehil, for outstanding service to NYWEA.

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See website for details: www.nywea.org