Grace Johns, Ph.D., became the 91st chair of the Florida Section American Water Works Association at its Fall Conference on November 30, succeeding Kim Kunihiro. She is the first economist to lead the Florida Section.

Born in Miami, she has lived in south Florida most of her life. She received her B.S. in food and resource economics from the University of Florida and her Ph.D. in agricultural and natural resource economics from the University of California, Berkeley.

In 1990, Grace returned to south Florida to pursue her dream of protecting the natural resources of her beloved home state, including Florida's Everglades and coastal estuaries.

She joined Hazen and Sawyer, where from 1991 to 1993 she led the economic impact evaluation of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas Everglades Restoration Act, which resulted in economically feasible methods to improve Everglades water quality.

As senior associate economist at Hazen and Sawyer’s Hollywood office, Grace is responsible for Hazen’s economic and financial studies related to water supply development, stormwater management, and water resource regulation. She has led studies that estimated the economic value of the Indian River Lagoon in eastern Florida, the Bogota River in Colombia, Biscayne Bay in Miami, and the reefs of southeast Florida and the Florida Keys. Through her work she has demonstrated that protecting Florida’s natural environment has tremendous value to the state’s economy and its residents.

Grace thanks her first boss at Hazen and Sawyer, Peter Robinson, a past section chair, for encouraging her to become active with the section. She began her FSAWWA journey as a Water For People volunteer and as a speaker at the Florida Water Resources Conference and the FSAWWA Fall Conference. In 2006, she became chair of the Florida Section Water For People Committee, which she led over the next four years. After serving as Administrative Council chair in 2010, she became treasurer-elect and was the section’s treasurer from 2012 to 2014. Since 2015, she has worked with the section’s Executive Committee and its chair to improve member engagement and professional diversity.

Passionate about the water industry’s role in providing safe, reliable, and affordable water to all, Grace is proud to be part of AWWA and the Florida Section. “Each and every person I have met and every presentation I have heard through FSAWWA has taught me that many people with diverse talents and life backgrounds work very hard to serve water customers and the community. I am always very impressed and inspired.”

When asked about leading FSAWWA in 2017, Grace added, “I am very honored and excited to chair this very active and growing section as we continue to ensure a better world through better water.” Grace is looking forward to working with section leaders, staff, and members to improve member services, engage members, and attract a professionally, geographically, and individually diverse membership.

Grace lives with her husband, Stan Schneider, in Cooper City, where she serves on the board of Pets’ Broward, a charitable organization that works to preserve the lives of all adoptable cats and dogs at local animal shelters.