

## TOM GROVES

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## April 2009 e-News

### NOWRA e-News - April 2009

*Thank you to all who contributed stories and ideas. This member communication belongs to each of us, so keep the news and ideas coming.*

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### NOWRA Conference was Very Educational

NOWRA held its 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Technical Education Conference & Expo in Milwaukee, WI from April 6-9, 2009.

While attendance numbers reflected the struggles felt across the country at other meetings, it did not affect the number of Papers presented or educational sessions to attend. The information that came from the Educational Sessions was rich in panel discussions and provided industry professionals with excellent learning opportunities. Both budding and seasoned attendees experienced a wave of information and new trends in the decentralized wastewater industry to weather this economic storm. They heard new perspectives, learned new skills, and met new people, all with the tools they needed to return to work with a vision for onsite sustainability.

Among the events hosted at the Conference was a roundtable of how states can work together to make their regulations more closely based on science. A Press Release was sent out

### Septic Locator

NOWRA's Septic Locator will connect you with a wastewater professional in your area and our membership list.

[Begin Here!](#)

regarding the roundtable and can be viewed on the NOWRA website at [http://www.nowra.org/news\\_releases.html](http://www.nowra.org/news_releases.html).

A symposium on **Pharmaceuticals and Personal Care Products in Wastewater, Surface Water, and Groundwater** was a pre-conference workshop favorite that presented the latest research on how best to address the issue of emerging contaminants impacting the environment and advancing our understanding of the contaminants in onsite wastewater treatment systems.

If all that wasn't enough, a full day tour highlighting four onsite wastewater treatment sites was conducted for a capacity crowd. Guest speakers and guides for the day included Jerry Tyler, UW Emeritus Professor of Soil Science, and Jim Converse, UW Emeritus Professor, Biological Systems Engineering. Among the topics addressed was the history of the "Wisconsin Mound".

Sites visited included a 1,000-student high school and Cabela's retail store and deli. The tour continued to a 100 home subdivision with septic tanks and pump chambers at each home feeding to ATU units followed by 6 mounds and finally a Business Center with a number of different businesses including restaurants.

***Special thanks go out to our local host, the Wisconsin Onsite Water Recycling Association (WOWRA). Their support was greatly appreciated.***

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## Message from Tom Groves - NOWRA President

As each of us returns to work after NOWRA's 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Technical Conference & Expo, I want to take a moment to express my sincere thanks to each of you who attended.

We live in trying times, and it is often easier to say 'no' to spending money than it is to say 'yes'.

With economic times as they are, attendance was not at the level any of us would like. We knew that going in though, based on other meetings we have attended, but you do not need a crowd for a meeting to be a success.

Each time I attend a NOWRA event, I am reminded of the amount of progress that is occurring all over in industry, academia and every discipline that makes the onsite industry a success.

By attending the annual conference, it is easy to pick up information that helps make you stronger professionally, not to mention reacquainting yourself with friends and colleagues you have not seen for a year, learning about new research or a new product, or discovering a new way of thinking about something that changes you for the better. In that sense, I believe we each left Milwaukee a better person and a stronger contributor to our industry.

I speak for the Board of Directors and each of the other members who worked so hard to put this meeting on when I say that we truly appreciate your support of NOWRA in these tough times. While there are emerging signs that the worst of the recession may be behind us, the days ahead will require hard work and diligence to make our individual and collective futures what we want them to be.

It is an honor to serve you, and with the sense of support I came away with, I recommit myself and the board to make you proud of NOWRA and the larger industry that we support.

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## NOWRA to Host Installer Academy at the 2010 Pumper Show

Discussions between NOWRA and Cole Publishing have led to the exciting announcement that the 2010 Installer Academy will be held in conjunction with the Pumper show in Louisville.

The Pumper Show is always among the top-rated "must-attend" shows in the industry and we are excited to be able to deliver important training in concert with the show.

Details are being worked on now and we will report in *e-News* as plans firm up.

For now, mark your calendars for the week of February 22, 2010.

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## A Quick Look at the Economy

*e-News* begins a new feature this month - *A Quick Look at the Economy*. It will not be presented in a biased manner, but rather as a review of some key information from the past month.

As we launch this month's update, it is good to note that there are some indications that the U.S. economy may be sprouting "green shoots" this spring. That is, telltale signs that better times may be on the horizon. Here is a review of some economic indicators:

### **Trending to the Positive:**

**Stock Prices** - Major indexes have risen for five straight weeks, a rally unmatched since prices hit an all-time high in the Fall of 2007. While volatility has eased, there is still concern in sectors such as banking and the auto industry.

**Consumer Confidence** - A poll conducted recently by the Ipsos-McClatchy Newspapers found that 52% of Americans think the economy has stabilized. This is up from 35% in early March. Beyond the impressive jump is the underlying reality that it has been a decrease in discretionary spending that has helped cause the troubles we are in.

**Credit** - Money is flowing more freely in the form of business loans and mortgage financing, thanks to Federal Reserve efforts to keep interest rates low and the money supply abundant. Many believe that the jury is still out on when basic stability will return to the sector though.

**Business Sales vs. Inventories** - Wholesale inventories fell in February by the most since at least 1992. As inventories become leaner, orders and production will increase, but that will only occur when demand picks up, a crucial part of the equation. It is still too soon to say when that will happen.

**Retail Sales** - They are still declining nationally, but March sales were better than expected. Gallup pollsters say their consumer mood index is the most positive it has been since February 2008.

**Real Estate** - Sales and prices appear to have stabilized nationally. Homebuilder confidence numbers are at historically low levels, but February contracts to buy existing homes rose 2.1%. Since contract signings usually lead to transactions, it suggests that home sales nationally will increase by about 2% later this spring.

**Manufacturing** - The manufacturing index rose for the 3<sup>rd</sup> straight month signaling a slowdown in the rate of contraction.

**Jobs** - Planned layoffs fell 23% in February from January and fell again by 19% in March. It is still a negative but it hints that cuts may not be as bad as predicted.

**Exports** - They rose in February for the first time in seven months, but only from a two-year low. Demand overseas for U.S. products is not expected to strengthen soon.

### **Still Negative:**

**Jobs** - An 'acceptable' level for first-time claims for unemployment benefits is below 400,000 a

week. Last week it was 654,000. Job growth coming out of a recession is the last area to improve, but it is one of the most important.

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## WEF® Distance Learning Webcast Series Announces May Webcast

The Water Environment Federation (WEF - one of NOWRA's EPA MOU partner organizations) announced a webcast will be held Wednesday, May 20<sup>th</sup>, from 1pm to 2:30pm EDT. WEF is getting the word out about the value of small systems to WEF members including engineers and water professionals associated with wastewater utilities. This webcast focuses on the economic and practical benefits of decentralized wastewater systems. A proposal for a follow-on webcast(s) on the economic and societal benefits is also being discussed.

If you are interested in attending the webcast, please visit

<http://www.wef.org/ConferencesTraining/Webcasts/DistributedWastewaterSystems/>.

WEF is extending the member rate to MOU Partners and their members **for \$155**.

(Nonmembers are \$195). There is no limit to the number of people that can participate via a single registration and WEF currently averages approximately 9 participants per site, which equates to \$17 per person.

**To get the member discount rate you must register by fax (703-684-2471) and write "PARTNER" across the top of the registration form.** Please contact WEF if you have any questions. Registration closes May 13<sup>th</sup>. Because the WEF online system cannot accommodate this discount exception, **you must register by FAX.**

**Thanks to NOWRA's MOU partner status, NOWRA members are entitled to the WEF member rate of \$155.00.**

Members can also fax the form to Bonnie Bailey's attention at WEF at 703-684-2413. She will hand carry it to registration and send you an email confirming that they have it and understand that you get the member rate.

If you wish to pay by check, you can fax the form and WEF will send you an invoice.

Forms must be received by the registration deadline of May 13<sup>th</sup>. If you have any questions regarding registration, please call WEF registration at 703-684-2441.

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## Septic Locator Article to Appear in NESC's Magazine

With a circulation of 46,000, NESC's **SF-Small Flows Magazine** will feature an article on NOWRA's [Septic Locator Tool](#) in an upcoming issue. This article will provide an excellent opportunity to give each Septic Locator listed company increased exposure. If you have not done so, please update or add your listing!

The NESC (National Environmental Services Center) exists to assist small and rural communities with their drinking water, wastewater, environmental training, solid waste, infrastructure security, and utility management needs and to help them find solutions to problems they face. Their staff of environmental specialists, engineers, certified operators, technical writers, editors, and trainers understand the latest technologies, regulations, and industry developments.

Watch your mail for the upcoming issue from NESC!

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## Time to Update Your Septic Locator Listing

With the article about Septic Locator appearing in NESC's **SF-Small Flows Magazine**, it is time to update your profile.

To take advantage of the new tools, you will need your user name (membership number) and password to log in.

User name: tomshyan

Password: 1918

#### To update your profile:

- Log in Click here [NOWRA log in](#)
- Next to "Welcome Thomas Groves!" Click on [Edit My Profile](#)
- Edit any of the information under Main, Address, Phone, and Custom categories.  
Note: If you are a member of more than one state affiliate group, please update each of your profiles.

If you have any questions, NOWRA staff would be happy to help you. Call 1-800-966-2942 or email [info@nowra.org](mailto:info@nowra.org).

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## Craig Jowett Joins NOWRA Board of Directors

NOWRA president Tom Groves reported at the Annual Conference in Milwaukee that board member Ellen Vause has tendered her resignation. Tom accepted her resignation with regret and expressed his thanks to her for her energy and enthusiasm.

In Ellen's place, Tom announced that Craig Jowett will take Ellen's seat on the board.

Craig is President and Owner of Waterloo Biofilter Systems, a manufacturer of wastewater treatment systems.

He is a charter member of NOWRA and the Consortium of Institutes for Decentralized Wastewater Treatment, and organized the University of Waterloo Septic Conferences through the 1990's. He holds more than 20 patents in the area of sewage treatment, and has authored many papers in the geology and sewage fields.

To learn more about Craig's background, visit <http://www.nowra.org/board.html>

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## Update to AzOWRA's Northern Arizona Demonstration Site Article

From 1999 to 2001, Northern Arizona University (NAU) applied grant funding from the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) to the design and construction of an Onsite Wastewater Demonstration Project on the campus of the university. The goal of the facility was to demonstrate technologies available for use in Arizona. (To learn more, read the full article about this on page 10 of the Fall 2008 OSJ.)

<http://www.nowra.org/documents/OSJ%20Summer%2008%20Final.pdf>

Richard Sinclair, Past President of AzOWRA, provided e-News with the following update:

*"The Arizona Water Institute, through the efforts of AzOWRA, has provided a \$15,000 grant to NAU for the purpose of writing a business plan for their On-Site Park. The funds will be sufficient to do a preliminary influent characterization. Minor modifications*

*of the panel that controls the discharge pumps will provide an accurate measurement of the quantity of water available.*

*NAU obtains its influent directly from a married student-housing complex. All couples residing in these units must have at least one child. We feel that this isolated influent source is a major plus in realistic testing.*

*The NAU complex was originally built to be a purely educational complex. When the Arizona Rules did not embrace the anticipated requirements for training and certification, the cash flow to maintain the facility vanished.*

*The new program will be a combination of independent third-party testing (think a western Barnstable) and educational complex (think URI).*

*Several state associations have indicated interest and possible financial support of the NAU program, but all have qualified their potential support with one question, "Where is your business plan?"*

*As you may readily understand, the development of the business is plan is an essential step."*

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## News From the Finance Front

The finance committee met in Milwaukee during the Annual Conference & Expo. Recommendations from the meeting include:

- Brian McQuestion and Glenn Zimmerman will be working with the Milwaukee Hilton as final Conference bills are presented.
- Work with Cole Publishing as we work with them on the 2010 NOWRA Installer Academy at the Pumper Show.
- Craig Gilbertson is pursuing a "Super Conference" with NEHA and SORA in 2011. This action, along with some other inquiries for groups to partner with NOWRA, satisfies a request brought by affiliates and manufacturers alike.
- Jerry Stonebridge will work with Dick Otis and Tony Smithson to complete the soil piece of the Model Code by September 2009. The Finance Committee views this item as a potential revenue stream.
- Try to collaborate with an interested state affiliate group to hold an Installer Academy in the fall of 2009. Possibilities mentioned were the southeast (Florida, Georgia, Alabama) and Missouri.
- Examine the current membership dues and Business Benefit Program (BBP) structure.

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## Brian Scheffee as Interim Affiliate Leaders Chair

Brian Scheffee has stepped in to assume the role of Chair of the Affiliate Group as Hilary Moore steps aside.

Hilary showed an energy and dedication that was infectious and appreciated as she worked to provide a critical link between the state affiliates and the national organization. Brian is already off to a running start and all of us at NOWRA thank him for assuming this vitally important post.

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**About NOWRA**

The National Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association (NOWRA) is the largest organization within the U.S. dedicated solely to educating and representing members within the onsite and decentralized industry. NOWRA headquarters are located in Santa Cruz, California, with constituent local groups throughout the U.S. and Canada.

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