

Maine Water Environment NEWS

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President's Corner

By Michael Guethle, P.E.



Thanksgiving is just around the corner as I write this, and I'm still in shock about how quickly this year has flown by. A tradition we do at our Thanksgiving table is write something down that we are thankful for and share this with our family. This year, I am thankful for all of MEWEA's hard working members, and for the work that you do day-in and day-out to protect the waters of Maine! This community is the most humble and helpful I've ever been part of, and I'm so thankful that I was given the opportunity several years ago

to join it! I look forward to many more years ahead of me in this Association and community.

I was able to attend the virtual Fall Convention this past September. I thought the conference ended up fantastic, and appreciate all vendors that showcased their products, the Personnel Advancement and Convention committee for putting together a great show, and to all the presenters for donating their time. We are definitely still learning how to best transition our convention efforts into a COVID-safe environment, and we are always welcoming feedback and new ideas. I also want to thank those who were able to attend and sponsor the COVID-reduced golf outing in October (including those on my team who were able to keep our team score respectable and in the single-digits above par).

As I wind down my presidency, I want to encourage you all to become an active member of a MEWEA committee. Whether your interests are in awards, convention, this newsletter or government affairs...there is always an opportunity within the MEWEA association to be involved. Check out the MEWEA website at <https://www.mewea.org/> to find out more on the various committees we have within the Association. I want to wish Phil Tucker a wonderful presidency next year! I think the Association is in great hands, and I look forward to remaining an active member for many years. I hope you and your families all have a wonderful holiday season.

SAFETY RESOURCES FOR WATER ENVIRONMENT PROFESSIONALS

Coronavirus is not going away anytime soon, and we are continuing to receive best practices information from epidemiologists

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Jeff McBurnie
Casella Organics

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 MEWEA, we are always interested in receiving material and will make every effort to incorporate your submissions.

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President's Corner... (cont'd)

working specifically with the clean water community. As such, MeWEA finds it prudent to continue to provide the general guidance for specific safety protocols for clean water facilities and water professionals as recommended by the CDC, WEF, and NEWEA.

The Water Environment Federation (WEF) has released materials to inform and update water professionals about the Coronavirus (COVID-19). Whereas we are aware this information is continually developing, we find it prudent to provide a link to WEF information, which will be updated with the most recent information available to them, from the MeWEA Website, <https://www.mewea.org/>

Additional resources are available with CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>

And not the least, but finally, through NEWEA as well: <https://www.newea.org/covid-19-updates/>

As always – be in touch if you have further questions or thoughts on the Association's activities. 🌊

Michael Guethle, P.E.
2020 MeWEA President
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History and Beer

Leeann Hanson Program Manager
c/o Joint Environmental Training Coordinating Committee

There is some history in this picture taken at one of JETCC's last face to face classes on March 4, 2020!

All entered the industry before cell phones were the norm and definitely before virtual training. This picture was taken on March 4 at JETCC's class on "Brewery Pretreatment and Dealing with Brewery Waste" which was held at Allagash Brewing in Portland. I know for sure that these guys all entered the industry before there were any microbreweries in Maine. 🌊



Depicted are Howard Carter of Saco Water Resource Recovery Department, Patrick Cloutier of South Portland Water Resource Protection Department, and Michael Bolduc of Kennebunk Sewer District.



Operations Challenge

Alex Buechner, City of Biddeford

WEFTEC2020 Virtual Operations Challenge

I think we can all agree, 2020 has been a strange year. With businesses and schools being half open, sporting events canceled, vacation plans indefinitely postponed, limited access to friends and family and possibly worst of all, my favorite breakfast spot now only serving lunch, stating that our future feels uncertain is an understatement. But one thing that is not uncertain is the wastewater community's determination to push onward and continuing to make dirty water clean again, regardless of how rashy our faces get from constant mask wearing. This year's WEFTEC2020 Operations Challenge virtual event was a great example of the fortitude of our wastewater professionals. At first, it looked like the event was going to be canceled for this year. But thanks to the hard work from the volunteers that make up the event coordinators and judges, a virtual version of Ops Challenge was quickly put together. A few changes had to be made to accommodate this. Teams of four were reduced to teams of two. Five events were reduced to three events. And the whole thing had to be live streamed from multiple angles from 40 different team locations to judges that were also located in different places. Quite the task.

When I learned that all the New England teams had decided to sit this year out, I made an impulsive decision and signed up as a two-person team with about three weeks to prepare before the final event. I then promptly went on vacation for a week and a half. Luckily, past team member and Ops Challenge enthusiast, Scot Lausier from the Sanford Sewer District agreed to join up with me. We were able to get the supplies together and cram in about three practices before the day of the big event. We dusted off our hardhats, picked up our saws, and taped up our nips to step in for yet another exciting year of WEFTEC Ops Challenge (kind of).

Apparently, "we still got it" because even with limited preparation we still managed to pull off placing in all three events with a third overall placement (2nd in process control, 2nd in collections, and 3rd in laboratory). Am I telling you this because I'm bragging? Sure, maybe a little. But more importantly, to highlight the long-term benefits towards professional growth that come along with being involved in Ops Challenge. After 11 good years of being a part of Maine's OC team, Force Maine,



I have learned more, made closer friends, and provided more opportunities for myself than could ever have been done just by coming to work or attending classes and conferences. And I am certainly not alone in this. Some of the most knowledgeable and passionate wastewater professionals that I have had the pleasuring of getting to know have been involved with Operations Challenge in the past. And almost all of them are now in some kind of leadership role. This, and the fact that Scot and I were able to pull off placing in the national event, after years of not being on the team, and with almost no preparation is a testament to the long-term benefits of Ops Challenge. For me personally, there is no denying that I would not be where I am today if I had not been tricked by Travis Peaslee to show up to a practice to check things out 14 years ago, and then tricked again into joining the team, and then tricked a third time to being the team captain for the next ten years. Trickery aside, I have no regrets. And if it worked for me, it can work for you too.

If you or someone you know has any interest in learning more about Ops Challenge and how they can benefit from it while having a good time, contact me at alex.buechner@biddeford-maine.org. And if you know someone who would benefit but does NOT have interest, send them my way as well. I'll trick them into changing their minds.

Lastly, a big thank you to all the event coordinators, judges, competing teams, spectators, past and present teammates, travel companions and sponsors for all supporting this fantastic event. Let's hope that WEFTEC 2021 Operations Challenge can come back next year in full strength. ●

PFAS Update

Jeff McBurnie, Casella Organics

PFAS Regulation in Maine – A Status Report

July 1, 2020 marked the start of the current requirements for PFAS testing and management from the Maine DEP. In many ways similar to the requirements implemented in the Department's 'Land Application Moratorium' letter of March 22, 2019, holders of biosolids land application program approvals and composting and processing licenses are required to test their biosolids materials for PFOA, PFOS, and PFBS. The frequency of testing has been increased from annual to semi-annual for processors. If the concentrations of these 3 compounds are below the ME DEP Screening Levels (ME DEP Chapter 418, Appendix), there are no restrictions on the material's use. If any of the Screening Levels are exceeded, best management practices, usually the lowering of application rates, must be defined and implemented before the distribution and use of the biosolids can continue. For Class B land application programs, soil testing for the PFAS must be completed before spreading can start. If any field exceeds one or more of the Screening Levels, biosolids may no longer be applied there. One additional requirement is having sludge generators who supply sludge to processing facilities in Maine test their sludge annually for PFOA, PFOS, and PFBS. Current sampling

and analysis workplans (SAWPs) must be updated to show the additional sampling & testing requirements. If a SAWP was not updated and submitted to the Department in 2019, it is required before the resumption of distribution and use of biosolids and biosolids-based products. Revised SAWPs were due by March 13, 2020. One final requirement is that purchasers of compost and other biosolids-based products must sign an acknowledgement stating that they understand and will abide by the loading rates and usage instructions for the product(s) they are buying.

MEWEA continues to partner with NEBRA and other entities to support research that will hopefully lead to more appropriate PFAS screening levels being adopted for agronomic use of biosolids. Stone Environmental looked at PRZM as a scientifically more suitable alternative fate and transport model compared to the one currently used (SEVIEW) by the Maine CDC for risk assessment and screening level establishment. Their work showed that the screening levels should be several times higher yet will still be conservative and protective of human health and the environment. We are now working to fund additional work to further refine the modeling and do some model validation with data collected from biosolids utilization sites. ●

Clean Water Week Calendars

Alex Buechner, City of Biddeford

The Clean Water Week poster contest calendars are in and they look great! Looking for a way to track the passage of time for 2021? Need a way to avoid the guilt associated with forgetting your mother's birthday? Or if you are like me, perhaps you just want to have something pretty hanging in your butler's basement living quarters next to the wine cellar so that he stops giving you those resentful glances when he thinks you are not looking? We have just the thing for you! Send an email to alex.buechner@biddefordmaine.org with your address and the number of calendars you would like to receive. Supplies are limited and the new year is rapidly approaching, so act fast to get your copy.

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Next steps for JETCC MCS class that began in Fall 2019

Leeann Hanson Program Manager

c/o Joint Environmental Training Coordinating Committee

Upon cancelling all in-person training in March 2020, JETCC was challenged with completing the remaining classes for Wastewater Operator School (see article) and also with meeting the goals of 23 committed Management Candidate School (MCS) Students.

With 6 classroom sessions remaining one of the first challenges for the MCS curriculum was assessing presenter ability to engage in virtual training. Because the topics in this program are often interactive, hands-on and spontaneous, most presenters expressed reluctance and had little experience with virtual training.

Next was to meet with the students to establish their expectations and desires. Via a virtual meeting In June, JETCC's 23 MCS students met virtually and opted to "pause" through the summer hoping to resume in-person meetings and to review the situation in September. Much of the June discussion focused on how much of the MCS experience is contingent on building a community of peers who share common goals/aspirations. Historically, the face-to-face discussions and live interplay that occur in the monthly sessions foster the relationships that develop between the students and industry leaders.

On September 22 several JETCC Board members joined the MCS students and some of their supervisors in a virtual meeting led

by program coordinator Leeann Hanson. In its 11th year, MCS students who began the curriculum in November 2019, have had three classes and participated in the Maine Water Utility Association Trade show in February. All but one student met the June deadline for completing the "Management for Success" self-study course with California State University.

As of September, remaining activities for the MCS students include: 6 more classroom sessions, student classroom presentations, a day of job shadow activities for students to visit another's facility and participation in the MeWEA Fall Conference.

The September meeting was conducted as a round table discussion. To assess the possibility of completing the job shadow portion, supervisors and managers were asked to specify whether they were permitting personnel to travel for meetings and if they were allowing guests into their facilities. It was clear that equitable arrangements were impossible since the majority of MCS students work in more restrictive southern Maine communities with increased COVID outbreaks while those in Maine's more remote regions were more flexible.

Each student was then given an opportunity to weigh in on options to:

- Move forward with Virtual classes
- Hold monthly virtual 1 – 2 hour topic oriented MCS discussion groups
- Wait until we could all in person
- Create a hybrid where some students participate in-person while others participate virtually

Several opinions were voiced, until one student frankly stated this process was "a complete waste of time since it was clear in June that everyone preferred to meet in person." The comment actually seeded productive discussion on how this process was offering "a real-life management exercise" in decision making. On September 23 the JETCC Board of Directors met and following a student suggestion voted the MCS classes would reconvene in March 2021 exactly one year after the program was put on hold. Classes will likely take place virtually or through a combination of methods.

Over the years, JETCC's MCS has developed a consistent reputation from graduates who highlight the program benefit of shared experience and lasting relationships. Certainly the shared experience of the MCS class that began in 2019 will be unlike that of any class prior. 



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19 Maine Operators complete JETCC's 6-month Wastewater Operator School in just under 9 months

Leeann Hanson Program Manager
c/o Joint Environmental Training Coordinating Committee

Adaptation, resiliency and “trial-by-fire” is how students progressed through JETCC’s Wastewater Operator School (WOS) when in-person classes were sidelined in March due to COVID-19.

What began in January as a 6-month curriculum for new operators to meet in person every other week turned into a variety of assigned viewing projects, impromptu assignments and live virtual classes through Zoom, GoToMeeting, WebEX and GoToTraining.

None of these classes would be possible without hours of assistance from 20 plus volunteer presenters and tech helpers who committed their time to create and post the pre-recorded assignments and then participate in the LIVE virtual classes that followed. Most of our presenters were also new to creating virtual training, Internet presentations, making videos and recording a voice over PowerPoints. Nearly all of the WOS students had never participated in web-based training or a virtual meeting. **And they were all amazing!** Amazing not only in how they embraced the new technology but also in finding access to the needed computers, technology, cell programs, cameras etc. All were also very patient as subjects to my own learning curve as I learned on-the-job how to execute and facilitate training in this new venue. THANK YOU to all!

As an “old School” Training Coordinator still ducking technology at the end of March, I was pulled forward by the “let’s just do it” approach from LAWPCA staff and PE’s from Woodard & Curran. When faced with postponing their live presentation for the students on April 30, Erik Oborn, Tom Herer and Julianne Page offered to produce videos while Travis Peaslee and Mac Richardson did likewise, and Paula Drouin placed them on the LAWPCA website. The first LIVE virtual WOS took place on April 30. The topic was “Sludge Management.”

It took another month with many phone calls and virtual meet-



Back Row L to R: Everett Sanborn - Bar Harbor Sewer District; Ed Crockett - Boothbay Harbor; Isaiah Letourneau - York Sewer District; Dave Roberge – Kennebunkport WW Dept.; Todd Colby – Sanford Sewerage District; Evan Johnson – Portland Water District; Jeff Warden – Bethel WWTP; Brett Goodrich – Maine DEP; Tanner Demers – Biddeford Wastewater; Zoe LeBlanc – Maine DEP; Riley Mitchell – Boothbay Harbor Sewer District; Jonathan Rice – Maine DEP; Robert Drehobl – Stonewall Kitchen; Chris Simeoni - Kennebunkport WW Dept.; John Barry – Soil Preparation, Inc.

Kneeling L to R: Pat Kidder - Bar Harbor Sewer District; Terry Tucker – Sanford Sewerage District; Hardy Cummings – Greater Augusta Utility District; Crystal Cooper – Portland Water District; Ron Kelton – City of Portland Water Resources; Robert Merrill – ND Paper. Two of the original students did not complete the class.

ings to complete the second Virtual class and set a fairly regular schedule. I must commend Rob Pontau of Brunswick Sewer District who assembled and created links to the additional presenter material.

The 2020 WOS program concluded with the 8th live virtual class on August 27. To complete the program WOS students participated in a variety of assigned viewing projects, impromptu assignments and Live VIRTUAL classes carried out through ZOOM, GoToMeeting, GoToTraining and WebEx. By the final virtual class two WOS students were able to boast that they had also passed Maine’s wastewater exam. 🌊

GET CONNECTED! MEWEA now has a Facebook-based online discussion forum open to all water professionals. It is a great place to discuss water related topics, ask water treatment related questions and connect with other water professionals. To access the forum from you Facebook account, search for Maine Water Professionals Discussion Forum.” Any questions can be directed to Paula Drouin (pdrouin@lawpca.org).

Virtual Fall Convention Recap

Oh fall conference A click, a colorful mask Whilst watching the zoom

COVID prevented MEWEA from hosting its annual fall convention in person this year. MEWEA instead held a virtual convention to offer the valuable training (with no masks required) from the comfort of your home or office. Your MEWEA Personnel Advancement and Convention Committees members worked extremely hard to create our first ever virtual conference. Kudos to all involved for a job well done!

Networking with peers, visiting vendor booths, and the epic corn-hole tournament were all sorely missed. Here's hoping the 2021 fall convention will be a little less virtual!

If you are interested in watching any of the sessions, they are available here: <https://www.mewea.org/video/fall-convention-2020.html>



2020 AWARDS were presented to the following wastewater professionals during the conference. For more information about each award and photos of each recipient, please visit <https://www.mewea.org/recognition-program/>

- Outstanding Service Award: **Jeff McBurnie**, Casella Organics
- Richard B. Goodenow Award: **Lewiston-Auburn Water Pollution Control Authority**
- Roger Gagne Award & Maine DEP Certificate of Achievement: **Mark Holt**, Town of Jay Wastewater Treatment Facility
- Alfred Jellison Lifetime Achievement Award: **Mac Richardson**, LAWPCA
- Communications Award: **Bryanna Denis**, Wright-Pierce
- Operator Award: **Scot Lausier**, Sanford Sewerage District
- Pretreatment Excellence Award: **Pineland Farms**, New Gloucester
- Stormwater Award: **Kristie Rabasca**, Integrated Environmental
- Young Professional Higher Education Award: **Anthony Pinnette**, University of Maine, Wright-Pierce
- Young Professional Award: **Brody Campbell**, Wright-Pierce
- David Anderson Award for Laboratory Excellence: **Thomas Farley**, Southwest Harbor Water and Sewer District
- Charles Perry Collection System Award: **Paul Pomerleau**, Ted Berry Company
- President's Service Award: **Paula Drouin**, LAWPCA
- Past President Award: **Stacy Thompson**, City of Saco WRRF
- JETCC Lee Agger Award: **York Sewer District**
- JETCC Founders Award: **Matthew Ondra**, Rockland Pollution Control Facility
- NEWEA Quarter Century Operators' Club: **Joseph Madigan**, Orono ME & **Jennifer Nicholson**, Brunswick ME
- WEF Life Membership: **Frank Underwood**, Berwick ME
- NEWEA Operator Award: **Alex Buechner**, Biddeford ME
- NEWEA Alfred E. Peloquin Award: **Aubrey Strause**, Portland ME

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