I was introduced to the Caribbean Water and Wastewater Association (CWWA) last year at its annual conference in the Bahamas. When I found out that its 2015 conference was going to be in Miami, I thought it would be great to work with incoming CWWA President Jason Johnson as a partner. The Florida Section of AWWA and CWWA agreed, through a memorandum of understanding, to work together on the 24th Annual Conference and Exhibition, which was held August 24-28.

The CWWA conference is an opportunity for the managers and practitioners of water and wastewater management to share their experiences for the mutual benefit of improving the quality of life in the Caribbean and the state of Florida. Over its 24 years of existence, this conference and exhibition has taken place in Caribbean countries. This year’s conference was the first time in its history to take place in the mainland United States.

FSAWWA Region VII Support

I reached out to Region VII Chair Juan F. Aceituno for his help, and Region VII’s board and volunteers were committed to help during the planning phase of the conference, and I want to offer a big thanks to all of them for stepping up and working closely with CWWA to make this a true partnership. The following is an extensive list of areas where Region VII provided support:

- **Technical Program Committee Chair** – Aceituno, with CH2M, served as chair and assisted with organizing the committee by recruiting members: Dr. Hector Fuentes, Florida International University (FIU); Jorge Acevedo, director of utilities, City of Coral Gables; and Dornelle Thomas, co-chair and engineer, CDM Smith. The committee developed the technical paper criteria, technical program development, and logistics related to the final program, which included providing 15 volunteers to assist with moderating the conference technical sessions.

- **Technical Paper Committee** – Developed the criteria for evaluation and subject areas presented in the call for papers. Topics focused on applied research, case studies, and lessons learned that were applicable to the Caribbean and Florida water industries that were not only engaging, but represented both geographic areas. A big thanks to all of the volunteers for their time and effort on this project! The committee consisted of Juan F. Aceituno (chair), Dornelle Thomas (co-chair), Dr. Hector Fuentes, and Jorge Acevedo.

The call for papers generated a submittal of approximately 90 papers, excluding those submitted by the Inter-American Association of Sanitary and Environmental Engineering (AIDIS), which were reviewed and evaluated by AIDIS leadership. The final technical program consisted of 78 papers representing topics related to water, wastewater, solid waste, climate change, project planning, and financing. During the conference the following Region VII volunteers assisted with moderating all of the technical presentations:

- Dornelle Thomas, CDM Smith; Jorge Acevedo, utilities director, City of Coral Gables; Dr. Fuentes, professor, FIU; Peter Jelonek, Miami-Dade Water and Sewer Department (MDWASD); Diana Merisier, CH2MHill; Manny Moncholi, MDWASD; Enrique Vadieloo, Hazen and Sawyer; Orlando Castro, Hazen and Sawyer; Guillermo Regalado, AECOM; Jose Acosta, Chen Moore and Associates; Cristina Ortega, CH2M; Andres Gomez, AECOM; Sheri Kamali, assistant city manager, City of South Miami; Jorge Camacho, CH2M; and Mandy Kinnick, AECOM.

I want to offer a special thank you and appreciation to all moderators for volunteering their time to make the technical program a success.

- **Welcoming Ceremony and Reception and Exhibit Hall Opening** – The region coordinator...

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- Coordinated with the Office of the Miami-Dade County Mayor to invite Mayor Carlos Gimenez to speak at the opening ceremony to welcome conference participants.
- Coordinated with the Miami-Dade Water & Sewer Department to invite Director Lester Sola to deliver a speech to conference participants in the welcoming ceremony. Director Sola also participated in the ribbon-cutting for the opening of the exhibit hall.

Plenary Session – The session included a roundtable discussion of executive managers of various utilities in the Caribbean, South America, and Miami-Dade County. Coordinated and facilitated the participation of Juan Carlos Arteaga, operations assistant director, in a two-hour roundtable discussion sharing the Miami-Dade experience with the EPA consent decree, ocean outfall legislation, and its capital plan over the next 15 years.
- Exhibit Hall Raffles – Provided volunteers from Region VII membership to assist with the morning and afternoon raffles throughout the week.
- Exhibitors and Sponsorship Support – Assisted by reaching out to Region VII’s vendors and manufacturers to consider exhibiting during the conference. Similarly, Region VII reached out to south Florida engineering companies inviting them to consider sponsorship opportunities for the conference.
- 11th High-Level Forum of Caribbean Ministers Responsible for Water – The forum brought together high-level Caribbean government officials, experts, donors, and development partners to discuss social, environmental, and economic policy issues in the Caribbean, including climate change. Region VII assisted by contacting the office of Commissioner Jean Monastime, a native of Haiti. The region invited a representative, Chief of Staff Gerard Phillippeaux, to provide opening remarks to the ministers in attendance, welcoming them to Miami and offering general well wishes.
- Technical Tour Planning and Logistics – Coordinated by Juan F. Aceituno and the South District Wastewater Treatment Plant and South Dade Landfill. (Unfortunately, the landfill tour was cancelled by the County due to the weather and preparation activities for a tropical storm.)

Technical Tour to South District Wastewater Treatment Plant

Region VII assisted with the planning and coordination with Miami-Dade County’s Solid Waste Department and Water and Sewer Department to plan a facility tour of the South District Wastewater Treatment Plant.
Dade Solid Waste Landfill and the South District Wastewater Treatment Plant. Unfortunately, due to tropical storm Erika, the landfill tour was cancelled by the county.

However, the site tour of the plant was attended by 20 conference participants and was very well received. Region VII's chair coordinated the tour with the wastewater treatment operations group. Leo Pou, deputy superintendent for the plant, led the tour, delivering an overview of the plant’s history and treatment process of the liquid and solid streams, while providing background information of the other two treatment plants in Miami-Dade County.

Attendees interacted with Pou through a series of questions and comments, exchanging experiences from their utilities. Participants in the tour came from the Caribbean (Dominican Republic, Barbados, Guyana, and Belize, among others), South Africa, and Florida.

**FSAWWA Past Chairs Summit**

The Florida Section took the opportunity to host the eighth annual Past Chairs Summit during the CWWA Conference. This gave our leadership an opportunity to experience the conference firsthand. The first summit was held in 2008, with Matt Alvarez as section chair. It was great to see Matt back at this year’s event.

We kicked off the summit with a delicious welcome dinner that was arranged by section staff; thank you, Peggy Guingona, and a big thanks to our resident expert on everything Miami, Grace Johns, current section vice chair, for recommending the restaurant and bringing Stan along. I’d also like to thank Past Chair Bevin Beaudet for telling some great Dr. Edward J. Singley stories, saying some kind words in his remembrance and allowing us all the opportunity to remember our friend, mentor, and colleague. The food was delicious and the fellowship gave everyone a chance to meet and reconnect before getting down to business the next day.

At the morning meeting, the past chairs were briefed on the most recent year’s accomplishments and challenges. After the presentation, a round-robin table discussion was held. Some of the main topics included membership, finances, marketing, and both the Florida Water Resources Conference and the FSAWWA Fall Conference. As a direct result of the leadership and guidance from all our past chairs, the financial health of our association is in very good standing. A healthy discussion on ways to use those finances for the betterment of the membership ensued. There were also discussions on our upcoming marketing plan, ways to retain members, and ideas to improve member experiences at both conferences.

The input and guidance we receive from these leaders will assist the Executive Committee with key decisions concerning the future of FSAWWA. The past chairs have been invaluable in helping section leadership evaluate new ideas and develop strategies for implementing them. Many of the milestone steps for the section would not have taken place if it were not for the past chairs’ support.

I was thrilled to have the support of all these past chairs and especially happy to see a few of them that I hadn’t seen in a while—thank you, Larry, Matt, Chuck, Bevin, and John!

In attendance this year were Bevin Beaudet, Pete Robinson, Jim Cowgill, Richard Coates, Larry Ruffin, John Hagelskamp, Jackie Torbert, Matt Alvarez, Ana Gonzalez, Chuck Carden, Richard Anderson, Rick Ratcliffe, Jason Parrillo, and Carl Larrabee, and our current Executive Committee: Kim Kunihiro; Grace Johns; Bill Young; Peggy Guingona, our executive director; and myself.

I want to again sincerely thank everyone who was involved in the CWWA Conference and the Past Chairs Summit for a job well done!