FSAWWA’S Outstanding Awardees at FWRC

As the Florida Section AWWA chair, one of my greatest pleasures is presenting awards to outstanding utilities and water industry employees across the state who are out there doing their jobs 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Oftentimes, the mindset in our business is that “no news is good news” and we feel like we’re doing a good job if we don’t get too many phone calls or see our company name in the news. Although that can be true sometimes, I think we all can agree that it’s important to take the opportunity to promote our industry and recognize individuals and entities that go above and beyond in providing the water-related services that are so critical for a healthy society.

The Florida Water Resources Conference (FWRC) provides an excellent opportunity to provide this recognition, and this year was no exception. So, without further ado, please allow me to present to you the outstanding awardees and contest winners from this year’s event!

Top Ops Competition

Well, you probably guessed it—Palm Coast’s public works/utility division has done it again and its Water Buoys team won the Top Ops state championship this year. Palm Coast’s winning record is nothing short of amazing! Questions in this fast-paced, game-show-type competition cover a broad range of operational topics, including basic science, hydrology, water distribution, public health and sanitation, plant maintenance, safety, and process control.

The annual contest recognizes and promotes excellence in all aspects of water operations, giving operators the opportunity to showcase their knowledge and talents. The Water Buoys will now have the opportunity to compete for top national honors in June during ACE19 in Denver. Congratulations to the Water Buoys—we’ll be cheering for you!

“Best of the Best” Drinking Water Contest

Talquin Electric Cooperative/Meadows Regional Water System won the statewide “Best of the Best” Drinking Water Contest on April 16 at the conference. Four taste-test judges chose Talquin from 12 regional winners to earn the title as Florida’s best, and they will now go on to the national competition to be held in Denver at ACE19. Talquin, which provides water and wastewater services from Florida’s Gulf Coast to the Florida state line (including portions of Tallahassee and the surrounding areas), won the Region I competition earlier this year.

Judges for the statewide contest were yours truly; Kim Kowalski, incoming FSAWWA chair; Rick Harmon, Florida Water Resources Journal editor; and Brian McClure, Bay News 9 award-winning meteorologist. Good luck Talquin, and we’ll be cheering for you in Denver, too!

Outstanding Water Treatment Plant

This award is presented to the top water treatment plant in the state in each plant classification: A, B, and C. Entries are judged by the FSAWWA Awards Committee based on various categories, such as regulatory compliance, process control, safety, and emergency preparedness. All of the plants submitted wonderful brochures highlighting their plants. The pride they take in their facilities is obvious.

Class A: Peace River Manasota Regional Water Treatment Facility

The Peace River Manasota Water Treatment Plant uses a conventional surface water treatment process that consists of coagulation, flocculation, sedimentation, disinfection, and filtration. The source of the water is surface water from the Peace River that is stored in two reservoirs totaling 6.5 billion gallons of storage, and the plant averages 27.5 million gallons per day (mgd).

I was very proud to present this award to the Peace River Manasota Regional Water Authority at their annual barbeque on May 10 (I was also thrilled to consume mass quantities of barbeque!).

Class B: City of Tarpon Springs Alternate Water Supply Facility

The Tarpons Springs Water Treatment Plant treats brackish groundwater from 16 wells, which is directed to 5-micon filters, and then treated by reverse osmosis (RO). Sulfuric acid and antiscalant are added as pretreatment ahead of the RO trains. Chlorine is added for disinfection, as is carbon dioxide, to lower the pH prior to the addition of lime and caustic for hardness and alkalinity. Finally, a corrosion inhibitor and fluoride are added prior to distribution. The average daily flow is 2.5 mgd.

Class C: City of Plant City Utilities

The City of Plant City operates four drinking water treatment plants, with a groundwater extraction well at each. All of the plants have chlorination, fluoridation, corrosion control, and a 4-log virus removal certification. A storage tank is associated with each plant and the distribution system is looped for water quality and reliability.

Most Improved Water Treatment Plant, Class A: Palm Beach County – Treatment Plant No. 3

Palm Beach County’s Treatment Plant No. 3 underwent several improvements during the past 12 months and certainly earned the most improved award. Improvements included heaters added to the membrane cleaning system, a new permeate flushing system, coating of the clearwells with a polyethylene lining, a new degasification tower, a second sand strainer, and replacing 10 trains of membrane elements with a new hybrid system that lowered operating pressures by 20 pounds per square inch (psi) and increased permeate production. These folks have been busy!

Most Improved Water Treatment Plant, Class C: City of Leesburg Plantation Water Treatment Plant

Leesburg’s Plantation Water Treatment Plant earned this year’s most improved award due to the construction of a new treatment facility that incorporates a new high-service pump building, new motor control room, new sodium hypochlorite disinfection system, and a new emergency generator. Additionally, Leesburg rehabilitated its raw water wells and built a new raw water main to the treatment plant. The city is very proud of its new facility!

Meritorious Drinking Water Treatment Plant Operator of the Year: Douglas Heistand

Doug Heistand has been an integral part of Hillsborough County Public Utilities De-
partment throughout his career as a water plant operator, where he started in 2008 at the Lithia Water Treatment Plant as an operator trainee. In 2009, he transferred to the new central water treatment plant to assist with the commissioning of that facility, while simultaneously studying, testing for, and obtaining his water plant operator A license.

Doug continues to be a mentor to all the employees he has coached, and understands that the most valuable part of an organization is its people. We are proud to acknowledge and reward Doug as one of the best at what he does in his profession.

So there you have it—well-deserved recognition for several of our industry’s best and brightest. Congratulations to you all and, for those of you taking it on to the competitions at ACE19, we wish you the best of luck!