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TAWWA/WEAT

JULY-AUGUST 2013

ISSUE 91

SOUTH TEXAS CHAPTER

e-Newsletter

IS THIS CHIP THE KEY TO DESALINATION?

MICHAEL MARKS (STATEIMPACT TEXAS) | JULY 31, 2013

It would be easy to mistake the small, translucent, object in Kyle Knust's hand as just another cheap piece of plastic. With dozens more scattered around his section of a buzzing graduate assistant's lab at the University of Texas, the thumbnail-sized chips don't appear to be worth much.

And that's because they're not. At 50 cents apiece, the chips are pretty cheap to make. But the technology inside of them – a method of water desalination that's potentially cheaper and more efficient than any other – could prove to be invaluable.

Along with other researchers and private companies, Knust is helping to develop a desalinating "water chip" that uses a charged electrode to separate salt from water. The new technique could revolutionize how people get water, as well as how much they pay for it.

Desalination Today

Desalination, the process of removing salt or other particles in order to produce usable fresh water, is practiced around the world with varying degrees of prevalence. It is most common in the Middle East, particularly in arid countries like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

According to the Texas Water Development Board, Texans use approximately 120 million gallons of desalinated water per day, all of which comes from brackish water. Although Texas does not currently have a seawater desalination plant, the Laguna Madre Water District plans to build one on South Padre Island.

Powering the plants and transporting the water often requires the use of fossil fuels, which can be costly and hurt the environment. Waste from desalination can also affect the marine life that lives near the plant itself.

Currently, the most prevalent desalination technique is reverse osmosis, which uses differences in pressure to filter water through a membrane.

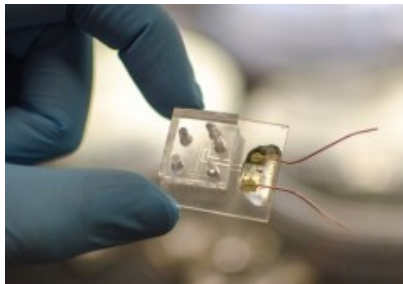
Although reverse osmosis can be performed on a large scale, the technique presents certain challenges in terms of cost and efficiency. Microorganisms that live in the water can damage the fragile membranes, so any water run through them must first be pretreated with chlorine, which is expensive.

A Different Way to Desalinate?

The water chip requires neither chlorine nor a membrane to operate. Instead, it uses a tiny metal strip carrying a 3-volt charge to separate salt from water.

The chip contains a Y-shaped channel the width of a human hair. At the split of the Y, the charge from the metal strip creates an electric field. As sea water flows through the channel, it is able to pass through the electric field. But the charged particles (such as salt or microorganisms) are "bumped" to the other channel by the field, effectively desalinating the water.

Since the water chip doesn't need pretreatment with chlorine or a membrane, experts say it's a more cost effective way to desalt water. It also requires less energy than reverse osmosis.



Water Chip Prototype (Photo by Natalie Krebs)

SAVE THE DATE



TAWWA/WEAT SEPTEMBER MEETING

Date: Thursday, September 19, 2013
Time: 11:30 AM
Place: San Antonio Water System
Tower II, 1st Floor, RM C145
2800 US Highway 281 North
San Antonio, TX 78212
Speaker: Jeff Haby, PE
San Antonio Water System
Topic: Sanitary Sewer Overflow
Reduction Program

TAWWA/WEAT OCTOBER MEETING

Date: Thursday, October 17, 2013
Time: 11:30 AM
Place: San Antonio Water System
Tower II, 1st Floor, RM C145
2800 US Highway 281 North
San Antonio, TX 78212
Speaker: Jim Murphy
Guadalupe-Blanco River
Authority
Topic: GBRA Ocean Desalination

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Continued on page 3

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

It is truly an honor and a privilege to be selected as the next President of the San Antonio Section of the Water Environment Association of Texas (WEAT). I would like to thank everyone for this opportunity. I am looking forward to working with the South Texas Chapter of the American Water Works Association (TAWWA) to continue to improve on the achievements that these wonderful organizations have been a part of. I would like to especially thank past presidents David Bennett and Greg Swoboda for their support and leadership. I would also like to thank Heather Lindner for assisting me with the transition to this most honored position.

For some of the folks that might not know me, I am the Assistant Superintendent over the Treatment Department for the San Antonio River Authority (SARA). I've been working in the Water and Wastewater industry for over 26 years, and throughout this time I've had the privilege of working with some of the most talented and diligent engineers, equipment representatives, contractors and water utility operators here in the great state of Texas. My collaborations with these individuals gave me a better perception of the water and wastewater industry in Texas. One of my goals during my tenure as President is to increase the participation of my fellow water utility workers in order for them to share their knowledge and experience to help meet the water quality challenges that we are facing here in Texas now and in the future.

I would like to thank everyone that came out and supported the 3rd Annual San Antonio Summer Seminar. A special thanks to the presenters that took time out of their busy schedules to make this event a success with their very informative presentations. The Annual Water For People Golf Tournament was held on August 23, 2013. Upcoming events include the Basura Bash in September and our

Annual Scholarship Dinner on December 5, 2013 at the San Francisco Steakhouse. And remember, the San Antonio Section of WEAT scholarship application deadline is September 6, 2013. We appreciate everyone continuing to be active through attendance and sponsorships.

Once again I would like to thank everyone for this opportunity to serve as President of the San Antonio Section of the WEAT, and I will strive to do my best to represent this position with the same level of commitment and dedication as my predecessors. Please contact me if you have any questions, suggestions, concerns or recommendations that could help improve our sections.

Best Wishes,
Sterling Lee
President, WEAT San Antonio Section



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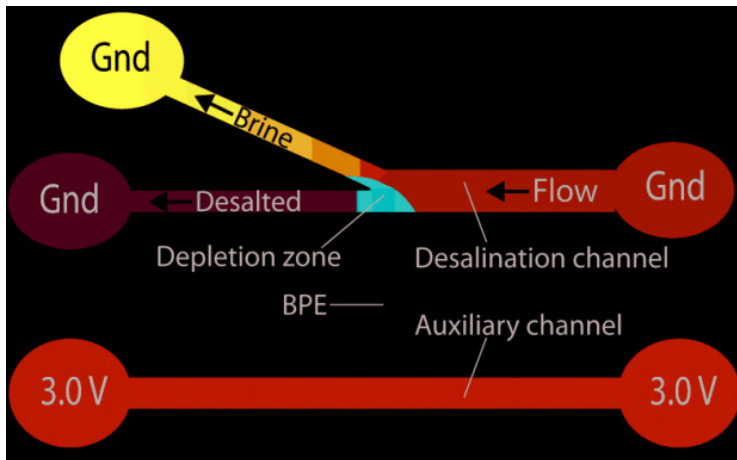
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Dr. Richard Crooks is the professor overseeing the project. He says that the water chip eliminates many of the problems that have prevented desalination from becoming more common.



The water chip's configuration (Image courtesy of Kyle Knust)

"Because of the energy cost, the only reason to desalinate right now is because you have to," Crooks said. "So anything you can do to bring the energy cost or the total cost down, that's a good thing."

But even with these advantages, the system isn't exactly perfect yet.

Chip Challenges

Drinking water needs to be 99% desalinated in order to be potable, but the device's current configuration has only reached 25% desalination. Lately, Knust's main preoccupation has been figuring out how to increase that number.

"Simple things like changing our device heights, altering the design of the electrode, the shape or position of the electrode, we haven't really played around with any of that at all," Knust said. "Those will all have key effects on the electric field, which is really what's controlling the desalination process."

If Knust is able to increase the degree of desalination though, there's still the challenge of scaling up the device. Maintaining the device's energy efficiency is crucial to its development, and researchers are unsure how that will hold up as it gets bigger.

Knust and Crooks have also had to figure out better materials to use, since the seawater would corrode the electrode after only a few uses. Though they've had some success with metals like platinum, that may be too expensive for a large-scale production.

Broader Impacts

Despite these challenges, at least one company is betting on the potential benefits that the water chip represents.

Tony Frudakis, the founder and CEO of Okeanos Technologies, started his company in 2010 specifically to build a product around the water chip. He doesn't mince words on why he decided to do it.

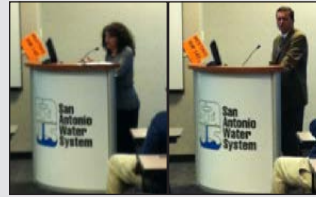
"There's a dire need for not just incremental improvements to our ability to produce water, but for drastic, paradigm-shifting improvements," he said. "In essence we've taken the first step towards demonstrating that there are more efficient ways to separate salt from water, and globally the implications of that are profound."

Frudakis is using the principles of Crooks' and Knust's design to create a device that can replace current desalination methods. He plans to build "modules" containing millions of desalination units in order to desalt water on a larger scale.

Frudakis says that the product should remove 95% to 99% of the water's salt. And while Okeanos' product will look much different than the water chip, the guiding hypotheses behind it are the same.

"It's a fundamentally different way of desalination. It's a lot less

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR JULY AND AUGUST SPEAKERS AND SPONSORS:



Thank you to Ila Dryzmala with the SAWS, and Greg Swoboda with HDR, for speaking about managing solids at the SAWS water recycling centers. Also, thanks to The Scruggs Company for sponsoring the July Meeting!



Thank you to our August Speaker, Nieves Alfaro with KBR, who spoke about the Waller Creek Tunnel Project in Austin. Also, thank you to DN Tanks for sponsoring the August meeting!

SPEAKER FOR SEPTEMBER MEETING: JEFF HABY, PE

SENIOR PROJECTS DIRECTOR, SAN ANTONIO WATER SYSTEM

Mr. Haby has more than 25 years of experience in system operation, project management, utility engineering, hydraulic modeling and infrastructure planning. He manages the Sanitary Sewer Overflow (SSO) Reduction Program to ensure the utility complies with state and federal requirements governing SSOs. A graduate of Texas A&M University with bachelor's and master's degrees in civil engineering, Mr. Haby is a registered professional engineer in Texas and Missouri and holds an "A" Water Operator license in Texas.

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SPEAKER FOR OCTOBER MEETING: JIM MURPHY

EXECUTIVE MANAGER OF WATER RESOURCES GUADALUPE BLANCO RIVER AUTHORITY

Mr. Murphy serves as Chief Operating Officer. He directs engineering and construction activities of the organization, water resource management, recreation and parks, and utilities operation. Mr. Murphy further directs the negotiation and development of major contracts and represents GBRA with its customers.

Sponsor:



energetically expensive, and...its potential lays in the operational savings it could provide," he said.

Frudakis projects that Okeanos' first prototypes will be ready for field testing by early 2014. He then plans to market the product to established desalination plants as a replacement for reverse osmosis membranes.

For Knust, that will be an opportunity to see his cheap little chip do some very valuable good.

"I think what I really like is the basic science and discovering something new," he said. "Yes it's still in its infancy...but it's something that no one has really pursued previously. The fact that it could have a global impact is exciting."

This story is reprinted with permission from StatImpact Texas (stateimpact.npr.org/texas), a reporting project of public radio stations KUT Austin and KUHF Houston that reports on energy and environment issues across the state.

WEAT SCHOLARSHIP NEWS

Scholarships will be awarded to local students with interest in water related studies. Email Josh Marazzini at CP&Y (jmarazzini@cpyi.com) if you are interested in receiving an application, or go to <http://weat.org/sanantonio/main/scholarships.php> for more information.

The deadline for submission is Friday, September 6, 2013!



San Antonio Section

Application for Scholarship Assistance

WEAT STUDENT MEMBERSHIP AWARDS

The San Antonio Section of WEAT will be awarding up to 10 student memberships. Student memberships can greatly enhance a student's career by providing networking opportunities, leadership skills, and an exceptional knowledge base.

Email Dennis Laskowski (dennis.laskowski@saws.org) for more information.

Application deadline is Friday, September 6, 2013!



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YOUNG PROFESSIONALS HAPPY HOUR

Following the summer seminar on July 26, 2013, about 25 people gathered for a YP social at StoneWerks Big Rocke Grille. It was a great evening – thanks to all who attended! And a special thanks to Newman Regency for sponsoring the event!

YOUNG PROFESSIONALS TOUR OF SAWS ASR FACILITY

Approximately 20 young professionals toured the San Antonio Water System's (SAWS) Twin Oaks Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) facility on August 16th, 2013. Robert Macias, ASR Plant Manager, guided the tour and explained how the ASR facility stores water, and uses it when needed. The YPs enjoyed seeing this facility and learning about how SAWS' planning has allowed it to manage water supplies during times of drought.



OLMOS BASIN ALLIANCE

The Olmos Basin Alliance (OBA) is a newly formed advisory committee to address the problem of man-made trash in Olmos Basin Park and the surrounding areas. The OBA includes representatives from the San Antonio River Authority, City of San Antonio, Bexar County, among many others. If you're interested in finding out more about the OBA or receiving the OBA's Good Neighbors to Nature newsletter, please contact Karen Bishop at 210-302-3642, or kbishop@sara-tx.org. More information can also be found on the OBA's Facebook page at www.Facebook.com/OlmosBasinAlliance.

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WEF OUTSTANDING MEMBER ASSOCIATION GOES TO...WEAT!



Congratulations to WEAT, which has been recognized as the Water Environment Federation's (WEF) 2013 Outstanding Member Association! WEAT exemplifies the WEF guiding principles including leadership, stewardship, collaboration, integrity and passion. WEAT maintains a strong and diverse membership, with over 1,625 members across 20 chapters. WEAT is a leader in offering scholarship opportunities as well as the development of young professionals. Each year, WEAT co-hosts the Texas Water conference with TAWWA and plays an active role in the Operations Challenge. WEAT also

supports knowledge transfer through the Texas WET magazine. WEAT's success is due to its members, and each and every one should be proud of this award!

WEAT is now offering FREE webinars to its members! Please see the schedule of events on page 14 for dates and topics. Online

registration is available at www.weat.org, and contact Julie Nahrgang (julie@weat.org) with any questions.

ONLINE
WEBINAR

BASURA BASH

TAWWA/WEAT SAN ANTONIO CHAPTER



Saturday, September 28, 2013
9:00 - 11:30 a.m.

Location: Olmos Basin Park

To sign up,
email Bregger Garrison
at Bregger.Garrison@urs.com
or
email Josh Marazzini
at JMarazzini@cpyi.com

Save the date



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TAWWA / WEAT SOUTH TEXAS SECTION SEPTEMBER MONTHLY MEETING



When:

Thursday, September 19th, 2013
11:30 A.M.

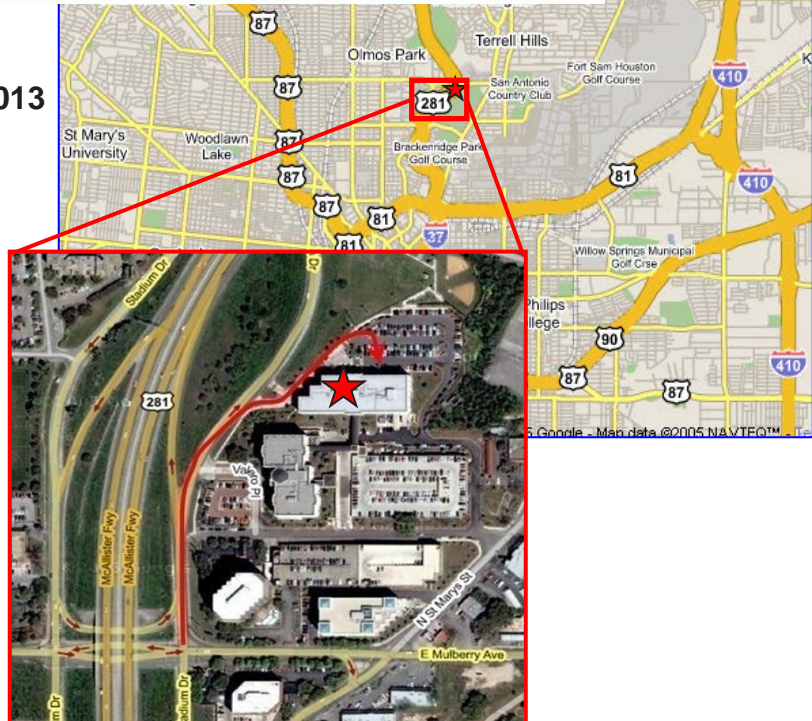
Where:

San Antonio Water System
Tower II – 1st Floor
Room C145
2800 US Hwy. 281 North
San Antonio, Texas

Speaker:

Jeff Haby, PE
San Antonio Water System

**Topic: “Sanitary Sewer
Overflow Reduction
Program”**



***THIS MONTH'S MEETING IS SPONSORED IN PART BY
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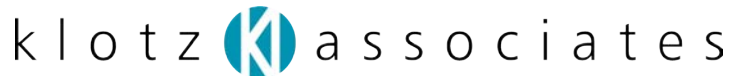
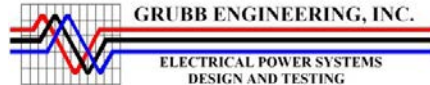
Please RSVP by noon, Tuesday, September 17th, 2013 to:
Heather Lindner, Secretary, San Antonio Chapter, WEAT
Email: heather.lindner@hdrinc.com Phone: 210-841-2826
The price for lunch is **\$12.00** with RSVP, **\$15.00** without RSVP

THANK YOU

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seminar
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2013 TAWWA/WEAT 3RD ANNUAL SUMMER SEMINAR

With over 125 attendees, the 3rd Annual San Antonio Summer Seminar held at



SAWS on July 26, 2013 was once again a huge success. The wide range of technical and informational subjects drew a large crowd from Central and South Texas. Topics covered in the one day seminar ranged from Advancements in Desalination to the Dallas Water Utilities successful FOG Outreach Program. Thank you to all of our sponsors and speakers!

Ms. Kelley Neumann, PE and Senior Vice President with SAWS, provided insightful opening remarks, with an update on the utility's Sanitary Sewer Overflow Reduction Program. Mr. Steve Graham, PE and Assistant General Manager with the San Antonio River Authority, closed the seminar with thought-provoking remarks by challenging everyone to think globally.

The local TAWWA/WEAT chapter donated \$500 to Project Agua, a program at SAWS that provides payment assistance for customers unable to pay their water bills. Please stay tuned for more information on the 2014 Summer Seminar!



SAVE THE DATE

TAWWA/WEAT 9th Annual Scholarship Dinner

December 5, 2013

Old San Francisco Steakhouse

WATER FOR PEOPLE NEWS

The local Water For People chapter has continued to be the most active and successful chapter in Texas! Our annual educational activity involved sponsoring a booth at the national AWWA/AMTA Membrane Technology Conference & Expo in February 2013, which gave us the opportunity to increase awareness about the great things that Water For People is doing both globally and here in San Antonio. Water For People volunteers included Jonathan Vorheis (CH2M Hill), Veronica Godley (SAWS), Marisa Vergara (CP&Y), Amy Middleton (CAS), Steve Renneker (KBR), Lyn Pitman (SAWS) and Adam Conner (SAWS).

Additionally, the local Water For People chapter hosted its fifth annual "Sweat for a Cause" charity golf tournament. The event raised more than \$27,000 net, all going directly to Water For People!! This golf tournament continues to be the premier golf outing in the south Texas area, with folks travelling from as far away as Louisiana. Thank you for the generous support from all the sponsors, golfers and volunteers, and we look forward to seeing you all next year!



Thank You 2013 Platinum Sponsors!



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Students \$30

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<http://utsa.edu/ee/WIT.html>

UTSA Engineering

TAWWA/WEAT South Texas Chapter now on Facebook!

The South Texas Chapter of TAWWA and San Antonio Section of WEAT are now on Facebook!

Please go to the link below and "Like" South Texas Water Professionals to be connected and stay informed about upcoming events and activities.



LOCAL TAWWA / WEAT CONTACTS

TAWWA, South Texas Chapter Officers

Office	Name	Day Phone	Fax No.	E-mail
President	Steve Renneker, P.E.	210-321-5327		steven.renneker@kbr.com
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Finance Chair	Andrew Hunt, P.E.	210-321-4353	210-854-9518	ahunt@rkci.com
Scholarships Chair	Marisa Vergara, P.E.	210-494-8004	210-494-8286	mvergara@cpyi.com
Water For People Chair	Jonathan Vorheis, P.E.	210-321-6256	210-349-8944	jonathan.vorheis@CH2M.com
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YP Representative	Kira Iles, E.I.T.	210-404-1330	210-404-1370	llesK@BV.com

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Section Representative	Dennis Laskowski, P.E.	210-233-3682	210-233-5234	dennis.laskowski@saws.org
Scholarships Chair	Josh Marazzini, P.E.	210-494-8004	210-494-8286	jmarazzini@cpyi.com
YP Representative	Heather Lindner, P.E.	210-841-2826	210-841-2828	heather.lindner@hdrinc.com
YP Representative	Lance Rothe, P.E.	210-841-2910	210-841-2828	lance.rothe@hdrinc.com

LOGIC PUZZLE

		First Names				Phone Numbers				License Plates			
		Kendall	Lucas	Marisol	Nolan	445-7953	502-9182	589-2812	867-5309	NUH-871	RRF-129	SPR-413	UAJ-192
Times	8:30am												
	4:00pm												
	7:00pm												
	9:00pm												
License Plates	NUH-871												
	RRF-129												
	SPR-413												
	UAJ-192												
Phone Numbers	445-7953												
	502-9182												
	589-2812												
	867-5309												



CLUES

- The driver with the SPR-413 license plate is not Marisol.
- Either the person who arrived at 4:00pm or the person who arrived at 7:00pm has the NUH-871 license plate.
- The person who arrived at 9:00pm can't be reached at 445-7953.
- The driver with the NUH-871 license plate can be reached at 589-2812.
- Kendall didn't arrive at 4:00pm and can't be reached at 502-9182.
- The person whose phone number is 589-2812 arrived later than Nolan.
- Of the person whose phone number is 867-5309 and Kendall, one arrived at 8:30am and the other has the UAJ-192 license plate.
- The driver with the NUH-871 license plate arrived earlier than Marisol.
- The person who arrived at 8:30am is Nolan.

Times	First Names	Phone Numbers	License Plates
8:30am			
4:00pm			
7:00pm			
9:00pm			

Answer to logic puzzle on page 14.

UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS

Date	Topic/Presenter	Event Host	Location
September 11, 2013	Water Well Rehabilitation and Asset Management Webinar	TAWWA	SAWS Tower II Room C154
September 18, 2013	FREE 83rd Texas Legislative Session Wrap-up Webinar	WEAT	Webinar
September 19, 2013	September Monthly Meeting: SAWS Sanitary Sewer Overflow Reduction Program	SAWS	SAWS Tower II Room C145
September 28, 2013	Basura Bash	TAWWA/WEAT	Olmos Basin Park
October 3-4, 2013	TCEQ 2013 Water Quality/Stormwater Annual Seminar	TCEQ	Austin, TX
October 4, 2013	Water Institute of Texas Symposium on Emerging Water Issues	UTSA	UTSA Downtown Campus
October 5-9, 2013	WEFTEC	WEF	Chicago, IL
October 17, 2013	October Monthly Meeting: GBRA Ocean Desalination	SAWS	SAWS Tower II Room C145
November 13, 2013	FREE Water Reuse Webinar	WEF	Webinar
December 6, 2013	9th Annual Scholarship Dinner	TAWWA/WEAT	Old San Francisco Steakhouse San Antonio, TX
January 15, 2014	FREE Stormwater Webinar	WEAT	Webinar
April 14-17, 2014	Texas Water	TAWWA/WEAT	Dallas, TX

CALLING ALL YOUNG PROFESSIONALS!

In an attempt to better serve the Young Professional (YP) members, we are asking that all members under the age of 35, or less than 10 years in the industry, please e-mail Heather Lindner at: heather.lindner@hdrinc.com with their name, e-mail, and phone number.

If there are others in your offices who are not yet TAWWA/WEAT members, but might also be interested in participating in YP events and functions, please pass this request on to them.

Thanks!

LOGIC PUZZLE ANSWERS

8:30am	Nolan	867-5309	SPR-413
4:00pm	Lucas	589-2812	NUH-871
7:00pm	Kendall	445-7953	UAJ-192
9:00pm	Marisol	502-9182	RRF-129



ARE YOU RECEIVING THIS E-NEWSLETTER IN ERROR?

Please e-mail Heather Lindner (heather.lindner@hdrinc.com) to be removed from the list.