**President’s Message**

It’s an honor to address you as your new president as we look forward to the coming year. I would like to begin by thanking and commending David Miller of Manchester Water Works for his dedicated service to our association as president during the past year. He is a devoted volunteer and a leader in our industry, particularly with his and Manchester’s contributions to the Partnership for Safe Water. Thank you to both Dave and his wife Carol for your friendship and support over the years.

Each president of this organization that has preceded me has set goals and initiatives which have helped make great contributions to our organization. At the 2018 Planning Session, we looked forward to the Year 2023 and developed NEWWA’s next 5-year long-range strategic plan with specific goals for the organization. The two major initiatives for this plan are Knowledge Creation & Exchange and Membership Engagement & Development, which align with AWWA’s strategic plan. Better use and incorporation of technology in all aspects of what we do at NEWWA was a common theme at the 2018 Planning Session. Technology can and should play a major role in our operation, outreach efforts, education, volunteerism, networking, and other major functions. Using the long-range plan, I developed my presidential goals for the upcoming year and beyond and they are detailed below.

**Work with NEWWA staff, committees, and volunteers to produce at least three YouTube outreach videos.**

We recently held a Council Meeting including committee leaders, the board, staff, and volunteers at Jack’s Abby in Framingham, MA. During part of the afternoon we split up into small groups and discussed ideas for producing short outreach and teaching videos. Some of the many great ideas included a career in water, emergency response on a water main break, and PFAS. The idea of producing workwaters videos and providing links to videos has been a common thread over several planning sessions and it is important that we provide this resource to our membership.

We challenge you to produce a short video! I would also like to recognize and thank the Membership Committee and Sponsor Services for funding the Council Meeting at the Abby and helping to make our volunteer efforts more fun!

**Enable better electronic committee communication to promote greater volunteer involvement.**

Several of our committees do a great job at communicating electronically, particularly the Program, Young Professionals, Membership, and University Outreach Committees. Another consistent theme in several of our past Planning Sessions is that we need to do a better job communicating our committee activities all across committees and councils as well as communicating to our membership and potential members.

This will help make it easier for more of our members to become better engaged. We are working on getting committee annual reports on NEWWA’s website as a first step. 2019 annual reports have been added to the website for the Youth Education, Young Professionals, Membership, and Filtration Committees. Check them out and see what these committees are all about! These reports include committees’ activities over the past year and also a committee roster. In the future, electronic communication can be expanded by including committee calendars, action items, and meeting minutes. This will also assist with better collaboration between committees.

**Continue to provide education and training and collaborate with state associations throughout New England.**

Both Dave Miller and Chris Hodgson have made collaboration with state associations a priority and I plan to follow in their footsteps. Kirsten King and I will be attending board meetings over the next year for all of the state associations throughout New England. It is important that we continue to maintain support of New England state associations.

**Enable better inclusion.**

I recently attended a CEO conference in New York City. It was my first opportunity to attend such a conference, and it was very exhilarating, but also a little overwhelming not knowing many people. This was a great opportunity for me, but it also reminded me of how some of our newer or potential members may feel when they attend one of their first NEWWA meetings; overwhelmed, maybe? My challenge to all of you over the next year at every NEWWA meeting or function is to find someone you don’t know, spend some time talking with them, and introduce them to someone. The annual Spring Conference at the DCU Center in Worcester will be a great place to practice our “Inclusion Challenge.”

The conference will be held April 1 and 2, 2020. Hope to see you there!

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**Ryan Memorial Dedication**

In October 2019 NEWWA dedicated a memorial at its headquarters to former Executive Director Steve Ryan, who passed on October 10, 2018, from cancer. Board and committee members, staff, and Steve’s family were all on hand for the ceremony, which revealed a new garden space, granite marker, and two Adirondack chairs for those visiting the site to enjoy. This memorial is an extension of NEWWA’s naturescape garden located to the side of its facility, all are welcome.

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**Two NEWWA Members Honored by MWWA**

At the Massachusetts Water Works Association’s Annual Meeting & Awards Banquet in November 2019, NEWWA members Chris Hodgson (top photo), accepted the William H. McGinnis Member of the Year Award from then MWWA President Amy Rusinski and Andy Reid (bottom center) accepted the NEWWA Water Works State Leadership Award for Massachusetts from NEWWA President Barbara Cook. Congrats to both for these outstanding accomplishments!
One often overlooked but essential step for successfully handing any crisis, including a cyber attack, is fully implementing the final phase of the crisis management process: the recovery stage. Previous “PR Perspectives” columns have detailed specific phases of this process: prevention, preparation, crisis management and communication planning, testing, training, response, and resolution. But containing or resolving a crisis doesn’t mean that the job is done.

In fact, many crisis management experts contend that how an organization handles the aftermath of a crisis (the recovery phase) can be just as important as how it handles the crisis itself. Two critical results, among several others, can emerge from the recovery phase.

First, an organization can formulate a real-time diagnosis of the now-settled crisis. What an organization concludes—the successes, shortcomings, and failures—from the outcome of this crisis can be analyzed, then additions and adjustments can be made to an organization’s future crisis management and communication plans.

As a result, an organization is in a far stronger and better-prepared position to respond to and resolve future crises. The reputation, good name, and public trust of an organization—three of its most valuable assets—take a hit during any crisis.

The degree of severity varies; but for many organizations, the damage can be catastrophic. Overcoming such severe damage is often protracted and arduous. Perhaps Warren Buffett, chief executive officer of Berkshire Hathaway, put it best: “It takes 20 years to build a reputation and 5 minutes to ruin it (as the results of a crisis).”

During the recovery phase, organizations can develop and implement strategies to neutralize negative fallout, rebuild trust and confidence among key stakeholders and restore—or even enhance—its reputation and image.

Supported by a comprehensive communication recovery plan, an organization can more effectively accomplish these goals, starting in the recovery phase.

Conducting a Post-Crisis Assessment

In the aftermath of a crisis, when calmer conditions and clearer minds prevail, an organization should take an immediate, comprehensive look at its existing crisis and clearer minds prevail, an organization should take an immediate, comprehensive look at its existing crisis. This strategy boosts an organization’s credibility, trust, and public confidence so, when a crisis does occur and the situation is just occurred. Avoid finger-pointing, scapegoating, or the blame game during the post-crisis assessment process. Such actions can lower employee morale and create internal friction at a time when employee unity and loyalty are critical as an organization recovers from a crisis.

Concentrate on formulating and implementing constructive changes as a team.

Rebuilding Reputation and Trust

Rebuilding an organization’s reputation and trust among employees, key stakeholders, the news media, and the public actually begins before a crisis occurs.

An organization can create a “reservoir of goodwill” from which it can draw when a crisis does occur. This process requires a sustained strategy rooted in proactive and two-way communication.

This process boosts an organization’s credibility, trust, and public confidence so, when a crisis occurs and relationships with various stakeholders become strained and tense, an organization can draw on this reservoir of goodwill.

As a result, research has continually shown that these stakeholders are more likely to give an organization a fair hearing and believe its voice throughout a crisis. In the end, the organization weathers and recovers from the crisis more quickly and more favorably.

The next “PR Perspectives” columns will focus on specific communication strategies to rebuild reputation and trust during the recovery phase.

Member Spotlight: Robert Williamson, PE

Rob Williamson is a senior project manager at Wright-Pierce, Inc. Rob earned his bachelor’s degree in civil engineering from the University of Massachusetts Amherst in 1988. Rob joined NEWWA in 2004 and has been an active member of the Program Committee for 12 years. As part of the committee, he serves as a coordinator and moderator for technical sessions at NEWWA’s Annual and Spring Conferences as well as the January Joint Monthly Meeting with New Hampshire Water Works Association.

What led you to a career in drinking water?

I went to school for an engineering degree because I thought it would challenge me—my dad was an engineer. Being a college student, I was not sure what was out there and available. When I interned with Whitman & Howard over a summer, I worked in the water department, and that was where I found I fit best and where my calling was. When I was hired by Whitman & Howard after college, it was in a water group. I have a broad background to work with and I would say my specialties are in treatment, master planning, and distribution systems. Today I manage anything to do with water, working with staff, and business development. Our role as managers at Wright-Pierce is unique because we remain active in the engineering of projects. And when I can, much to the dismay of my staff, I enjoy getting into the details of projects.

What is the most interesting project you are working on today?

We are currently in the final year of a 3-year, $38 million upgrade of the city of Haverhill’s water treatment plant, which is the largest water project Wright-Pierce has ever undertaken. Technically, the design was relatively straightforward, but the construction sequencing is extremely complicated. The project involves upgrades to every facility without out expanding the footprint. So we must do the work while keeping the plant online.

What is your favorite aspect of your job?

What makes me tick, really what gets me to work everyday, is helping clients and staff solve their everyday issues and doing whatever I can to keep them happy. As an engineer, certainly the technical stuff interests me. But what has really kept me going over my career is seeing a client genuinely satisfied knowing that we were able to make their day a little bit easier. While our profession is engineering solutions, it all revolves around people.

Discuss your time on the Program Committee.

I joined Program Committee probably more than 10 years ago. I chose the Program Committee because I wanted to get into something that was very active. The committee gives me good exposure to other members of NEWWA.

As program coordinators, we look for presentations that we think will generate the most interest to the audience—some of our best programs have been a potpourri of presentation topics. I take my role seriously and put a lot of time into facilitating and organizing the meetings.

What do you look for in a presentation?

Good speakers! A good speaker can make a dull topic really interesting. The best presentations are the ones with the catchy headlines, and from people who can tell a compelling, exciting, and interesting story about a client's project. As engineers it's easy to take ourselves too seriously. When it comes to presenting a technical subject, we need to think outside the stereotypical presentation box and deliver it in a way that sets it apart and stands out.

Would you share a fun fact about yourself?

I am a fishing nut. It’s almost all I think about. I was taught fishing by my dad when I was very young, and I have never let it go. These days I am involved in competitive bass fishing up to 100 days a year! True story: When my son was born, I left the hospital after 2 hours to buy him a life jacket around the country fishing in tournaments. I am on the water fishing up to 100 days a year! True story: When my son was born, I left the hospital after 2 hours to buy him a life jacket for the boat. Now he has the fishing bug and is even more passionate about it than me.

NEWWA Staff Directory

Executive Director
Kirsten King

Deputy Executive Director
Don Bunker, PE

Accounting Manager
Pam Amalfi

Backflow Prevention & Cross Connection Control Coordinator
Nelson Cabral

Events & Marketing Specialist
Kathleen Todiscio

Publications Coordinator
Jacqui Campana

Materials Preparation Assistant
Lisa Franks

Accounting Clerk
Claire Bunker

Membership & Volunteer Coordinator
Mary Quigley

Operation Programs & Technical Support
Paul Riendall

Facility and Office Manager
Linda Smith

Check us out on Facebook, Follow us on Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram
The Role of the AWWA Section Director

By Chris Hodgson, AWWA Section Director

I am very pleased to serve as your AWWA section director, where I represent NEWWA on the AWWA board of directors, and act as a conduit for communications back to our section. I was fortunate to have previously served on the AWWA board, from 1998 to 2001, having reached the position of council chair of the Manufacturers/Associates Council (MAC). Each council chair serves on the board and on the AWWA Executive Committee, so it provided me with great perspective of AWWA and how the organization works with the sections. When I completed my term in 2001, I set a personal goal to return to the AWWA board as NEWWA’s AWWA section director. Obviously, things fell into place for me and I am now fulfilling that goal. I appreciate everyone’s support and I commit to working to serve the interests of all NEWWA members.

One of the important meetings facilitated by AWWA is the annual Regional Meeting of Section Officers, otherwise known as the “RMSO.” AWWA is divided into geographical regions, allowing smaller groups of section officers to meet with AWWA leadership to discuss current topics and help shape AWWA’s initiatives. NEWWA, A Section of AWWA routinely attends the Region 1 RMSO and is consistently well represented at the meetings. It had attended three previous RMSOs prior to this fall, so the recent meeting was my first as section director.

The 2019 meeting was hosted by the Atlantic Canada Section and held September 6 and 7, 2019, in beautiful downtown Halifax, Nova Scotia, on the waterfront. NEWWA had a total of seven attendees including Dave Miller, Barbara Cook, Kirsten King, Don Bunker, Katelyn Tedesco, Mary Quigley, and me. We had the most representation by far of all the Region 1 sections. The meeting was well attended by the leadership of our homes.

NEWWA’s leadership was focused primarily on AWWA’s current emphasis on relationships with the sections and the formalized section affiliation agreements. These agreements are essentially contracts between AWWA and its sections, to define the mutual working relationships and obligations for both the sections and AWWA. The goal for AWWA is to update all the section agreements for consistency of mission, branding, communications, finances, and membership development. The topic is particularly important for NEWWA given our long history as an independent organization before our affiliation with AWWA in the late 1980s. Our section is well respected nationally for the work that we accomplish to serve the needs of our members and the water community at large. We enjoy a strong tie with AWWA so the discussions at the RMSO were specifically valuable for us.

In addition to the section affiliation agreement topic, the RMSO also focused on the work of our AWWA government affairs team from Washington, DC. Tommy Holmes, AWWA’s director of legislative affairs presented an update on their work on current legislation and new regulations. The focus was on America’s Water Infrastructure Act of 2018 (AWIA) and the key elements of this legislation. AWIA is an update of various previous programs and includes new compliance rules for risk and resilience assessments. Also addressed are updated requirements for Consumer Confidence Reports (CCRs), which must now be issued twice per year for water systems serving more than 10,000 and include information on corrosion control. Tommy Holmes also updated the group on the ongoing work with EPA on perlite, lead, and PFAS.

Holmes reviewed the importance of the 2018 Farm Bill, which was passed last year with the support of AWWA and WEF. A key highlight of that legislation is the commitment to spending $4 billion on source water protection over the next 10 years. Lastly, Holmes reviewed the importance for each section to maintain an active legislative affairs committee to work locally and nationally supporting our mutual priorities. Lastly, a valuable program was presented by AWWA Section Services staff to highlight the range of organized services provided by AWWA specifically to meet the needs of each section. The services include strategic planning, leadership webinars, bylaws guidance, membership development, and many more useful topics. Whereas NEWWA is unique among the AWWA sections—with our skilled staff, permanent offices and training center, and depth of experience in carrying out our mission—the resources from AWWA are valuable and welcomed.

I look forward to serving NEWWA over the next 3 years as your AWWA section director and welcome your input and inquiries.

Water Resources Symposium

Thank you to the Water Resources, Conservation, Groundwater, and Sustainability Committees for organizing another highly successful Water Resources and Sustainability Symposium, which focused on “Success in the Face of Challenge.” The keynote speaker, Scott Berry, gave an excellent presentation on the “One Water Approach: Strategies for Collaboration.” Other case studies, as well as breakout sessions, were well received and allowed for a lot of networking between attendees. Thank you to all the sponsors as well as volunteers who made this event possible annually.

2020 Water Vision

By George R. Allan

When we hear 2020, we usually think of our eyeglass and glasses lifestyle. And a typical cliché...: hindsight is 2020. But now as we enter the third decade of the century, we don’t want to look back but ahead. How might the water professions change over the next 10 to 15 years? Here are some thoughts on some changes we could see.

Perhaps the most significant impact on our industry could be more extensive use of artificial intelligence (AI). We are seeing it now with the increasing presence in our homes and offices with Alexa, Google, and Siri. The term “artificial intelligence” refers to algorithms to analyze large data sets and detect trends and patterns and then make decisions.

Using reams of data and algorithms, AI can manage workers, increase efficiency, and predict equipment failure. Others feel that AI will generate plenty of jobs, they will just be different jobs. There is also concern that when decision-making tasks are being done by an “AI assistant” we become less independent. However, AI will still require human insight and the ability to interpret the results, which will become an important part of a water operator’s job.

There is a lack of consensus of where AI will take us as a society. Despite being in its infancy in the water industry, there are several areas where AI will be a benefit to water professionals in the near future. Here are a few examples.

The water sector gathers a trove of data from such sources as laboratory equipment, SCADA, meter readings, GIS, geological reports, and water levels. Combining that data with analytics, AI can be used to forecast water quality issues and provide insights into the efficient management of water resources.

AI could also be used to monitor equipment and prevent costly repairs using predictive maintenance. Sensors on pumps and motors would recognize data and indicate a potential problem with voltage, for example, before it caused a shutdown.

Remote sensors in the distribution system could monitor water pressure and flow, as well as forecast excess demand and direct water to where it is most needed at a particular time.

AI can be used to improve job safety. There are already some startup companies that have developed software that is based on the analysis of thousands of photos and videos from construction job sites. This has led to the development of customized accident prediction models for construction sites.

Faced with a skilled labor shortage, water departments could use remote controlled construction equipment. Drones and autonomous vehicles can be used to scan a construction site at the end of the day to monitor job progress. Drones can also be used in an important part of facial security.

Other future water trends might include:

• More use of recycled wastewater and stormwater for irrigation, similar to what is currently occurring in Florida.

• The impacts from climate change on precipitation patterns could increase demand in some areas while supplies are drying up. Here in New England, we haven’t seen a prolonged drought since the mid-1960s, but drought could become more frequent. This could also impact water quality.

• Consolidation of smaller water suppliers into larger water districts (think mini-MWRA) and privatization of more municipal supplies due to a lack of skilled operators.

• Continued consolidation of engineering firms due to mergers and acquisitions.

• The economics of water will change. It will be priced based on its value to public health and economic growth.

• As laboratory equipment becomes better able to measure minute levels of contaminants down to parts per trillion and we use the elusive zero, we will continue to detect new contaminants such as PFOA and PFAS.

• The use of smart meters for residential and commercial customers will become standard.

I am sure that you could come up with other ways you think our profession will change in the coming years but the important thing to remember is that the only constant is change.

Out in the Silicon Valley of California, they have a saying that “we can predict the future is to invent it.” We can apply that to water and NEWWA can take the lead in inventing the future of water.
Getting Hysterical for Hydrants

A silence fills the air on one end of the DCU Center in Worcester, as everyone is focused and bursting with anticipation. Will the reigning champions represent NEWWA on the national stage for a third straight year or will they be defeated? A voice blares through the speaker: judges… are you ready?” (the volunteers give their thumbs up). “Competitors… are YOU ready?” (the six participants give their thumbs up). “3, 2, 1, GO!” And with that, you can hear the distinct clanging of metal through the roar of the crowd. Cheers for the three teams vying to be the fastest echo through the building. Each two-person team moving with precision akin to a well-oiled machine. Tools are being handled masterfully to put together the array of parts strewn across the competition floor. The challengers begin to near their goal, neck and neck as the pressure intensifies. The spectators become even louder as things are coming down to the wire. Quickly competitors begin to raise their arms to signal they’ve completed their assembly, just seconds apart from one another. Just like that, in less than 2 minutes, each team was able to assemble a fully functional fire hydrant. A champion cannot yet be named, however, as the tension mounts while the judges inspect each hydrant and deliberate to discuss any infractions. The final scores are turned in to the announcer, who declares the winner, and still champion, Bristol County Water Authority of Warren, RI.

These are the sights and sounds many have come to know as the Hydrant Hysteria competition. This event is run annually by the New England Water Works Association’s Innovations Committee. It entails pairs of competitors racing to determine which can effectively assemble a fire hydrant the fastest. The teams are judged on speed, but may be assessed time penalties for any loose or improperly assembled parts, as well as any safety violations. As a multi-organizational event, the competition is sponsored by a variety of organizations, including Jack’s Abby Brewery, for which there is a cash prize for the winning team. The competition has grown in popularity and scope, showcasing the skills and creativity of New England’s water professionals.

The council meeting is a great way to meet other like-minded water works professionals and network. It’s also a great way to discover how to become more involved with NEWWA unique!
Outgoing President David Miller passed the gavel along to Barbara Cook during the Membership Recognition Celebration on Tuesday evening of the conference.

David Polcari accepts the George Warren Fuller Award, the highest award bestowed on a member each year. It is presented annually to a member for their distinguished service in the water supply field in commemoration of the sound engineering skill, the brilliant diplomatic talent, and the constructive leadership that characterized the life of George Warren Fuller.

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Robert Cheng, assistant general manager for the Coachella Water District in California, was this year’s keynote. He spoke about the value of the Partnership for Safe Water. The conference also included an exhibit hall and infrastructure contest and technical sessions allowed attendees to learn about technologies and case studies from across North America.

Top photo: The theme for this year’s Meet and Greet Reception was “Under the Sea,” and many of our attendees did not disappoint! Having a theme for the Meet and Greet Reception is a great way to break the ice and meet new people (and reconnect with old friends).

Bottom left: Thank you to the “Best of the Best” Drinking Water Taste Test judges Robert Cheng (Coachella Water District), Jane Downing (U.S. EPA), and Lee Anne Jones (AWWA Vice President) for their work in selecting the best tasting water in New England. And congratulations to the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority for taking the title—they will represent NEWWA at AWWA ACE20 in Orlando in June 2020.

Bottom right: Tom Garrity carefully pours water into his team’s “NEWWAqueduct” to see if it could hold water during the Aging Infrastructure Contest (it did, and his team took top honors!). This fun event takes place each year in the exhibit hall.
NEWWA joined forces with the New England Water Environment Association this year to present the 2019 IT and Asset Management Fair. The day included classroom instruction on cybersecurity, strategic management, and more. In addition, attendees rotated around four interactive learning stations to view hands-on presentations on technologies such as pump efficiently testing, drones, operational data collection and reporting, and multisensory inspections. Thank you to NEWWA's IT Committee and NEWEA's Asset Management Committee for their work in organizing the day.