

## **NOWRA 2022 – 2025 Board Elections Candidate Profile**

### **Candidate: Gary Hawkins (GA)**

#### **Category: Academic**

#### **Candidate Statement/Bio:**

I am interested in being considered for a position of the NOWRA Board of Directors as an Academic Representative in that I feel educating people of all ages is important to protect both human health and the environment. Educating kids, college age students, adults, and professionals is important to protecting septic systems and the environment. This can be done in many different ways and as a Board member and in my professional career, I will do my best to provide education to all of the groups listed here. I also understand the commitment required if elected to being a member of the NOWRA Board.

I am an Associate Professor and Water Resource Management Specialist at the University of Georgia in the Crop and Soil Science Department. I am an Agricultural Engineer and graduated from Clemson University, Auburn University and the University of Tennessee. My current extension and research programs are related to water resource issues in the areas of soil and water conservation, stormwater, septic systems, well water protection, nutrient movement, water quality, water quantity and small-scale irrigation. I have been at the University of Georgia as an Extension Specialist involved in water and soil conservation for 21 years and working directly in the on-site waste management education area for 6 years. As an Agricultural Engineer and Extension specialist focus on water resource management, I feel I am qualified to fill the position as the Academic Representative on the NOWRA Board.

#### **What specific area of interest do you desire to work with the NOWRA Board on industry issues and how you will make a contribution?**

If elected to the NOWRA Board, I am interested in continuing to learn more about the industry so that I can provide better education to people of all ages both in and outside the on-site wastewater management industry. I am willing to serve on the NOWRA Board to better understand the industry and learn from industry leaders. Being a member of the NOWRA Board will allow me to grow both personally and professionally so that I can pass the information along to others through my education programing.

#### **What is your perspective(s) on the directions that NOWRA as an organization should consider in order to increase its leadership role in the industry?**

My perspective on the direction of NOWRA is that we need to provide or offer more education on how on-site wastewater management is important to treating wastewater in areas where centralized wastewater treatment is not available. Also, how we as individuals can protect on-site wastewater systems by knowing and understanding why there should only be certain things flushed down the drain and the effects on an on-site wastewater treatment system if too many of the things that should not be flushed can negatively affect the system as a whole.

#### **What are the critical issues that NOWRA's Board should be addressing on behalf of its members?**

I see some of the critical issues the NOWRA Board should be addressing again is how to better educate the public on how to better manage their on-site wastewater management systems. But also, how do we educate the professionals in the industry to better understand the on-site industry from the installation to the pumping and all aspects in between. As the industry continues to grow and change, learning about the new products being produced will help members better understand how the industry is helping protect the environment and how they can better educate their clients.

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Overall, as a Water Resource Management Specialist my position allows me to work with industry and the public on issues such as on-site wastewater management. Being a member of the NOWRA Board will provide me with the opportunity to work with the on-site industry leaders to better provide education to the groups I provide water resource education.

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**Candidate: Jerry Stonebridge (WA)**  
**Category: Service Provider**

### **Candidate Statement/Bio**

I work as a Designer, Installer, Pumper and O&M Professional and have done so for 50 years. I have also been President of WOSSA & NOWRA and am currently on the WOSSA Board.

The Service Provider category (Operation & Maintenance ((O&M)) Professionals) is a very important component in the continuum of Onsite Professionals. They need to know all aspects of the intent of the design, how it was installed to the specifications of the design, and how is it being used.

I believe that I can bring forth the knowledge and experience needed for representation of this sector on the NOWRA Board.

### **Why you are willing to serve on NOWRA's Board as a leader in the onsite industry?**

I have served on the Board before and understand the commitment.

### **What is your perspective(s) on the directions that NOWRA as an organization should consider in order to increase its leadership role in the industry, and what are the critical issues that NOWRA's Board should be addressing on behalf of its members?**

I have always been a proponent for the Decentralized Industry and our Professionals. NOWRA needs to reach out to all organizations that are participating in the water sector.

### **What are the critical issues that NOWRA's Board should be addressing on behalf of its members?**

NOWRA needs to be proactive in the push for re-use and the green movement. Water, or lack of it, will be the new world driver. Education and Training are also a high priority.

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### **Candidate: Kwame Agyare (CA)**

#### **Category: Designer/Engineer**

#### **Candidate Statement/Bio**

I wish to serve on the Board of Directors of the National Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association (NOWRA) in order to utilize my extensive education and knowledge from previous work in the field of onsites permitting and installation, to help advance the field in education, regulatory improvements, and the practice of installing onsite systems, to continue to protect public health and safety, and the environment.

I currently work as a system designer, branch manager, and head of engineering for Acuantia, Inc. in Fairfield California, a septic services company that provides one stop shop septic services for homeowners and developers through California and the nation. Prior to this, and between 2005 and 2010, I served as the section manager for environmental design review and permitting for septic and alternative wastewater systems for the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality, in Phoenix, Arizona. In that capacity, I represented the State for several years on SORA, and was engaged in rulemaking and several public meetings and hearings to educate and advance the practice throughout the entire state. I also oversaw the new product approval process for onsite wastewater systems during that period.

#### **What specific area of interest do you desire to work with the NOWRA Board on industry issues and how you will make a contribution?**

I would like to be involved at the board level to help ensure that there is adequate training, guidance materials, and education sessions, for all the parties involved in the decentralized wastewater arena, including the homeowner, developers, permitting officials, and septic services contractors, to be able to ensure that the permitting process for the installation of onsite systems can be as smooth as possible.

#### **Why you are willing to serve on NOWRA's Board as a leader in the onsite industry?**

I have had much prior experience serving on boards' including most recently from 2017-2020 serving as a director on the national board of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), and I believe that this prior experience coupled with my knowledge of onsites would make me an excellent candidate for this position.

#### **What is your perspective(s) on the directions that NOWRA as an organization should consider in order to increase its leadership role in the industry?**

NOWRA should definitely consider increasing programs and outreach to encourage and engage emerging young professionals into the field, since there is intense competition from other fields and professions for young professionals. Visible efforts such as inviting a younger member to sit on the board of direction, or special events for young professional at all NOWRA conferences, would go a long way to encourage these emerging professionals to seek a career in the onsite wastewater field.

#### **What are the critical issues that NOWRA's Board should be addressing on behalf of its members?**

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NOWRA must continue to provide current knowledge and information on best practices in the industry to its members through printed newsletters and email blasts. NOWRA must survey its members on a regular basis and provide information on projects other NOWRA members and working on to highlight and promote the profession. NOWRA must also initiate an awards recognition program to award and encourage members in the field, and to build commitment from its members. I have implemented many awards programs in the past, and this would be a very effective tool of encouragement and to build commitment to the NOWRA organization.

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### **Candidate: Robert Sweeney (OR)**

#### **Category: Designer/Engineer**

#### **Candidate Statement/Bio**

I would like to be considered for a role to serve on the NOWRA Board in the Designer / Engineer category. I have reviewed NOWRA's published policies and website and would like to serve in that capacity for the described term from 1 Dec 22 to 30 Nov 25.

My experience as a Registered Sanitarian & Environmental Health Specialist - has spanned a career of 45 years, including: 20 years as a regulator and 25 years as a consultant, designer, maintenance provider and trainer. My formal education includes a wide variety of Public Health and Environmental Protection roles. During that period, I served in both regulatory committees and as a board member in onsite wastewater Treatment Associations: including serving as the President of the Washington Onsite Sewage Association (WOSSA) and Board Member of the Oregon Onsite Wastewater Association (O2WA). I have also been involved with the Water Reuse Association, Environmental Health Association and other such groups.

#### **What specific area of interest do you desire to work with the NOWRA Board on industry issues and how you will make a contribution?**

Acceptance of Performance Based Treatment & Re-Cycling Systems.

During my career, I have seen Septic Systems evolve from Disposal-oriented Cess-Pools and Dry-Wells to Modern Treatment Systems incorporating Textile Filters, Computer Panels, Telemetry, Membrane BioReactors, Nano-Technology and more. Yet, we still suffer from the stigma left from bygone times in which sewage was discharged in holes to the groundwater or allowed to run into surface waters. Even though we can treat and re-use resources onsite to any degree that is needed, most people still think that public sewers are magically better.

From the simple appropriate technology to the most elegant rocket-science, this field is already full of innovation, but hampered by the stigma of old disposal oriented systems and bureaucratic inertia.

By our very name, NOWRA focuses on what has recently become popular: Wastewater Reuse. We are and have been for decades the vanguard of all the newcomers to public health: recycling, re-use and a myriad of beneficial uses. This is nothing new to us – our professionals and the technology we incorporate into all of our projects is just getting better and more robust all the time. We need to help our members and community showcase our abilities.

#### **Why you are willing to serve on NOWRA's Board as a leader in the onsite industry?**

I have been involved with many organizations. This one continues to evolve and I would like to help that process to continue. I understand that this is voluntary and involves some travel and effort at my own expense.

#### **What is your perspective(s) on the directions that NOWRA as an organization should consider in order to increase its leadership role in the industry?**

NOWRA's Direction is great – It can and must continue to evolve.

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Training. Introductory Training Modules are a great start in upping our game. Lets' build on that. Additional courses should be developed to continue that training beyond the beginning levels. NOWRA should assist our professional members to chart their educational journey. Classes and presentations by members should be incorporated into individual profiles demonstrating that our learning is not merely a certificate for sitting through the same classes at another similar annual training conference.

Model Codes. Prescriptive Codes are helpful for the simple systems but can hinder progress by limiting techniques and devices to what is on the list. Performance Codes and Examples should be shared that demonstrate how to deal with the challenging sites and how to get those permits approved.

Performance Based Design and Permitting. Many states don't have professional designers or tiered levels of practitioners. We can help with that.

### **What are the critical issues that NOWRA's Board should be addressing on behalf of its members?**

Stigma. We need to show that we know how to safely and cost-effectively treat wastewater and residuals onsite.

Resources. Fighting for innovation is just so difficult and involves excessive sampling and economically crushing lab work that many clients won't take the risk of delaying progress for a better, but greatly unappreciated result.

Innovation Support. Prescriptive Rules have their place, but also present the biggest barriers to public acceptance of modern technology. There is a "that isn't on our list and so can't be done here" mentality that needs to be breached to enable and encourage innovation.

Holistic Approach to Environmental Protection, including: Wastewater, Sewage, Stormwater, Erosion Control, Wetlands, Irrigation, Beneficial Re-Use and the cost-effectiveness of onsite systems. We need to bridge the gap between siloes of separate regulatory pockets. Local control with a one-stop permitting process would help.

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### **Candidate: David Price (TX)**

#### **Category: Installer**

#### **Candidate Statement/Bio**

I wish to become a member of the NOWRA Board, as I think it is critically important the wastewater recycling be put on the forefront of the permitting process in all States. Critical water shortages are being exacerbated by climate change, and more recycling needs to be done. This will take public education, education of regulating and permitting authorities, and the public.

The wide use of commercial wastewater needs to be similarly addressed by the States. Inadequate/misunderstood standards are leading to many systems being approved with incorrect designs, or designs done by licensees that do not possess the actual license required (the State of Texas recently issued a letter to local permitting authorities in this regard, wherein these same authorities were not requiring designs by a PE – even though such requirements are in the statutes).

The wide use of OSSFs needs to address the phosphorous levels that such systems are generating, as well as excess nitrogen limits. Depending on geographic location, phosphorous levels are causing nuisance algae blooms in adjacent creeks/streams/rivers/lakes. This needs to be addressed from a regulatory standpoint on the local/state/national level.

I am a Registered Professional Engineer in the State of Texas and have actively been involved with the Texas Onsite Wastewater Association (TOWA), a licensed installer in the State of Texas, a maintenance provider, owner of my own business for 31 years, and have been involved in the OSSF industry since 1989.

#### **What specific area of interest do you desire to work with the NOWRA Board on industry issues and how you will make a contribution?**

NOWRA, as a national voice/resource, has the ability to positively impact the industry, Public Safety and Welfare for the benefit of everyone. As more decentralized systems are used, due to a variety of factors, proper rules for protecting the environment with the proper use of engineering principals in the design of the systems, proper installations, and proper maintenance/reporting, should continue to be paramount in NOWRA's mission.

#### **Why you are willing to serve on NOWRA's Board as a leader in the onsite industry?**

Having "seen it from all sides" (engineer, land developer, designer, installer, State OSSF Board Member, Conference Speaker, Technical Committee Chair, and regulatory consultant), I think my experience and knowledge would be beneficial to NOWRA.

#### **What is your perspective(s) on the directions that NOWRA as an organization should consider in order to increase its leadership role in the industry?**

In order for NOWRA to increase its leadership role in the industry, is multi-faceted. On the individual State level, a relationship should be developed/strengthened with each State organization. Continuation of the online training programs should be strengthened. Issues with individual State programs should be identified, then

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addressed (establishing severity of issues, and a timeline/method to address issues, as well as emphasize strengths).

### **What are the critical issues that NOWRA’s Board should be addressing on behalf of its members?**

Critical issues are education, training, and regulations. Education to member organizations should continue, and be strengthened, to ensure properly functioning systems are being designed, installed, maintained, and correct long-term testing is done. Additionally, addressing system inadequacies need to be addressed. With all of the above, it is also to work with manufacturers on constructability of needed systems. Work with NSF standards also needs to continue, to address current and future needs.