

Maine Water Environment NEWS



1-800-452-8786

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A Publication of the Maine Water Environment Association

President's Corner: Water, Water Everywhere

By Aubrey Strause, Verdant Water, PLLC



When Samuel Taylor Coleridge wrote his classic epic poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* around the year 1800, he finished the title sentence with "... nor any drop to drink". He was describing the terrifying paradox of a crew stranded on a ship in the ocean, surrounded by water yet dying of thirst. Today, I propose to end the sentence, instead, with "... if you only stop to think".

In my travels, I am stunned by the plethora of opportunities on a *daily* basis I experience to talk to people about the value of clean water (that is, treating wastewater and managing stormwater).

A few weeks ago, at a birthday party, I hit the mother lode. A neighbor mentioned his disgust at how he sees "raw sewage" going directly from houses into a local marsh when he's out clamming. I put down my beer- this is important- and walked a bit with him to see the spot in question. The offending flow was just a groundwater seep, and explained how I knew. Upon return to the party, I was able to tell the group that this part of town was actually connected to sanitary sewer. I asked them to turn around, and gaze across the marsh to actually see the treatment facility on the other side. Some, who live near the treatment facility, had no idea it was there. "Great", I said. "That's because they're doing a good job". I explained the concept of illicit discharge and said that the Town takes its responsibility very seriously. The icing on the cake, while eating cake, was getting stormwater and sewer questions from the group. I loved it. The clammer and I plan to do some follow-up inspections with my field test kits. Great dinner conversation, made better only by knowing those 10 people would otherwise have left the party with some very bad information, and probably spread it.

Next up: my hairdresser. Over the last 10 years, I'd assumed that she just blocked out my response after she'd ask, politely, "So how's work?" Wrong. Just a few weeks ago, I barely got settled in the chair before she excitedly told me how she'd given her friends the "don't flush wipes, even if they say 'flushable' on the label" lecture I thought I'd been boring her with. All the mini- water environment lessons had hit their

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*For a complete Board Listing,
please visit the MWWCA website at:

www.mewea.org

Upcoming Board Meeting Dates:

October 17

Place: TBD

November 21

Maine Municipal Association

December 19

Maine Municipal Association

President's Message cont'd

target. Steph's friends will absorb that message from her far better than they will from 100 TV commercials or bill stuffers. She made my day.

At another party, a family member was complaining that her wastewater bill was so high. Looking at her bill, we calculated she was paying about \$0.0045 per gallon for municipal drinking water and about \$0.011 (just over a penny) per gallon of wastewater her house generated. I asked her how much she'd paid for the pallet of bottles of spring water on the table- "Got it on sale for \$18", she said, or nearly \$4.00 per gallon. She was stunned- she'd never thought about what she's willing to pay for water she has to drive to a store to get, compared to what she pays for the convenience of clean water at her house. The concept of "level of service" was presented very simply.

A friend who'd never thought about how septic systems discharge treated water back to groundwater.

A neighbor who assumed water, trash, and pollutants entering catch basins went to a treatment facility.

A friend's mom who planned to flush

her late aunt's unused medications.

Explaining the recent Illinois legislation banning plastic "microbeads" in hand soap to a college classmate.

Describing to a policymaker how wastewater gets from her house to the treatment facility, and how byproducts of the wastewater treatment process can be re-used.

Giving ideas to an educator who never considered the great science lessons related to stormwater and wastewater that can fit into Common Core standards.

Last but not least: the Yarmouth Clam Festival, a classic New England summertime celebration, complete with amusement rides, great food, and an excellent craft show. While watching the parade, waiting for my husband and his deuce-and-a-half to pass by, I saw Bob Crowley (winner of 2008's "Survivor" TV show and keynote speaker at the 2014 NEWEA Spring Meeting) and WCSH6's Bill Green (champion of the Maine outdoors and if Matt Timberlake and I are persistent and find the right carrot- a future MEWEA keynote speaker) on different floats. "Why", I thought, "at a festival celebrating the bounty of the clam

flats, is there not a float celebrating the work it takes to keep Maine's clam flats open?" Without clean water, there are no clams. A seed for next year's MEWEA & partners float was planted in my mind... and I know just the truck to haul it.

Water is everywhere, and so is the chance to talk to people about it: it's our perspective that's wrong. Those kids in the local school or Girl Scout troop? They're ready to learn about water. Residents of the assisted living facility down the street? They're ready to learn about water. Your buddies when you go out for drinks? They're ready to learn about water. When we assume that we are adrift in an ocean of people uninterested in hearing our message, we're wrong. They're ready to learn about water. Maybe they'll even share the message.

Come visit – or better yet, volunteer! Where? At the MEWEA booth at the Portland Greenfest (www.portlandgreenfest.org) in Monument Square on September 13 as we continue to take our message to our neighbors, and see the MEWEA resources you can take into your own community. Water's Worth It. 

IMPORTANT NOTICE: Name Change!!!

MEWEA
60 Community Drive
Augusta, ME 04330

To Whom It May Concern:

Please be advised that The Maine WasteWater Control Association is now called:

Maine Water Environment Association (MEWEA)

Invoices should now be made payable to MEWEA instead of MWWCA. The mailing address has **not** changed and should be sent to MEWEA, 60 Community Drive, Augusta, ME 04330.

Please update your system to reflect this name change (MEWEA) effective immediately.

After July 1, 2014, MEWEA will not be able to accept checks made out to MWWCA.
NOTE: Any payments received after July 1, 2014 made payable to MWWCA will be returned for re-issue.

Thank you for your cooperation!



ON MY SOAPBOX: WASTE IS GREAT!

By Mac Richardson, Editor

Note: *The opinions, positions, and views expressed in any “On My Soapbox” feature are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the opinions, positions or views of the Maine Water Environment Association.*

Perhaps more to the point waste is becoming valuable. I really believe we are entering a period where all over the world people are looking at those items we formerly thought of as wastes as raw materials. I can think of at least three examples that apply to Maine in very different ways, yet if we are smart, we will take notice and act accordingly.

First is water. With global climate change, water is becoming increasingly scarce in many areas of the world and in large portions of our own country. As I write this we are having heavy showers and I joke that we Mainers don't know what drought is and while I think that is true, we need to understand how precious water is. We are water rich in this state, but we cannot afford to be complacent, wastewater is still water and it has value. Consider for a moment that water, when bottled sells for more than gasoline.

Second is poop. Or should I more correctly say biosolids? Here is another area where we are blessed in Maine. We still have one of the highest rates of recycling these nutrients back to soil in the country. Again taking a bit of a global view, we simply cannot afford to squander the nutrients we remove from wastewater. Locking up nitrogen and phosphorus (not to mention micronutrients such as sulfur, boron, manganese, iron and even molybdenum) in landfills or allowing them to go up an incinerator's stack is just plain foolish from a long term point of view. I will say however, that challenges remain, from managing odors to finding economical means of doing the job, if we are truly concerned about keeping our environment healthy, we can't consider our jobs done when “the solids hit the truck”. I encourage you to actively support sustainable practices for the residuals we generate in treat-

ing wastewater.

The third is what I will call “sloppy wastes”. They include the nearly 50% of food that becomes waste, fats, oils and grease, deicing fluids, oil and gas storage tank condensates, and any other relatively wet, potentially odorous and high energy wastes. Until recently these wastes have been nothing but a problem – often too wet to burn too solid to put into treatment plants, they often “flew under the radar” disposed of with other wastes when no one was looking. Following the example set by some European Countries and a handful of forward thinking treatment plants here in the US (such as East Bay MUD, Johnstown-Gloversville NY, and Essex Junction VT to name a few)

these problem materials are getting a second look. In anaerobic digesters these energy rich materials can generate substantial quantities of methane which can be used to generate power. As a result, these materials are starting to become scarce in some places and markets are starting to be set up to buy and trade these previously unwanted “nasties”.

Are there more opportunities to turn problems into assets? Undoubtedly there are. Certainly it pays to think creatively and be open to new ways of looking at old problems. To paraphrase Bob Dillon, “the times they are a changin’.” Now if someone just had a profitable idea for used baby wipes....

Brunswick Sanitary District Acquires New Electric Vehicle

By Leonard Blanchette

The Brunswick Sanitary District recently acquired the 202 GEM (Global Electric Motorcar) pictured here. It will be seen around the town of Brunswick as staff use it for gathering information on field assets for the District's Graphical Information System(GIS). Street legal, the car can travel at speeds up to 27 mph and was purchased for \$3,000 from a school in western Massachusetts after the ever resourceful Rob Ponto found it on an internet web site.



The newest Hot Rod added to the fleet of the Brunswick Sanitary District.

Members on the Move

By Steve Broadbent



In December 2013, Lynn Woodard, was promoted to the Assistant Superintendent and Chief Operator position at Kennebec

Treatment District, Waterville Maine. Lynn is a 1978 graduate of Old Town High School and EMVTI (now EMCC) where he earned an Associate Degree in Applied Science majoring in Environmental Controls Technology. Lynn began his career at the City of Brewer wastewater facility and moved on to KSTD in September 1980. He will inherit a talented crew at the plant and his new duties will keep him busy for many years to come. Congratulations from us all.

Douglas Clark has returned as the wastewater Superintendent for the City of Gardiner, Maine; replacing Chuck Applebee. Doug began his career in 1978 in Vermont and moved to Gardiner to be the lab technician/operator in 1982. In Gardiner, he rose up through the ranks and became the superintendent in 1988. In 2000 Doug left Gardiner to manage the Little River Compost Plant in Lisbon until the facility was closed in 2007. Doug continued his career in the water industry and was an operator at the Kennebec Water District plant in Vassalboro. Welcome back Doug to your roots in Gardiner.

Paul Lowe at the Paris Utility District will retire in June 2014. Paul has spent 34 years with the District and has climbed the ladder to be the Assistant Administrator for the District. Paul has accomplished a lot in our field and has received certifications in both water and wastewater. He is responsible for both the water and wastewater systems that serve the community. He came to our field

from the construction industry and he and his Team have been able to use their talents to plan and implement improvements in both the water

and wastewater systems. Times have not always been easy at the District and he has faced many challenges: the local tannery closed in 1980; the plant staff was reduced by seven positions and Paul and his crew were faced with an aging wastewater treatment plant with many out dated components. Paul was up for the challenge and the District made many low-cost improvements to reduce operating costs for the system and improve performance. In the meantime, Paul and the District began planning improvements that lead to a \$10-million plant renovation and allowed the District to comply with a very stringent discharge permit. Paul's dedication and hard work in our



Paul Lowe and his crew at the Paris Utilities District

chosen field has benefited everyone in the District. He will be greatly missed by his crew and associates. We wish him much success and happiness in his retirement and offer our

sincere thanks for a job well done.

Dan Bolduc has been the long time superintendent of the Oakland Sewer Department and will retire in August 2014. Dan began working for the Town of Oakland in 1977 and served the community as the chief operator at the wastewater treatment plant. Like many of us, Dan has done every job at the plant, pump stations and in the sewer system. Dan's dedication and long hours of service have benefited everyone in Oakland. Like many small towns, local industries began to close in the 1970's and Oakland was hit hard by the closure of Cascade Woolen Mills and other manufactur-

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Matt Timberlake, Governor LePage and 2014 Maine Clean Water Week Poster Contest Winners.

MEWEA 2014 Fall Convention

The Maine Water Environment Association will hold its annual fall convention at Sunday River in Newry, Maine on September 17-19, 2014. The convention is typically attended by over 300 wastewater professionals and provides an excellent opportunity for vendors to present information about products and services to potential clients, attendees to engage in networking and some fun along the way.

The fall convention is a three day event with an optional golf tournament or recreation on your own on Wednesday, September 17th. Additional recreational activity options are available at <https://www.sundayriver.com/events-and-activities/activity-guide>

This year's event looks to be exceptional with 27 technical sessions available and dedicated time allotted for vendor interaction. Technical sessions are listed below and can also be found at WWW.MEWEA.ORG:

Thursday September 18, 2014

- MANHOLE REHABILITATION DEMONSTATION
- SOCIAL MEDIA AND "PHISHING"
- LABORATORY MATH FOR BEGINNERS
- HANDS-ON PART 1: EQUIPMENT
- REGULATORY UPDATE: WHAT'S BEEN GOING ON AROUND USEPA REGION 1
- LAB STATISTICS AND TEST ACCEPTABILITY/REPORTING
- HANDS-ON PART 2: PROBES
- WHAT ARE THE SKILL SETS NEEDED AS A WATER PROFESSIONAL AND WHERE CAN I FIND THEM?
- SPILL REPORTING AND RESPONSE
- HOW TO DEAL WITH AC PIPE
- SETTING UP AN INTERNSHIP PROGRAM/SUCESSION PLANNING
- TESTING FOR AND USING ORP DATA
- BASIC ELECTRICAL FOR NON-ELECTRICANS
- HOW TO GET SCHOOLS INTERESTED IN CLEAN WATER EDUCATION

Friday September 19, 2014

- FLOW DATA ANALYSIS FOR PROPER SIZING OF PUMPS
- INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY: BACKING UP AND SECURING YOUR DATA
- REGIONAL BIOSOLIDS MANAGEMENT POLICIES AND ISSUES: HOW THEY COULD IMPACT MAINE BIOSOLIDS REUSE IN THE FUTURE
- CONWAY TO NORTH CONWAY: DESIGN CHALLENGES OF A LONG FORCE MAIN
- OVERLAP BETWEEN WASTEWATER AND STORMWATER OPERATIONS
- DEVELOPING & SUSTAINING A SUCESSFUL DRUG TAKEBACK PROGRAM
- ISSUES AND CONCERNS WHEN APPLYING VFD'S
- CLOUD-BASED SERVICES: USE YOUR DATA; DO INSPECTION AND WORK ORDERS FROM ANYWHERE
- FAST-PACED PROJECT LEADS TO SLOW-SPEED DEWATERING SOLUTION
- MAINE DEP UPDATE/GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS
- LUBRICATION MANAGEMENT
- RIGHT-SIZING CSO STORAGE: HOW GARDINER, ME SAVED OVER \$2 MILLION

This year's show promises to be unique with area students joining us Friday morning to watch the Mr. & Mrs. Fish show and then Friday afternoon sessions taking place atop the mountain at North Peak. For this, attendees will be transported up the mountain via Gondolas and able to enjoy lunch and sessions while taking in the breath taking views. There has been tremendous effort put forth to make this show exciting and beneficial to all so please consider attending. Registration forms have been mailed to facilities, but can also be downloaded at <WWW.MEWEA.ORG> . We look forward to seeing you all there!

Members on the Move cont'd

ers. As a result, budgets were slashed and Dan worked diligently to keep the system operating smoothly always facing ever increasing discharge limits to protect the Messalonskee Stream. Dan and his team worked hard to keep the old plant running but in 2009, the Town began the planning process to decommission the wastewater treatment plant and pump all of the wastewater from Oakland to the Waterville sewer system and ultimately undergo treatment at the Kennebec Sanitary Treatment District in Waterville. The new system went on line in 2012 and Dan has remained vigilant keeping the new system running smoothly and serving the residents of Oakland. Dan will always be remembered for lending a helping hand to those that knew him and his willing smile that greeted everyone that came to the plant. We wish him much success and happiness in his retirement and offer our sincere thanks for a job well done.

Steve Moore has served the Town of Farmington since 1973 and will retire later in 2014. Steve returned to Farmington after finishing the wastewater program and SMTC and served under Dan Chandler at the plant for many years. The two worked hard to get the new system up and running and keep the plant in compliance. In 1983, Dan retired and Steve became the superintendent. Steve often referred to himself as the chief cook and bottle washer in the department and has done every task imaginable. In 1992, when the plant underwent a major renovation to replace aging systems and to prepare for new stricter discharge limits Steve stepped back to the chief operator's position and David Keith assumed the Superintendents position. In 1995, Dave moved to another community and Steve was once again elevated to Superintendent. The upgrade was not without controversy and user fees soared causing Steve's and Dave's phone to ring. True to his nature, Steve responded to every question

and did his best to work through each issue. Steve's dedication to the plant, community and our chosen field has benefited many. Steve is currently working with the new superintendent, Steve Millett, to smooth the transition and pave the way for his retirement. We wish both well and hope that the Farmington facility continues to protect the water quality in the rich trout habitat of the Sandy River.

Retiring one week and going to back to work the next may not be for everybody, but that is what Frank Talbot did. Frank worked at the Bath wastewater treatment plant for 33 years and recently accepted a full time position in Richmond as the Utilities District Manager. Frank was Mr. Fix-it in Bath and devoted his career to keep all of the mechanical systems at the wastewater plant and out in the sewer system running smoothly. His "can do" attitude and willingness to share with others will serve him well in his new position. In Richmond, Frank will be responsible for both the water and wastewater systems that serve the community and his hands on experience will certainly come in handy in his new assignment. Congratulations Frank for a job well done in Bath and accepting your new position in Richmond.

Kyle McCormick retired from the South Berwick Sewer District after serving 36 years in his chosen field. Kyle has worked in many plants throughout his career and contributed greatly in each one: Berwick; Sanford; North Berwick and South Berwick. The North Berwick plant was recognized for O&M excellence while Kyle was chief operator. Kyle worked closely with the staff at the South Berwick plant and their combined knowledge allowed them to reduce energy costs by 40-percent over the past 10 years and still maintain excellent performance. Kyle's willingness to roll up his sleeves, tackle any assignment and communicate with his staff will be greatly missed. We wish Kyle well in

his retirement.

Mitchel Cole has retired as superintendent at the Norridgewock Sewer Department and will be replaced by Heinz Gossman. Mitch came to the field from Lincoln Pulp & Paper where he worked as an operator for many years in the wastewater plant. In 1993, Norridgewock put a new treatment plant on line and Mitch took a leap of faith and took over the new system. Mitch served the Town for the past 20 years and retired in 2013.

When does a job mean a career and so much more? Jeannette Murch of Fal-mouth will retire this year, turn in her keys and make that last ride down the plant road after 28 years. Like many of us, she started work cutting grass and learned the business from the ground up. Jeannette started her career with Dick Goodenow and the opportunity gave her a chance to change her life for herself and her children. She has done it all throughout her career: from lab work to answering late night alarms. Many of us have been there – it is part of the job and our careers, but Jeannette showed an unusual sense of dedication. We wish Jeannette well in her retirement. 🌐



This is your newsletter – if you have news you would like to pass along or an opinion to express that would be of interest to the membership of MWWCA we are always interested in receiving material and will make every effort to incorporate your submissions.

Update on Nitrogen and Phosphorus Sampling

By Brian Kavanah

Recently the Department sent a letter to all dischargers to fresh water (N=109) requesting assistance with ambient sampling of rivers and streams above outfalls. The sampling is focused on total phosphorus and total nitrogen. The purpose of the sampling is to obtain a good data set that can be used to determine the need for water quality based limits in discharge permits. Samples can be shipped and analyzed free of charge to the dischargers under a Department contract with Katahdin Analytical Services in Scarborough.

As of July 23, 48 facilities (44%) have contacted Katahdin to request sample bottles to participate in the sampling project. The Department greatly appreciates the efforts of the regulated community to gather this data. If you are not yet participating, we encourage you to join this effort. Katahdin will provide all sampling and shipping materials and analytical services, and the Department contract will cover these costs.

If you wish to participate, please contact Katahdin at 874-2400, and ask for Shelly or Jen regarding the DEP-Rivers and Streams project.

The sampling window runs until September 15. The target flows for sampling are flows below the daily median flow in your receiving water. While flows are currently high throughout much of the state we are hopeful that there will be adequate low flow periods by the end of the sampling time window. Please remember to ice samples adequately to ensure proper temperatures during shipping. Please see the Department's letter of July 1, 2014 for more details on sampling protocol.

Once again, thanks to all the facilities assisting with this project!

If you have any questions, please contact Brian Kavanah, Director of Division of Water Quality Management, at 287-7700. 

Your Executive Committee

By Mac Richardson

Some say it takes a village to raise a child, then again some say it takes a bunch of village idiots to run a wastewater treatment plant operator's association, in this case AKA a water environment association. Joking aside, the group pictured is a group of smart and hard working people that offer up a good bit of their time to make the Maine Water Environment Association what it is. We try to keep a little fun in the mix and this picture was taken during a break in a recent meeting held at the Augusta Sanitary District Treatment Facility. Do you know the people pictured? Do you know what they do?

Listed in no particular order are: Matt Timberlake, Scott Firmin, Aubrey Strause, Dan Welch, Mike Stein, Tom Connolly, Mary Waring, Alex Buechner, Al Jellison, Dave Anderson, Mac Richardson, June Mooney, Jeff McBurnie, Paula Drouin, Brian Kavanah,

and Travis Peaslee. Can you match the name to the face? Unable to make the photo op were Chuck Applebee, Andre' Brousseau, Matt Bodwell, Dan Bicknell, Steve Lane and Peter Goodwin. If any of these people are strangers to you, make a point to engage them at the fall conference, they are actually a pretty good bunch! 



The Maine Water Environment Association Executive Committee Takes a break at the Greater Augusta Utilities District Wastewater Treatment Facility.

MEWEA Operator Profile

By Matt Timberlake

If you flushed today thank an operator!

Operator: Alfred Richards
Town of Jay Sewer Department
Years with the Town of Jay: 38
Years at the Jay Sewer Department: 13
Maine Grade II WWTP operator

The Maine Water Environment Association (MEWEA) is an operator's association and today I got the chance to spend a few minutes with Alfred Richards who operates the small North Jay Sewage Treatment Plant. The Town of Jay has two separate sanitary sewer collection systems, one that discharges to the Town of Livermore Falls wastewater treatment plant and one that serves North Jay Village that discharges to the North Jay plant. As a small facility, and like many Maine operators, Alfred wears many hats and has many responsibilities that change from day to day.

This morning it is a little after 6:00am and I find Alfred wasting sludge which is a process of "replacing old bugs so new bugs can grow in the tank". "Bugs" are complex mixture of microorganisms that are at center of the treatment process and must be carefully looked after. Wasting at the North Jay plant often happens a few times a week. If the operators did not waste sludge when needed, the sludge could become black and septic as bugs die resulting in poor treatment and offensive odors at the plant. Wasting sludge isn't a pretty process as it involves keeping a submersible pump in the secondary clarifier and transferring the solids to a holding tank. When the holding tank is full it is transferred to a 8,000 gallon tanker owned by the Jay Sewer department. When 6,000 gallons of sludge are on board (due to road weight) it is hauled to the nearby Livermore Falls WWTP where it is run through their centrifuge for dewatering.

Among Alfred's many duties is lab

work done on a daily basis, a role he shares the role with Superintendent Mark Holt. Daily he performs a series of tests including pH and temperature as well as many weekly and monthly tests like DO, BOD, TSS and others. The lab tests document compliance and that the process is working properly. A few times a year samples sent to an outside lab to confirm results. Whole effluent toxicity tests are performed by putting baby trout in the effluent to make sure they can survive and thrive. As we walked out and looked at the small discharge pipe at the plant we actually were able to see small fish swimming around the plant outfall!

The North Jay WWTP is a small plant which averages only 35,000 gpd with a max flow of 60,000 gpd which is one of the reasons the plant only has two employees, Alfred and the Superintendent Mark Holt. This can be both a blessing and a curse; the plant's simple design does not have some of the complex machinery of larger plants. However, with only two employees and testing that must be performed seven days a week either Alfred or Mark must go to the plant every day – including weekends and holidays.

The collection systems in North Jay

Village as well as the Jay Village and Chisolm systems, are also the responsibility of the sewer department, including five pumping stations, gravity and force mains, and two flow meters and parshall flumes that measure the flow discharged to the Livermore Falls WWTP. Each week Alfred checks the flumes and flow measurement devices and changes the paper wheel that records the flows. Just last week one of the metering stations was hit by a car and the sewer department needed to check it and make sure nothing was damaged and results were still accurate. Each year the sewer department will take on construction projects by teaming with the town's public works department. Just recently they completed a full replacement project of over 1,000 lf of 8" gravity sewer line on Highland Avenue, which consisted of installing new 8" PVC pipe, manholes, and lateral connections back to property lines.

Alfred attends training to maintain his license and gets that training through a variety of outlets like MEWEA and JETCC.

So today if you live in the Town of Jay and you flushed, thank Alfred for his hard work. 🌊

UPCOMING 2014 EVENTS:

September 17 – MEWEA Golf Tournament
Sunday River

September 18-19– MEWEA Fall Convention
Sunday River

September 27 – October 1 – WEFTEC 2014
New Orleans, Louisiana

Maine is a Force at NEWEA Competition

By Alex Buechner

It is Wednesday morning. 7:02. I am finally sitting in the Adirondack chair that I have been eyeballing all week that perches overlooking the breakwater at the beautiful Samoset Resort in Rockport, Maine. The morning is hazy, much like my current vision. I can see the waves smashing against the breakwater, much in the way my head feels. Why do I find myself in this state in such a beautiful place so early in the morning, you ask? Well my inquisitive MeWEA friends, it is in celebration. Yesterday (June 2), the Maine Operations Challenge team took first place in every event but one at the New England Water Environment Association Spring Conference: a new best for the current team.

In case you have just recently escaped from a basement-hostage type situation and you are unaware of the Maine Operations Challenge team, this year the team consists of: Team Coach, Operations Challenge veteran and Chief Operator at the Biddeford Wastewater Treatment Facility, Dan Laflamme, Scot (glad you could make it) Lausier of the Portland Water District, Stacy Thompson from the Saco Water Resource Recovery Facility, and our newest member (and the FIRST second generation Operations Challenge participant in Ops Challenge history), Ian Carter from the Kennebunk Wastewater Treatment Plant. Oh yeah, I'm on the team too.

I can't thank these people enough for the commitment they have made and the effort they have put in that allows me to be sitting here right now, smashing head and all. I also would like to thank all the other teams, event coordinators, judges, people that were here to cheer us on, our employers who allow us the time off to come to these events, and the woman making my hotel bed and

leaving me that neat little mint every morning we have been here. Operations Challenge is such an amazing learning experience!

On that note, I want to talk about something that I heard discussed quite a bit the last few days. This year only 3 teams competed. I know, why would I bring that up? It kind of diminishes our 1st place victories, doesn't it? I bring it up because many of the discussions I heard this weekend regarded whether NEWEA should send all three teams to WEFTEC for the national competition, or drop the number of teams sent for the sake of increasing the competitive spirit. POOPOO I SAY! Send as many teams as you can!



2014 Force Maine Team and NEWEA President Brad Moore

No Operations Challenge participant came here this week with the intention of not putting in 100% effort to do the best that they could simply because they knew they would already be going to the nationals. More importantly, Ops Challenge isn't really about doing well at the competition. I mean, everyone wants to do well (and it did feel pretty great to do as well as we did this week) but Operations Challenge is about the learning experience gained by allowing wastewater operators that would otherwise not have the chance to come to a thing like this an excuse to get out of the plant and see just how much there is to this line of work.

I have been to countless wastewater

classes. Not one of them compares to the learning experience that comes from sitting around with the team and discussing whatever process control problems our facilities may have experienced. Or listening to someone talk about the intricacies of infrastructure funding over dinner. Monday night I found myself in deep discussion about the pros and cons of contract ops. How could you ever fabricate a better learning experience than that? So many of the people that have participated in Operations Challenge are the same people that go on to be chief operators, supervisors, MeWEA presidents and volunteers. I like to think that the former may somewhat inspire the latter.

My involvement with Ops challenge and MEWEA is what changed my outlook towards my job from feeling like it is just a job, to realizing that it is a specialized and essential career with endless opportunities to learn. Seeing the value of what you do and having the opportunity to grow and better yourself is what inspires passion. And in what occupation is passion about what you do more valuable than in environmental protection?

So in conclusion, municipal supervisors, district employers: GET YOUR OPERATORS INVOLVED!! Encourage your employees to volunteer for MEWEA, send people to conventions, or better yet, start your own Ops Challenge team. Whatever it takes. You never know who might need just a little nudge toward becoming the next generation of passionate professionals. Whew. Did I blabber on long enough for this? Am I making any sense whatsoever? Does anybody have an aspirin?

Also, Ms. Strause: You still owe me a beer. I'm going to hold you to that. Just not right now... 🍷

The York Sewer District (23 July 2014)

by Ron McAllister

Editor's note: Tim Haskell informed me that this article came about as a result of a tour of the treatment plant that was, in turn, the result of the York Board of Selectmen appointing a "York Village Study Committee" to look at improvements to York Village, one of which involved putting all utilities underground. This turned out to be a great opportunity for Tim and his staff to get the word out about the important work they do. Good work, Tim – we all should look for such opportunities!



The old proverb "Out of sight, out of mind" is often applied to people whom we inadvertently forget as time passes without seeing them. But it also applies to things we want to forget; things we dispose of without a moment's hesitation. This was brought to mind last week when I toured the York Sewer District (YSD) wastewater treatment facility on Bayhaven Road in York Beach. You can see pictures of the plant's operations on their website: http://www.yorksewerdistrict.org/plant_pics.asp. The York Sewer District also has a Facebook page containing links to interesting stories about environmental issues. Tim Haskell, Superintendent of the YSD, walked me through the plant as he and his colleagues introduced me to the infrastructure used to treat the wastewater (sewage) from York's residences and businesses.

The YSD has 4,600 customers, all located between Route 1 and the Town's two rivers. Approximately 75% of the influent comes through the Long Beach Pump Station. The rest comes from the Short Sands Pump Station (the brick "lighthouse" located in Ellis Park's parking lot) or from one of the other pumping stations in town. Unless you are on your own septic system, whatever you flush down the toilet flows to the treatment plant. Everything you discharge from your toilet, sink, tub, shower, washing machine or dishwasher goes to the wastewater plant for treatment before it flows into the sea via the plant's diffuser located 1,600 feet offshore. Maybe you never think about it, but you should.

The receiving point for all your wastewater is what's called the Headworks. This is the first in a five-step process for turning wastewater into clean water: screening, settling, aeration and sedimentation, filtration and disinfection. The Headworks is where all the grit and debris are screened out of the influent. Plastic materials people flush down the

toilet are removed here, bundled up and carted off to a landfill. A recent article in the *Lewiston Sun Journal* ("Science of the clog" June 20, 2014) reports on how big a problem products like pre-moistened wipes and tampons are for sewage treatment plants around the country. According to the article "There are a (ton) of products that are labeled 'flushable' but really they should not be."

People may think they are bypassing the landfill when they flush these objects down the toilet but they're all screened out and then sent to the landfill anyway. It would be better for everyone if such materials were not flushed in the first place. After screening, the wastewater flows to a series of aeration basins where bacteria break down the waste, converting it to CO₂, sludge and H₂O. In the words of Dustin Price, the plant foreman, "This is where the magic happens." I guess you have to be a wastewater guy to appreciate the magic but the science of it would impress anybody. The plant has a modern laboratory with equipment familiar to any bio-scientist. You might expect the place to smell but it really doesn't. There is some detectable hydrogen sulfide (H₂S) odor in the Headworks area but that's about it. Outside, there is no smell. "If the plant is working right," Mike Tibbetts, the YSD Director of Operations, said, "there should be no odor." The levels and types of bacteria in the system are carefully monitored every day. "I don't want bacteria going to the ocean," Dustin Price told me, "None." It's a careful balance between the amount of waste in the system and the volume of hungry bacteria that can digest it. The "clumped sludge", (or dewatered solids) which the plant produces is trucked away 3 or 4 times a week by a company which uses it to produce compost for farms and gardens. While the YSD works closely with the Town, it is not governed by the Town of York. Instead, an elected five-member Board of Trustees oversees its operations. The rates for sewage treatment are set by the Board and are based on the previous year's water usage. The YSD has no other way to know how much sewage is being discharged by each and every customer. The best ways to lower your bill is 1) to use less water and 2) to keep the cost of processing down by not putting anything down the toilet that has not passed through your body first. Keep it out of sight if you like, but not out of mind. 🌊

Ron McAllister is a sociologist and writer who lives in York.

How Do You Say Goodbye to a Friend and Colleague?.....

By Steve Broadbent and Leann Hansen

Well, it is not easy with Dick Darling and we have all lost a valuable resource in our chosen profession. I knew him when his hair was not quite as white, but he always had that name-plate mustache. Dick, a long-term Maine DEP employee and mentor to countless wastewater operators, retired earlier this year. We wish him and his family well as he eases into his next endeavor. He will certainly be missed.



Dick started with the DEP in 1992 as Assistant Engineer and finished his career as a Senior Environmental Engineer. Among other roles, Dick was the Maine DEP's primary wastewater technical assistance provider. He was "hands on" and worked hard to provide on-site technical assistance to any licensed discharger for any issue. It did not make a difference whether the plant was big or small; he was there to help. This was a job he did exceptionally well and his gentle smile and demeanor often worked magic in many of the systems he visited.

At the end of his career, Dick was the only technical provider left after inheriting the work from Ken Jones and Don Almay who beat him into retirement. With his computer expertise, he also worked extensively on electronic DMR and compliance database issues at DEP

Essentially everything that has to do with wastewater operator certification and the certification exam went through Dick and was coordinated with JETCC. He worked with all training providers to review and approve courses for continuing education. How many times did we call on him to question something on an exam? Quite a few of us, I would suspect. At a time when many state workers are criticized, Dick provides a fine example of

one who should be recognized for his dedication and commitment.

On Friday, September 20, 2013 Dick became the 24th recipient of the JETCC Founder's Award (the Lee Ager Award) during the Maine Waste Water Control Association's annual conference at Sugarloaf in Carabassett Valley. The Lee

Ager Award was established in 1990 in memory of Lee Agger, whose hard work in establishing JETCC was an inspiration to all who worked with her. Receipt of this award is intended to show appreciation to those who have shown a similar degree of dedication to JETCC, statewide environmental training and dedication to our environment. Along with providing technical assistance, Dick conducted many classroom training courses. Since 1997 Dick taught over 80 JETCC classes and at least that many more regionally through MWWCA and other training organizations. With the absence of college level wastewater training programs, Dick made sure an intensive Basic Wastewater Treatment course was offered in Maine at least once per year. He was also a leading force in

the creation of Maine's Management Candidate School.

I will end this story with a gentle tribute; a "Dickism." We all know that Dick was responsible for many humorous quotes during his many visits across our great State. Many of us will remember these little quotes and laugh at and think of him. One in particular, I was told about again last week concerned when he visited a plant that was going through a particularly bad period of filamentous bulking and poor effluent quality. Dick took a quick look at the mixed liquor under a microscope, examined the SVI trends and with his wry smile he said: "Well guys, when you have this many filaments and the SVI is above 300 it is time to update your resumes". Dick was quick to add that this could be corrected and he was there to work through the issues with the entire crew. Dick knew that the solution did not lie just in the hands of the superintendent and he went to great lengths to explain the problem to the entire staff and work out the details. His willing smile and gentle humor will be missed whether in a classroom, in a boat on a lagoon, or looking under a microscope. Sound familiar? We have all been there.

Be well my friend and stay in touch. ☺

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- Become a leader

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For more information visit www.jetcc.org or call JETCC 207/253-8020.

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