2013: A Year in Review

Jason Parrillo, P.E.
Chair, FSAWWA

It’s hard to believe that this will be my last Journal article as chair of the Florida Section AWWA. The year has passed by so quickly! The old adage “Time flies when you are having fun” definitely applies here. During the FSAWWA Fall Conference, which will either be ongoing or completed by the time you read this, I will be handing the chair’s gavel to Carl Larrabee. Congratulations, Carl!

Looking back through 2013 there have been some very memorable events and accomplishments by the section, and for my last article, I would like to share with you some of those highlights—from my perspective.

Strategic Membership Task Force – One of the very first things accomplished in 2013 was the establishment of the strategic membership task force (SMTF). This task force is a three-year committee devoted to looking at ways to promote membership throughout the section over the various membership categories. During 2013 the SMTF developed the utility ambassador program, which will roll out right after the FSAWWA Fall Conference.

Legislative Day in Tallahassee – This year’s Legislative Day was held during Committee Week instead of during the regular session. I felt this year we had more interaction and face time with the legislators and they were listening to what we had to say. The section’s credibility has moved higher than ever before. A very special thank you goes to the FSAWWA Utility Council for moving us in this direction.

AWWA Water Matters Fly-In – This year, our message concerning the Water Infrastructure Funding and Investment Act (WIFIA) gained serious traction within the House of Representatives, and the message was well received in the Senate. It is refreshing to see that the effort being put forth by AWWA and the sections alike has gained significant credibility and is leading to significant legislation to benefit the water industry.

Landmark Award, Distribution System Award, and Water Treatment Plant Award Presentations – These presentations are always fun, simply because they mean everything to the utilities that receive them. These awards are one of the few times that utilities get praise and recognition in front of their board, council, or commissioners, for the hard work that is done daily to maintain and operate the systems that serve their customers. A special thank you goes to our Awards Committee for its creative thinking in how we now present these awards to their recipients.

First Female Operator of the Year – This was an historic event, not only for FSAWWA, but also for the water industry. This is the first time that a female operator was recognized as the Outstanding Water Treatment Plant Operator of The Year. Congratulations again to Kendra Phillips; she has raised the bar for an entire industry.

FSAWWA’s First Consumer Webpage – Part of the ongoing effort to reach beyond our traditional membership base and to help further the mission and vision of the section, a special ad hoc committee was formed to develop a consumer webpage through which water consumers can navigate when they visit the section’s website.

Joint Water Forum with Associated Industries of Florida (AIF) – This year, I really started to see a connection with the efforts the section has put forth during Legislative Day and this event. The legislators that did participate remembered us from our February visit and that, to me, shows the credibility that FSAWWA has now gained with Tallahassee. By partnering with AIF, our visibility continues to increase and our credibility continues to grow.

Joint International Society of Automation (ISA) Symposium – This event allows FSAWWA to offer our membership training and education through ISA. This has been a wonderful event growing rapidly over the past two years.

Sayfie Review Summit – This event was by invitation only. Attendees included Governor Rick Scott, Agriculture Commissioner Adam Putnam, and Florida Chief Financial Officer Jeff Atwater—and FSAWWA was invited! This is another example of how far our credibility has come. We are now invited to the table in advance of water policy changes. We actually have a voice for our utility members to engage.
in meaningful discussion of what should be considered for water policy—instead of just reacting to it.

**Backflow Accreditation Committee** – The accreditation committee structure and governance has been finalized, along with the FSAWWA backflow accreditation agreement. We have entered into an agreement with the Center for Training, Research, and Education for Environmental Occupations (TREEO) and reviewed and accredited its backflow program. As of right now, TREEO is the only FSAWWA backflow-accredited training agency in the state of Florida.

**Strategic Planning Retreat** – During this year’s strategic planning retreat, the membership decided to align the section’s mission, vision, and strategic plan with the newly-revised Association strategic plan. This was no small task and required lots of input and discussion as priorities and goals changed in our overall strategic plan.

In reviewing the year along with me, I am confident you will see the direction and course that the section is taking. Even more important is that you may begin to realize that this course and direction is set by you, the member.

It is only fitting that I start and close my year as chair with the same statement: The most important and valuable asset to our organization is you, the member. Without membership, there is no FSAWWA. There are no councils, regions, or committees on which to serve. There is no board of governors, or executive committee, no section chairs, and certainly, no parent association or association presidents.

In closing, I am forever grateful for the opportunity to serve the membership as section chair. The experience has been rewarding, both personally and professionally, and I will be looking back on it often throughout my life.

The lessons learned and the friendships made transcend the norm.

One final parting note: I sincerely hope that you take advantage of the FSAWWA Fall Conference, either this year or in the future, and all that it offers, including our first-ever opening general session and conference mobile app. Together, these new components help to enhance and optimize your conference experience. The FSAWWA Fall Conference is truly unique among a vast sea of conferences throughout the state. You, the member, own this one.