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PUBLISHED FOR THE NATIONAL ONSITE WASTEWATER RECYCLING ASSOCIATION



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A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Nearly 20 years ago when I attended my first NOWRA conference I never thought I would have the honor of being the president of this organization. Getting involved with NOWRA was the best thing I did professionally for continued education and networking. Being the first women to hold this position is an honor I do not take lightly and I will continue to support this industry in any way I can. I encourage you to get involved either with your local organization or directly with NOWRA as we have many active committees and task forces in need of member involvement. You too will be rewarded with the camaraderie and professional connections that you will make.

As we move into 2021, we can all hope for change from 2020. If 2020 made us realize anything, it was how connected our world has become and how easily that can change with an international pandemic. The good news for NOWRA is that our online training platform was well developed to help those in need of virtual education through our core classes and our 2020 Mega-Conference with nearly 600 people in attendance. With this success NOWRA has some lofty goals for the next several years:

•Transition to our new executive director Tom Groves – with Tom's history with NOWRA and years of expertise in the industry, NOWRA will be well positioned to continue to expand our impact in the decentralized industry. Read more about Tom on page 18.

• Pass federal legislation with benefit to our industry and continue to work with EPA, USDA and federal agencies to develop policies and initiate actions which support the decentralized wastewater community – this is also a long-term project, but things are looking hopeful.

• Continue to develop NOWRA's new website (www. nowra.org) – after our launch in 2021 the marketing committee will continue to enhance the website.

• Deliver a profitable "hybrid" conference in 2021 with most of the participation faceto-face but with a virtual option for those with travel limitations in partnership with the Texas Onsite Wastewater Association (TOWA).

• Continue to advance NOWRA's Online Learning



Sara Heger, President

offerings focusing on the development of designer training as well as offering select presentations from the successful 2020 Mega-Conference for those who could not attend.

• Complete Research Needs Scanning Project (see page 14) Continue to build a reserve account to prepare for times when resources may be limited, or new initiatives that require additional resources.

• Develop a 501(c)3 organization so NOWRA can pursue grant and foundation funding – this will not happen overnight, but this ability will be critical for NOWRA's future growth.

On behalf of NOWRA and it's Board of Directors, I would like to thank Eric Casey for his 10 plus years of service to NOWRA. He opened many doors for us and laid the groundwork for a great future for NOWRA. He will be missed.

ONLINE LEARNING AT NOWRA.ORG

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Check out NOWRA's Online Learning for a full listing of state and nationally approved courses on treatment, installation, design, soils, troubleshooting, etc. at **https://www.nowra.org/training/**

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STATE AFFILIATE NEWS

ALABAMA ONSITE WASTEWATER Association (Aowa)

AOWA has relocated their Annual Trade Show event to an outdoor venue due to ongoing concerns. Typically held in March, the 2021 AOWA Annual Meeting and Trade Show has been rescheduled to April 15-16, 2021. The show will now take place outdoors at the AOWA President's farm near Phenix City, AL. Utilizing large tents for education sessions, this year's Trade Show will feature outdoor exhibits, equipment displays, excavator rodeo, and actual field demonstrations. It is AOWA's goal to provide attendees with a valuable educational experience, while maintaining their safety as the top priority. For more information, call the AOWA office at (334) 396-3434 or visit our website at aowainfo.org.

COLORADO PROFESSIONALS IN ONSITE WASTEWATER (CPOW)

With the completion of the update to their strategic plan in 2019, CPOW identified offering online trainings as a priority. The COVID-19 epidemic caused CPOW to magnify their efforts. Almost a year, and nine online webinar style courses later, with close to 300 participants, CPOW has received favorable responses. CPOW still plans to offer in-person trainings in the future, they will also continue to expand their online course catalogue; CPOW is developing blended online courses with associated field components as well as partnering with NOWRA to host CPOW courses on the NOWRA online education platform.

TENNESSEE ONSITE WASTEWATER Association (Towa)

TOWA has postponed our annual Conference from January to August 23-25 at Montgomery Bell State Park, Burns, Tennessee to improve the chances of an in-person event. Save the date! Check the website for registration starting in May of this year. Training credit offered for engineers and operators. Vendor space available. Late August at a lake in Tennessee sounds really good right now, doesn't it! We'll work with you for training credit from your own state.

TEXAS ONSITE WASTEWATER Association (txowa)

TOWA continues efforts to improve Texas onsite regulations through meetings and discussions with our members and TCEQ staff regarding rules revisions. We recently completed a lengthy review of our state's onsite wastewater rules which resulted in 32 individual petitions. These efforts serve to better protect public health and the environment by creating more consistency with industry terminology and standards. We take great pride and appreciate the opportunity to participate in the development of our State's rules to better facilitate public health and sanitation through properly installed and operated onsite sewage treatment and disposal methods.

Many of you may already know, but for those of you who don't it is with a heavy heart we pay our final respects to long time industry leader, board member and past president of TOWA, friend and colleague Ron Suchecki. Fellow onsite professionals from all over the country will expand on how much Ron touched our lives and the lives of so many others. In Texas it's like the stars in the sky, Ron touched so many lives you can't count them all. We love you and will always remember your joyful energy Ron.

WISCONSIN ONSITE WATER RECYCLING Association (Wowra)

WOWRA held a successful conference – virtually – in mid-January. We also held a four-session POWTS Evaluator program in January and will host, in March, a five-session POWTS Basic/Intermediate training program for those looking to become licensed or brush up on their code, design, and installation skills.

On the advocacy front, we are working on legislation to enhance Wisconsin's POWTS rehabilitation fund – eliminating a sunset, increasing the number of eligible systems, and raising the income limits to qualify. We are also working to speed up the plan review process, asking the state to fund two new plan reviewers for our POWTS program.

YANKEE ONSITE WASTEWATER Association

(YOWA - NEW ENGLAND STATES)

The Education Committee of YOWA is busy serving its New England membership. YOWA is working to offer regularly scheduled online training sessions which qualify for continuing education credits in several member states. The first offering is tentatively titled "Septic Inspection" and is being produced by Bob Silva of Septic Preservation Services with the support of the Massachusetts Alternative Septic System Test Center (MASSTC). YOWA is also committed to offering an in-person training in the fall of 2021 and is hopeful conditions will allow for this to happen.

NOWRA conducts bimonthly calls with our state affiliate organizations. For more on NOWRA's affiliate state organizations, visit our web site at: www.nowra.org/. about/state-organizations/

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by Tracy Hammond, Polsinelli

After an incredibly contentious election, President Biden is set to lead one of the most dramatic shifts in executive branch policy and tone in memory. The President will not only focus on rolling back policies put in place under his predecessor, but he is also looking to enshrine initiatives focused on battling climate change and greening the nation's infrastructure. He has also stated that environmental justice will be a theme throughout his administration. From revising a 1994 executive order on environmental justice to creating an Environmental and Climate Justice Division at the Justice Department to enforcing environmental rules and supporting climate litigation against polluters, the new administration will combat generational environmental inequity. Biden has also said he will target 40% of clean energy investments to disadvantaged communities while his White House will publish a report in its first 100 days on strategies and technology to improve air and water quality.

The President selected Michael Regan, the North Carolina Environment Regulator, to lead the Environmental Protection Agency, and asked former Iowa Governor Tom Vilsack to reprise his role as Secretary of the Department of Agriculture. Biden has also brought in several seasoned water policy specialists to assist these leaders as executive branch agencies shift their focus. One former Obama-era EPA official expected to be highly influential in water policy is Ken Kopocis. He led the agency's water office and helped write the 2015 WOTUS, or Waters

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

of the U.S., rule revisions, as well as regulations for wastewater from coalfired power plants.

Other former Obama officials on the EPA team likely to influence water policy include Luseni Pieh and Cynthia Giles. Pieh was a deputy EPA chief of staff from 2015 to 2017, advised then-Administrator Gina McCarthy, and worked on the Flint water crisis, pesticide exposure, polychlorinated biphenyls and the agency's enforcement of the Civil Rights Act. Giles led the agency's enforcement office under President Obama and worked on some of the biggest environmental enforcement cases in history and is expected to play a critical role in prioritizing policy goals for Biden.

Turning to Congress, Democrats retained control of the House, but their majority has narrowed with Republicans unexpectedly gaining seats. Among the Democrats defeated were several elected in the 2018 "Blue Wave" that swept the party into the House majority, as well as some more senior members like Agriculture Committee Chairman Collin Peterson, who has represented his Minnesota district since 1991.

The country had to wait until January 5th to see which party would control the U.S. Senate. In a surprise, Democrats won both previously-Republican seats to create a 50-50 split in the upper chamber with Vice President Harris providing them with the slimmest of majorities with her ability to cast tie-breaking votes. In addition to Georgia, Democratic challengers successfully unseated GOP incumbents in Arizona and Colorado while a Democratic incumbent lost a seat in Alabama.

With the Democratic takeover,

the Senate Environment & Public Works (EPW) Committee, which has jurisdiction over the EPA, will be led by Tom Carper of Delaware. Due to Republican caucus rules, the panel will see a change to its top Republican. Sen. John Barrasso (R-WY) exchanged his leadership of the EPW committee for Energy and Natural Resources (ENR). This allowed onsite systems ally Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV) to become the panel's Ranking Republican.

Congressional Onsite Wastewater Recycling Caucus Co-Chair Sam Graves (R-MO) will continue to serve as the ranking Republican on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, while Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-OR) will return to chair the important panel.

Both President Biden and Congressional Democrats want to pass a massive infrastructure package that will likely include substantial water development programs. While some Republicans do recognize the need to improve and expand the nation's infrastructure, there are vast differences on what policies to prioritize and how to pay for any new projects. Both sides are in discussions, but negotiations could drag on until any final compromise is reached. In the meantime, NOWRA will continue to advocate to secure a more equitable balance of federal resources for those that rely on onsite systems around the country.

Tracy Hammond is a Senior Policy Advisor with Polsinelli's Public Policy Group in the firm's Washington Office. He advises clients on federal legislation and regulation in the areas of infrastructure, water and environmental policy and serves as one of NOWRA's lobbyists in Washington, DC.

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CORPORATE MEMBERS

NOWRA's Board of Directors thanks its Corporate Members for their support of NOWRA's activities:

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FENNER NATURE CENTER WASTEWATER TREATMENT AND RE-USE PROJECT

by Larry D. Stephens, PE

The word RECYCLING is in the NOWRA name and that of many state affiliate associations across the nation. However, it is not often that members of organizations like the Michigan **Onsite Wastewater Recycling** Association have a chance to put the term into practice. Then in 2019 along came the Fenner Nature Center, a local environmental contact and education center in Lansing, MI, with a plan to upgrade their aging facilities with the addition of a new nature pavilion.

The existing building was served with an old septic system, and the Nature Conservancy that manages the programming at Fenner planned to build a new onsite system even though public sewer was available in the street a few hundred yards away. Stephens Consulting Services, PC was retained to design the new onsite treatment system for the new building. Over the course of several meetings with the Nature Conservancy that manages the Nature Center, the city, the contractor, and the architect, the idea of creating a permanent and functional point-of-use wastewater treatment and reuse demonstration and training tool emerged. The suggestion quickly gained surprising support and any perceived barriers seemed to fall away one by one. The project actually gained wider and wider support from all involved as meetings were held and the plans took shape.

The motivation for creating such a facility at Fenner comes from its visibility. In recent years Fenner has attracted an estimated 12,000 local school students a year for short educational programs and day camps, and thousands of other visitors to special events; as well as daily visitors for a total of an estimated 60,000 visitors a year. Use of the Fenner facilities has grown rapidly after the management of the center was turned over to the Fenner Nature Conservancy a few years ago. The Executive Director at Fenner is a former teacher with a shared vision for this potential teaching opportunity. In addition, the site is only about 1.5 miles west of the campus of Michigan State University making it easily accessible to MSU Students and faculty, it is

actually owned by the City of Lansing, and just a short distance from the State Capitol and state offices.

WHY POINT-OF-USE TREATMENT?

The average person in the U.S. spends probably 2/3 of their lifetime working and going to school; activities that typically take up about one-third of their day. Many after-hours are also spent at shopping malls, retail establishments, restaurants, entertainment and sports venues, etc. All of these facilities are served by public restrooms for our use. Estimates are the average person uses 50 – 60 GPD of water a day for all domestic purposes. With a little math, one can easily estimate that a few billions of gallons of water are used in the U.S every day in these public restrooms.

In our urban sectors of the U.S. the common practice now is to treat all of our water to potable water standards to provide every residential, commercial, industrial, and institutional facility with potable water for all purposes, including flushing our wastes. We know from past



personal experience that ~ 80% of the water used in public restrooms is used for flushing purposes. If we capture and treat public restroom wastewater at or near the point of use, that water could be re-used for flushing toilets and urinals. And for those facilities served by public water and sewer system, consider the potential savings in infrastructure and energy costs to treat and deliver, and then pipe away and treat again billions of gallons of water every day. In public restrooms water can be used 5 times after delivery and before exiting the site through a public sewer or an onsite system.

For those facilities in rural settings served by onsite systems, the amount of treated wastewater water to be dispersed into the soil is significantly less. So, the soil component to handle the excess water can be significantly smaller by as much as 80%.

THE FENNER SYSTEM

Manufacturers today have developed almost an endless list of treatment technologies that can be used to highly treat wastewater. The treated effluent from many of these is clear and odorless, resembling potable water. Of course, the designer has the option and responsibility to assemble the components in such a manner so that the end product meets the performance criteria for the end use. And any system utilizing this quality of treatment and re-use must be managed and maintained throughout its lifespan by professionals that know what they are doing. With these concerns in mind, a



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Site layout of Fenner Wastewater Treatment System

purposeful choice was made at the Fenner Nature Center to use components in the system that are used every day throughout Michigan to treat onsite wastewater.

At the Fenner NC we chose to treat and use the entire waste stream. Most wastewater re-use systems that have been used elsewhere start with waste stream separation, separating the greywater from the blackwater. The blackwater is then treated and dispersed via normal onsite treatment means, while the greywater is treated and recycled. A barrier to source separation in a public restroom setting is that the greywater alone is not enough to supply flushing needs. Experience has shown that 20%, or less, of the wastewater in these settings comes from greywater. On the other hand, if one captures and treats the entire wastewater stream, $\pm 80\%$ of the treated water will be reused for flushing, leaving $\pm 20\%$ excess.

TREATMENT COMPONENTS

Figure 1 is a diagram of the components used in the treatment system at Fenner. The design flow for the system was chosen as 1,000 GPD, based upon the peak use during two festivals held every spring and fall. At times of peak flow, it is expected that 800 GPD will be re-used, and only 200 GPD will be wasted to a small drainbed.

All blackwater is first treated in a standard 1,500 gal. septic tank. The septic tank effluent is then treated with a recirculating packed-bed filter followed by intermittent sand filtration, and disinfection by UV and chlorine. Treated water is then held in a 1,000 gal. storage tank for use on-demand in the completely separate building plumbing system to flush the toilets and urinals in the building. All lavatories, drinking fountains, custodian and other sinks are fed with potable public water.



Some of the many volunteers that worked so hard to make the Fenner Nature Center Re-Use project successful. Liz Roxberry, Executive Director of the Fenner Nature Conservancy, is in the front and center of the group. The treatment system was constructed using common tanks, pumps, controls and treatment products used in our onsite industry here in Michigan. To keep the cost of the system down for the non-profit Nature Conservancy, products and services were generously donated by Milan Supply, Valley Farms Supply, Orenco Systems, Infiltrator, Roth Industries, Eljen Corporation, Salcor, Norweco, SCS Systems, Stephens Consulting Services, Pitylak Services, and Family Grade & Gravel. In addition, the Michigan Onsite Wastewater Recycling Assn. donated almost \$8,500 for out-of-pocket expenses not covered by other donations.

SYSTEM CONSTRUCTION WAS A TRAINING EVENT

As a further effort to gain the most from this opportunity, MOWRA seized the chance to make the construction of these facilities a training event. In the late fall of 2019 about 30 MOWRA members and friends came together to install this system for Fenner. Materials were delivered in advance, and volunteers accomplished about 90% of the installation in 2 days with the help of two local contractors that donated labor and equipment to handle the excavating. As pictured on page 12, many of the volunteers were manufacturer's representatives and distributors of donated components. Many commented on how much they learned from this hands-on construction experience. Some returned to the site to complete the project by December 1, 2019.

FIRST SHOW AND TELL EVENT

At our last Michigan Onsite Wastewater Treatment Conference held nearby in East Lansing in January 2020, we had the opportunity to take two groups of conference attendees on a short 10-minute bus ride over to Fenner to show them the facilities in person. We are excited about the idea of using these facilities as a tool to effectively and widely demonstrate how point-of-use treatment and re-use of the reclaimed water can be used to save significant amounts of water, energy and infrastructure in the future.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Larry Stephens, P.E. is the owner of the design engineering company Stephens Consulting Services, PC in Haslett, MI. Larry is active and has held leadership positions in both the Michigan Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association and NOWRA.



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NOW-R² A RESEARCH NEEDS SCANNING PROJECT

Sara F. Heger, Ph.D., University of Minnesota and Bryan W. Brooks, Ph.D., Baylor University

Horizon scanning exercises are often employed to identify contemporary and emerging challenges to an organization or field of study. These horizon scanning efforts often employ a key questions approach, where scientific, engineering and management questions of relevance to an area are solicited broadly, then focused by experts during synthesis workshops. Important and timely needs can then be prioritized by workshop attendees, representing the broader practice and scientific and engineering communities.

Thus, in addition to identifying critical areas of need, outcomes of horizon scanning activities can inherently support strategic longrange planning of organizations while aligning such efforts with a framework of consensus priorities of importance to disciplines and communities of practice.

Though onsite wastewater recycling represents a critical program for environmental public health and water resource management in the United States, a national scale attempt to identify key research needs across research and practice sectors for this growing area of importance has yet not occurred. In 2021, we are launching NOW-R2 (Needs for Onsite Wastewater Recycling Research), an unprecedented effort aimed at identifying priority research questions for onsite wastewater treatment and resource recovery. A steering committee has been formed with balanced representation from NOWRA, CDC, and The Water Research Foundation. Three phases of activities are planned.

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SPRING - SUMMER 2021

A web-based survey will be performed in which priority technical and environmental management research questions will be requested.

PHASE II SUMMER - FALL 2021

Submitted questions will be reviewed by the project team to remove duplicate questions and questions outside the scope of the exercise. A final list of questions will then be taken forward for discussion at a horizon-scanning workshop in October 2021. Workshop attendees will include participants from government, business, academia and nongovernmental organizations with diverse practice and scientific and engineering expertise, and regional experience in the United States. A one-day workshop will be held involving approximately 30 experts at the 2021 NOWRA Mega-Conference in San Marcos, Texas. These submitted questions will be refined and discussed to develop a Top 20 priority list of technical and environmental management research questions.

PHASE III WINTER 2022

In the final phase, a web-based prioritization activity will be performed to rank the Top 20 research questions. This exercise will be aimed to again solicit input from NOWRA members and related organizations. The results will then be disseminated at the 2022 NOWRA Mega-Conference and through a major international peer-reviewed journal. An effort of this magnitude will result in a wide range of benefits to the onsite wastewater recycling practice and profession that spans across the levels of government, business, academia and beyond by reaching leaders and decision makers within non-governmental organizations, private industry, and other sectors. National level decision makers and NOWRA leaders will be provided with essential data for shaping programs and activities to address identified research needs. Furthermore, it presents a novel opportunity to establish a strategic research roadmap for the onsite community through a transparent and inclusive process.

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For more information on this research project, please contact NOWRA at info@nowra.org.



REMEMBERING RON SUCHECKI

by Sara F. Heger, Ph.D

On February 8, 2021 we lost a remarkable member of the NOWRA community to COVID-19. Ron Suchecki was one of the most passionate people in our field – he deeply cared about bringing credibility to our industry through advocacy, education, standards, and support. Ron was known to always have a smile on his face and work hard to solve any problem in front of him even though he was often over-committed. He was full of energy, somehow making time for his work, family, friends, faith, and anyone who needed a helping hand.

For 20 years, Ron Suchecki was active with NOWRA, serving on the Board from 2004 to 2010 as well as several committees. If only one thing was said about Ron's time on the board, it would be that he got things done. He was full of ideas and always made time to bring those ideas to life. He was actively involved with developing the model code and pulled one of his famous all-nighters to get NOWRA's website designed and updated. While serving on the board, he found



his love for conference planning. He put this to good use in Texas, coordinating the Texas Onsite Wastewater Association (TOWA) annual conference for many years, typically attracting an annual attendance of 1,000 participants and vendors. Ron's involvement on the TOWA board was almost continuous with his service beginning in 1997, serving a term as president and conference chair for 2021. He enjoyed bringing industry experts, great communicators, and innovative science to the annual conference through his connections in the industry.

Ron had a deep interest in science and a mind that never stopped inventing. He worked with the Baylor University Wastewater Research Program from 1992 as a student, researcher and as a client, gaining both a BA and MS in Environmental Science. For over 25 years he worked hard to grow the residential and commercial solutions of Hoot Systems, which manufactures advanced aerobic wastewater treatment systems. Ron has seven US patents to his credit in bioremediation and onsite wastewater treatment. Three of these patents created systems for removing nitrogen from water; who knows how many more he was working on in his head!

Ron played a strong role in standards development through NSF. He was the current Chairman of the NSF Industry Forum and a Joint Committee Member since 2013. He served on and chaired numerous committees and task groups and was a member of the task force that developed the NSF/ANSI Standard 245 to test and evaluate the performance of individual onsite nitrogen reduction treatment systems.

Ron also had a passion for people, with many friends throughout our industry and across the US. While traveling for work he often scheduled dinners and sporting events to assure everyone was having a good time, while maintaining lifelong friendships. He was genuine in his concern and had a great sense of humor. Ron was deeply passionate about his family and faith. His wife Melinda and their four children, Jacob and Caleb (19), Sage (17), and Samuel (4) were the light of his life.

Ron truly made a difference in this industry and his legacy will inspire others to do the same. He will be deeply missed by his friends, colleagues, and family. The flame of his passion has not been extinguished. For those who were lucky to know him, his torch has been passed on to us all to continue his good work in wastewater treatment, while never forgetting to nurture the people and relationships in our lives.

DONATIONS

A fund has been set up to help cover Ron's medical expenses, as well as provide support for Ron's family. Donations can be sent to the bank or made online via GoFundMe.

Bank: Benjamin Lacy, FBO Suchecki Family Benefit Account, P.O. Box 2303, Waco, TX 76703. GoFundMe: https://gofund.me/efd5fe62



NOWRA NAMES TOM GROVES EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

NOWRA President Sara Heger announced that Tom Groves became executive director January 25, 2021. He succeeds Eric Casey, who retired at the end of December 2020.

Heger said Tom brings the perfect blend of experience: association management, regulatory affairs, wastewater management, training, knowledge of affiliates, and more.

Since 2000, Tom Groves has served as the wastewater division director for the New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission, overseeing the commission's work related to onsite/ decentralized wastewater and more. He has a long history of leadership and engagement in New England partner organizations. He was a founding member of the Yankee Onsite Wastewater Association and has been involved in its leadership ever since. Largely because of Tom's influence, YOWA became one of the first affiliates to actively advocate the use of NOWRA's online learning platform for continuing education in the industry. Online education is now a major source of revenue for YOWA.

More broadly, he has held positions with national wastewater-related organizations. In fact, Tom served on the board of directors of NOWRA as president at a critical point in the association's history. He served on the search committee that hired Eric in 2010. He served an additional term on the national NOWRA board from 2017-2020. Tom was also the 2017 recipient of the Dick Otis Award, which annually recognizes an individual who has made outstanding contributions to NOWRA and the industry.

A long-time wastewater industry professional, Tom resides in West-ford, Mass.

Heger said Eric joined NOWRA in June 2010. He has directed the association to a new level of accomplishments on behalf of the members and the industry. NOWRA wishes Eric all the best in his retirement and thanks him for his service.



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