

About Us

Mission Statement:

The Missouri Water Environment Association is dedicated to preserving, protecting, and improving the quality of Missouri's water environment by providing a forum for education and the exchange of information, promoting sound environmental policy and building alliances among all persons interested in the water environment.

The Missouri Water Environment Association is a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of water quality and water resources, and the relationship of these resources to the total environment. The Association advances the science of water quality, educates, disseminates technical information, increases public understanding and promotes sound public policy.

MWEA represents a diverse membership of water environment professionals from the public and private sector. Through the Water Environment Federation our members have access to a broad range of technical information and publications. WEF has about 35,000 members worldwide and publishes over 180 books and manuals of technical practice.

MWEA has over 20 committees that are involved in gathering and disseminating technical information. A complete list of the committees and the committee chairs may be found in our "Who's Who" section.



History of the Missouri Water Environment Association

The history of the Missouri Water Environment Association (MWEA) reflects the efforts of many concerned individuals who recognized the need to protect human health and the environment. In 1925, the Missouri Conference on Water Purification was founded. This was the first formal organization in Missouri to have a primary interest in water pollution and water purification.

The Missouri Conference on Water Purification held its first organizational meeting October 26-27, 1925, in Kirksville. Even this initial gathering heard presentations on sewage and sewage treatment-related topics as part of the technical program session. A. V. Graf, then Chief Chemical Engineer for the St. Louis Water Department, was elected Chairman. With the success of the first meeting, the founders believed that annual meetings should be held and that such meetings would present a needed opportunity to share the latest water information.



Although records of the early meetings are limited, the third (1927) annual meeting was apparently noteworthy regarding sewage and sewage treatment. Six presentations were made on subjects related to the treatment of sewage at the meeting. Among these was a presentation on stream pollution by Thomas Veatch, a Kansas City consulting engineer.

The year 1928 brought a reorganization of the Missouri Conference on Water Purification as a direct result of the formation of the Federation of Sewage Works Associations. The Missouri group chose to affiliate with the Federation for a number of reasons, most of which being those that led to the creation of the Federation. At the 1928 annual meeting of the American Society of Civil Engineers, an organizing committee for the Federation

reported these findings:

1. The formation of a national society to hold meetings for the presentation of papers and discussions pertaining to stream pollution is not now justified and should be discouraged.
2. Moral support should be given to the movement for the formation of a federation of local associations now existing and to be formed in the future, for the purpose of publishing the results of research, operating data, abstracts of articles published in other journals, and such other matter as will be of general interest to those working in the field.
3. Encouragement should be given to the presentation to the division of original papers comprising:
 - a. results of research which tend to establish fundamental principles of procedure in the solution of general problems.
 - b. analytical description of permanent value of design and construction of works.
 - c. results of operation which demonstrate the practicability and efficiency of important processes and works and their sufficiency for the solution of the problems for which they were provided.

4. Papers should not be accepted by the Executive Committee which are confined to biological and chemical details of research and to ordinary operating data, as such papers are needed and can be handled by other organizations.

5. The Executive Committee should be prepared to appoint one or more members of a joint committee for the coordination of the work of several organizations active in the field, if and when other organizations signify their desire for such a joint committee."

Thus, the Missouri Conference on Water Purification changed its name and reorganized to become the Missouri Water and Sewage Conference (MWSC). This reorganization occurred during the fourth annual meeting in Hannibal, November 15-17, 1928. Despite the shifts in emphasis and the formation of new competing organizations, the Missouri Water and Sewage Conference still existed in 1989 with membership of nearly 1,600. Although not considered a charter member, Missouri joined the Federation in 1929, soon after the formation of the Federation of Sewage Works Associations. In 1950, the Federation of Sewage Works Associations changed its name to the Federation of Sewage and Industrial Wastes Associations. In 1960, a chain of events resulted in another name change and reorientation for the Federation, which became the Federation of Water Pollution Control Associations. Since its inception, the Missouri Water and Sewage Conference has fostered the development of both the Missouri Water Pollution Control Association (1960) and the American Water Works Association (1967). Both of these organizations were formed by members of the MWSC.

The Missouri Association responded to member needs with the establishment of new committees such as the Safety Committee. The Safety Committee gave birth to "Cautious Claude" who entertained and trained members throughout the late 60's and 70's. "Claudette" joined in the safety message as more women became involved in the Association. Both "Claude" and "Claudette" have experienced a rebirth in recent years and will continue to train and bring some smiles to members as they reinforce the importance of safety.

As the new Missouri Association began to grow, the organization began to expand with more committees and a growing awareness for the needs of wastewater professionals. The Missouri Operator Certification Board was formed to support the voluntary certification of water and wastewater operators. This board managed the operator verification program and had members from the Missouri Water Environment Association, the Missouri Section of the AWWA, the Missouri Water and Wastewater Conference, DNR, and the Water and Wastewater Technical School in Neosho. This voluntary board managed the operator certification program until mandatory certification was adopted by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources in 1977.

After mandatory operator certification and the required renewal training, the Association, in response to member needs, established the Operator Assistance Committee in 1984. The Committee was formed to establish and promote operator training in each of the six DNR regions of the state. This committee also began and continues to support the Operator Competition at the Annual Meeting. The winners at the Annual Meeting receive support from the MWEA for competing in the National Operator Competition held at WEFTEC each October.

However, the Missouri Association is not all work and no play. In 1989, the Missouri Association organized and hosted, every fourth year, a round robin four state slow pitch softball tournament. In late summer of each year, members from the WEF Associations in the states of Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska, and Kansas came together for a dusty day of glory to determine the WEF Softball Champion for the EPA Region VII states' teams. The Missouri Association is proud of winning the championship or co-championship for a stunning 8 years in a row. The ball games were hosted on a rotating basis in each of the four states and were followed by a meal and refreshments before heading home. A good time was had by all, regardless of the ball scores. The softball series sadly ended in 2000 with a rainout in Glenwood, Iowa, with the promise of a later, similar golf tourney.

Over the years the Missouri Association has continued to evolve with changes in the field of water pollution control and new technologies. "Sludge" has become "biosolids" and "sewer workers" have become "wastewater professionals." The Association recognized the importance of wastewater operators and created a special membership for operators in the Professional Wastewater Operators Division (PWOD).

Beginning in the late 1980's and early 1990's, three notable committees led MWEA to new heights and "raised the bar" for committee involvement in our organization; the Collection Systems Committee, the Laboratory Practices Committee and the Industrial Waste Committee. These three committees had a strong presence in the water environment field but were under represented in MWEA. The leadership in these three committees envisioned how MWEA could advance the professional development of their constituents. From their efforts, members representing collection systems, laboratory practices and industrial waste underwent a metamorphosis from minimal involvement to becoming the very core of MWEA's mission.

COLLECTION SYSTEMS COMMITTEE: The Collection Systems Committee was originally established in 1972 but had been inactive until July 17, 1987, when John Stovall of Black and Veatch called a meeting to order at Bennett Springs State Park. This meeting launched an initiative that has continued for many years. Over the years, the Committee Chairs -John Stovall, Terry Henkens (City of Columbia), Cliff Fain (City of Raytown), Bill Weitkemper (City of Columbia), Brian Rodden (Jefferson City), Steven Spydell (City of Independence), Charles Raab (City of Kansas City) and Phil Burns (Delich Roth & Goodwillie), spent countless hours with their members to identify and achieve the objectives of the committee. One of the most notable accomplishments was the development and implementation of a Collection Systems Operator's Voluntary Certification Program, modeled after MDNR's Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator Certification. This program provided a mechanism to affirm an operator's knowledge of collection systems and also helped to recognize collection system operations as a distinct and professional component of the water environment field. Currently, over 250 exams have been proctored by the committee, resulting in some 140+ active certificates in 2004. The committee also pressed forward with numerous collection systems training opportunities at the annual meeting and at specialty conferences. These seminars presented new ideas and provided forums for discussions and networking opportunities that previously did not exist. Excellence in the collection systems field was recognized by the Committee's establishment of the Golden Manhole Award in 1997 based upon a WEF initiative to recognize individuals for their significant contributions to the collections systems field.

LAB PRACTICES COMMITTEE: Earliest records of this committee began in earnest through a committee sign-up sheet at the 1993 Annual Meeting. Led by first Chair Jane Henry (City of Independence), the committee had its first meeting that June and began developing initiatives supporting professional development of Laboratory Analysts. In August of 1994, Pamela Schweitzer assumed duties as Chair. That same year, the WEF Board of Directors developed the Laboratory Analyst Excellence Award to recognize MA individuals for outstanding performance, professionalism and contributions to the water quality analysis profession. Jane Henry was MWEA's first recipient and the committee has continued to apply for and bestow the honor each year since. This

committee began the first initiative process of voluntary certification, developing their program which resulted in MWEA's first sponsored certification exam on March 11th, 1997, and yielding the first six voluntary certified Lab Analysts. Other initiatives undertaken throughout the 90's and into the new century by Chairs Kevin Scanlon, Gail Francis and Jane Hood have become the mainstay of the committee's service are sponsorships of speakers at the annual Fall Technical Conference as well as beginning a >round the state, rowing, one day, stand alone Lab Practices Workshop in 1998. As the 21st century unfolded, a new society for recognition of significant participation or contribution was developed through WEF resulting in the first "Crystal Crucible Award" given out at the 2004 Annual Meeting.

INDUSTRIAL WASTES COMMITTEE: Most of the focus of this committee's first initiatives beginning around 1992 came at the hand of first Chair George Abbott (Lake City Ammunition Plant, Independence). During his 4-5 year reign as committee chair, an extensive Pretreatment Awards process was developed and topics and speakers for the Annual Meeting technical sessions were expanded to a commanding 3 full sessions. Subsequent efforts by Chairs Doug Mendoza (MSD St. Louis) and Robert Hughes (US Filter, KC) resulted in annual tours of the Pretreatment Award-winning facilities, the use of teleconferencing between Kansas City and St. Louis sites to maintain committee involvement and the enhancement of the pretreatment awards by developing a Platinum Award level for those industries that have won the Gold Award five years in a row. Past Chair Steve Schweitzer (2001-2003; EMC St. Louis), and current Chair Denise Burkett (Kansas City), have initiated the process of developing a Voluntary Certification Program for Waste Analysts that will offer both recognition and validity to members of MWEA.

Of further note, the Public Education Committee has responded to the need for bringing a new awareness to the public and especially students about the importance of water pollution control. The Public Education Committee sponsors a poster contest for students and also provides a special day for students at the Annual Meeting. The first Missouri Stockholm Jr. Water Prize winner was Jared Lightle (Carl Junction) in 2002. The following year, current Chair Clara Haenchen (City of Jefferson), initiated local MWEA sponsorship of this award by organizing and promoting regional Stockholm Junior Water Prize contests. A representative from our state is selected to go on to the national and international levels of this most prestigious award. The first results of this effort found Rachel Sass, a student from St. Joseph, winning the state-wide competition and representing our MA at the national level in Irving, Texas in June 2003.

The year 1993 was a stressful time for associates around the state in our line of business. Heavy snowfall in the upper Missouri River watershed basin combined with heavy spring and early summer rains led to historic, catastrophic flooding along the Missouri River all across the state. Many of our member operating entities watched as pump stations and treatment plants were lost to the swell of the inundation that would cost Missourian's millions. Nowhere was harder hit than our capital, Jefferson City, where long hours turned to long days which turned to long weeks of interrupted service delivery and extended outages. No doubt it is such weariness that prompted the musically inclined, 1999 Past-President Tom Wallace, then Director of Public Works in Jefferson City, to put to lyrics and music the following song which became Top 40 in the mid-90's:

RAW SEWAGE

A tribute to the Jefferson City Public Works Department who battled the Great Flood of 1993

I went down to the basement, what did I see?
Raw Sewage Lookin' back at me!!
Raw sewage, raw sewage, raw sewage baby, call the police!
They call it raw, but they mistook it,
What you think man? You gotta cook it?
Raw sewage, raw sewage, raw sewage baby, call the police!
I made the call, it was a gusher,
I told the lady "I'll be back" with the flusher.
Raw sewage, raw sewage, raw sewage baby, call the police!
We tried to tell him, it's a favor,
Just a gift, from your neighbor.
Raw sewage, raw sewage, raw sewage baby, call the police!

In the early 1990's, reorganization was at hand at the Federation. In response to changes in the diversity of its membership, the Federation of Water Pollution Control Associations became the Water Environment Federation in 1991. The Federation laid down guidelines to Member Associations that prompted a Constitution and Bylaws Committee to be convened to pursue recommended changes to our organization. Chaired by Tom Decker, several principal changes were adopted by the membership through a ballot initiative in early 1994. Along with provisions for a Secretary and a Treasurer instead of the then combined Secretary-Treasurer position, the addition of the right-to-form student and local chapters and the automatic advancement from Vice-President to President-Elect, the most visible item was that our name would change from the Missouri Water Pollution Control Association to today's Missouri Water Environment Association. At the Annual Meeting the following year, a design competition was held to select a new graphic logo to be used for our new identity. 1980 Past-President Harry Criswell won the contest with the current design of the Mighty Mo represented in a graphic rendering across the outline of the state.

During the mid 90's, recognizing the phenomenal growth in committee activity and expansion of services that the organization had the potential of delivering, the Executive Committee developed the position of Executive Administrator as the organization's first "paid staff." In May of 1997, a contract was executed with long time member Lorene Lindsay to fill the role on a contractual basis. During this time, several new initiatives were refined and developed. Aside from Lorene being instrumental in the conception and launching of both the Lab Analyst and Collection Systems Operator Voluntary Certification Programs, under her watch, the organization launched its own web page, www.mwea.org, to enter into the Internet age as a method to inform our members. Today, under the expertise of Doug Mendoza and the Web Page "committee", MWEA's web page continues to expand its usefulness by having not only much of the static information of our organization (MA description, current officers, contact information, html links to partner organizations, etc.), but is a dynamic, changing wealth of information with a calendar of events, a full posted copy of the current issue of our quarterly newsletter, and downloadable pdf files for printing of everything from membership and voluntary certification exam application forms, awards nomination forms and even complete registration information for the annual meeting each year. Its popularity has grown as it has seen over 14,000 hits in the last three years. Also under Lorene's time as Administrator, the concept of having a Leadership Conference session for incoming committee chairs coupled with the first Executive Committee meeting following the Annual Meeting began affording an annual "tune-up" for both freshman leaders as well as seasoned veterans. This practice continues today and helps immeasurably with developing and enhancing the leadership skills necessary to maintain the organization. However, probably the

most successful endeavor developed at this time was the 1997 launching of MWEA's Annual Fall Technical Conference at the Capital Plaza Hotel in Jefferson City. At a time of the year opposite the Annual Meeting, the format is a one day session of topics geared for operators around the state as a part of MWEA's overall outreach program of technology and information interchange. It has become an annual, major training endeavor offered to both our members and all our associates in the water environment field. Further enhancements in this outreach are seen in a separate annual "roving around the state" Plant Managers Workshops directed toward managers of treatment plants. Lorene continued in the paid staff position until April of 1999 when the experiment came to a close.

Toward the end of the mid 90's MWEA's quarterly newsletter expanded to incorporate full color covers and adopted its present name, "The Current." Late in the 90's, the infamous softball tournaments of the 1980's have given way to 4-State Golf tournaments rotating between MA members from Missouri, Nebraska, Iowa and Kansas, with MWEA having won most recently at Nebraska City in 2003. In 1998, membership in MWEA swelled to a record high of 809.

After 40 years since the last joint meeting with the Missouri Section of the American Water Works Association, 2003 President Ken Gambaro undertook the initiative to work with our counterparts and forge a combined joint Annual Meeting in March of 2003. The meeting was a great success bringing an expanded format of an extra day and a record setting display of vendors in the exhibition area. Both organizations found it to be so favorable that joint meetings were set for 2006, 2007 and 2008.

In late 2003, Silver Springs Environmental, third party vendor under contract to provide testing services for the Lab Analyst and Collection Systems Operator Voluntary Certification programs, gave notice to quit, ending the long standing relationship with the program. Both committees continue these very successful programs on a voluntary basis with exams offered throughout the year and throughout the state.

MWEA is an organization that keeps looking to the future. At least since the late 1980's, there have been periodic, structured sessions where the current leaders and past leaders have come together for the sole purpose of looking critically at the direction and services offered by the MWEA. The reasons for the meetings vary. Sometimes they are due to national federation changes, some from state policy/regulation changes and some from internal membership concerns or ideas. These meetings have ranged from very long range "visioning" exercises to examinations of specific short term actions to aid members doing their jobs. These exercises not only aid the MWEA, they are very efficient means to enhance personal development and add problem solving tools.

Today, MWEA is a vibrant, solvent, effective organization of volunteers, many with exception leadership skills and dedication that no doubt will continue to provide valuable service to the members and environment it serves. Throughout all the changes and technological advancements, the Association remains a strong organization because of its members. The members today are as dedicated as the original members; dedicated to a full-time career in the protection of the environment.

ORIGIN OF THE MWPCA SSSSS

The Select Society of Sanitary Sludge Shovelers (SSSSS) is an organized honorary service society with the MWPCA. The MWPCA Society was modeled after similar societies that had previously been organized in other states. The earliest of these were founded in Pennsylvania by H. E. "Ted" Moses. Ted Moses was one of the founders of the original Federation of Sewage Works Associations and served as Secretary-Treasurer of the Federation for more than 12 years. An active association member, Moses noticed that many members were contributing a great amount of otherwise unrecognized time and effort. Since no other means to recognize outstanding members formally existed, Moses created an honorary society --the High Hat Society--within the Pennsylvania Sewage Works Association in 1937. The group was more widely known, however, as the "Ted Moses Sludge Shovelers Society." Moses had used the words "sludge shovelers society" during the first initiation ceremony.

The name was further modified when the Arizona Water and Sewage Works Association organized a similar chapter in 1940. A. W. "Dusty" Miller and F. Carlyle Roberts, Jr., also wanted to recognize outstanding association members who may not receive the coveted Bedell Award or become association president but still make significant contributions to the organization. The Arizona Chapter of the SSSSS was also an attempt to encourage members to get involved in association activities. Evidence of the success of the Arizona Select Society, through the efforts of Art Vondrick, can be seen in its membership list which shows members who are located all over the United States and Canada.

A total of eight other state associations had organized similar honorary societies before the formation of the Missouri Chapter. Their members, or association members who wished to be inducted, spoke openly about their Select Societies. After hearing of the other societies, Jerome F. "Jerry" Fladung began to search out additional information. He talked at length with members of the Kansas Chapter of the Select Society and began to develop a vision for the Missouri Association. Believing that a Select Society could serve an important function in the MWPCA, Jerry began to organize the Missouri Chapter. His goal was to induct, initiate, and integrate the first members into the MWPCA Select Society at the banquet of the Annual Meeting in 1973. Roy L. Jackson (MWPCA Local Arrangement Committee Chairman), John D. Reece (MWPCA Secretary-Treasurer) and Art Vondrick (from the Arizona Select Society) helped Jerry reach his goal.

Following the precedent set by other societies, Jerry Fladung secured the sponsorship of other society members for the new chapter. Alvin A. Appel, Robert J. Barletta, Fern B. Grey, Robert H. King, and William Polanshek from California; Arthur F. "Art" Vondrick, A. E. Watson, and Ed H. Braatellen, Jr. from Arizona; J. Floyd Byrd from Ohio; and Robert E. Crawford, Paul D. Haney, Myron K. Nelson, and N. T. Veatch from Kansas signed the certificates of the Charter Members.

The Missouri Select Society conforms to tradition in many ways. Each member receives a certificate of membership and a badge that is worn during all meetings. The badge is a small shovel-shaped lapel clasp to be worn on the left breast pocket. The grand hailing sign is displayed by raising the grip (made by curling the fingers as though around a shovel handle) head high, with thumb on left, and lowering the grip smartly. The grand hailing sign symbolizes the close relationship between water and sewage which are the main interests of the Association.

It is thus impossible to "join" the Select Society. One must instead be selected after having met the established criteria. New members are initiated during a sacred ceremony at the banquet of the MWPCA Annual Meeting. A

badge and a certificate signed by 12 other Select Society members and the current Exalted Influent Integrator are presented to each new member during the initiation ceremony. The Select Society has no dues, and the only officer is the Exalted Influent Integrator. Designated as pH7, the Exalted Influent Integrator is elected by the vote of the Select Sanitary Sludge Shovelers present at any meeting of the Association and serves until a successor is elected and installed. His duties are to record and report the selection of new members, bestow badges, and inform the Association of Select Society activities.