Message from the Chair

The Region VII board and I could not be happier with the wonderful year we have had thus far! In 2020 we were unable to host our usual calendar of events due to the COVID19 pandemic. However, we adapted and entered the virtual world, hosting technical seminars and networking events virtually throughout 2021. Now, halfway through 2022, we can officially say that we are back to a “new normal,” with our Region successfully hosting the 2022 Drinking Water Taste Test, Baynanza, Model Water Tower Competition, Drop Savers Poster Competition, and one Young Professionals (YP) Seminar. The member attendance and volunteer support at each of these events has been phenomenal. And for that I would like to thank each of our members and water utilities. You have all been patient with us as we have navigated through the last two years, and you are now showing up as eager as ever to support Region VII of the FSAWWA.

Along with our members and water utilities, these events would not be possible without the support of our Annual Sponsors. Region VII is incredibly grateful for the support of our 26 Annual Sponsors. We thank each of you for your dedication and commitment to the Region.

Region VII remains dedicated to engaging members of the South Florida water industry. We have an exciting second half of 2022 planned, with a variety of events that will continue to bring awareness to the causes of supporting safe drinking water and water conservation. Our next in-person event is the Key West Networking Event, which will take place on June 23rd at Mangoes in Key West. We are also in the process of planning numerous technical seminars along with our annual YP seminar and networking event, the Topgolf tournament, the Water for People Wine Tasting event, and our end of the year membership appreciation social. I look forward to the continued success of Region VII and will see you at our next event!

For any questions regarding FSAWWA Region VII, including volunteer opportunities, email Elizabeth at epage@comtecheng.com
2022 Drop Saver Poster Contest

With collaboration between utilities and their local schools, the “Drop Savers” Water Conservation Poster Contest gives students from kindergarten through high school the opportunity to design a poster about water conservation. Students from kindergarten to 12th grade are encouraged to create a poster depicting a water conservation idea, in slogan form, drawing form, or both. The contest allows students to promote water awareness and the importance of water conservation in their daily routines. In 2022, 27 utilities around the state participated, submitting over 125 posters. The winning posters are displayed here.

Model Water Tower Competition

Some talented student engineers demonstrated their skills in hydraulics, structural efficiency, and creativity on April 30 while they competed as part of the 13th Annual Model Water Tower Competition. Fourteen teams from the middle and high school levels exhibited problem-solving skills as they revealed the water towers they built with limited specifications. Based on the the submissions, the local engineering and water industry looks to be in good hands for the future. Region VII Winning middle school and high school teams were $300 (first place), $200 (second place) and $100 (third place).

The winning teams were:

**Middle School:***
1st place: Rockway Middle
2nd place: Rockway Middle
3rd place: Glades Middle

**High School:***
1st place: G. Holmes Braddock High
2nd place: G. Holmes Braddock High
3rd place: Coral Park High

This fun and education event is made possible each year through the generous support from Region VII’s annual sponsors.
YP Virtual Networking Event

On April 7, 2022, Region VI and VII hosted a joint webinar for young professionals to provide guidance for a successful career in the water industry. We had two guest speakers, Jennifer Mc Mahon, P.E., with Hazen and Sawyer, and Melody Gonzalez, E.I., with Black & Veatch. Jennifer provided insight and narratives on lessons learned from extensive experience working in the water industry, including working overseas in Australia. Melody spoke about work-life balance and her experience volunteering in multiple engineering outreach events on top of work and raising a family.

Collaboration between Region VI and VII was able to reach a larger audience and engagement from YPs. The webinar offered unique perspectives and advice to young professionals on how to establish a successful career in the water industry.

Baynanza Biscayne Bay Clean-Up Day

FSAWWA Region VII participated in the Baynanza Biscayne Bay Cleanup Day on April 23, 2022, at Morningside Park. Baynanza is a celebration of Biscayne Bay and its significance as one of our most important ecological systems in South Florida. The purpose of the event was to promote conservation of the bays. More than 50 volunteers from FSAWWA participated in the event with their families, where they picked up trash from the Biscayne Bay shoreline. A special guest this year was the AWWA Water Monster Tank. The tank supplied fresh and safe drinking water from the Miami Dade County Water and Sewer Department system. The tank saved people from using plastic water bottles. The goal of the tank was to keep plastics out of the landfills and bays, encourage participants to bring their own sustainable refillable water bottles, and promote drinking delicious tap water. It was an amazing event and had a huge success with piles of garbage collected.
1. **How long have you been a member of FSAWWA Region VII?**

   I have been a member of AWWA since 2019. I first got involved with AWWA when I was invited to a Young Professionals Networking Event by a friend from University, Raul Alfaro. I started to attend most of the technical seminars and socials hosted by FSAWWA. It was a great opportunity to network and learn about the water industry.

2. **What committee do you currently volunteer with?**

   I currently volunteer as the Young Professionals Committee chair for FSAWWA Region VII. I began volunteering with the YP virtual events in 2020 when in-person meetings were on pause due to the pandemic. We hosted virtual bingo with water themed questions to give out prizes to the attendees as a fun way to interact with other members. In 2021 we organized multiple in-person networking events for young professionals. The 2021-member appreciation event in Coconut Grove at the end of the year was a great turnout.

3. **What is your current position?**

   Currently I am an environmental engineer working for Miami-Dade County Division of Environmental Resources, Water & Wastewater Division. In my current role I am responsible for reviewing construction plans, issuing permits, and monitoring the operational status for private and public sanitary sewer collection and transmission systems in Miami-Dade County.

4. **Why did you get into the engineering industry?**

   I studied environmental engineering at Florida International University because I was motivated to work in a field that has a focus on protecting our natural resources. My first internship was for the Miami-Dade County Water & Sewer Department water conservation and leak detection program. I hope to continue to work in preserving our natural resources including water and giving back to the community.

5. **What do you like to do for fun?**

   When I’m not working, I enjoy spending time outdoors. I like to ride bike on Key Biscayne, play soccer, and scuba diving in Key Largo.
18th Annual “Best of the Best” Drinking Water Taste Test

On April 14th, Region VII held its first “Best of the Best” Drinking Water Taste Test since 2019. We are pleased to announce that the 2022 Region VII winner is the Florida Keys Aqueduct Authority (FKAA), winning for the first time since 2016. The Miami-Dade Water and Sewer Department (MDWASD) came in second place.

This year’s event took place at the Miami Marriott Dadeland and was attended by over 175 members of the South Florida water industry. The event was made possible with the support of Region VII’s 26 Annual Sponsors, 13 Event Sponsors, and five participating water utilities. Along with FKAA and MDWASD, the City of Homestead, the City of North Miami and NMB Water participated in the contest.

Cristina Ortega Castineiras, past Region VII Chair, served as the Master of Ceremonies. Each participating water utility selected one representative to blindly judge the water samples. Each water sample was given a score between 1 and 10 by each judge. FKAA scored the highest in the final round and went on to represent Region VII at the State-level competition which took place on April 26th at the Florida Water Resources Conference (FWRC) in Daytona Beach, Florida.

As is the case every year, FSAWWA conducts the Drinking Water Taste Test in an effort to highlight each water utility’s success in producing safe drinking water for its customers and to raise awareness about water conservation. A portion of the proceeds from this event benefits Water for People as well as the Roy Likins Scholarship.
UPCOMING EVENTS:

KEY WEST SOCIAL AND YOUNG PROFESSIONAL NETWORKING EVENT

WHEN: June 23, 2022, 5:30 PM
WHERE: MANGOES IN KEY WEST
700 Duval Street
Key West, Fl 33040

Register here: www.fsawwa.org/reg7networking

REGION VII OFFICERS

Region Chair
Elizabeth Page, P.E.

Vice Chair
Catalina Lopez-Velandia, P.E.

Secretary
Guillermo Rivera

Treasurer
Raul Alfaro, P.E.

Young Professionals Chair
Guillermo Rivera & Kevin Gerszuny, P.E.

Membership Chair
Raul Alfaro, P.E. & Jorge Camacho, P.E.

Communications Chair
Jessica Ligenza & Jennifer Messemer-Skold

Public Affairs Council Chair
Adriana Lamar

Utility Council Chair
Samuel Zamacona, E.I.

Technical/Education Council Chair
Jonathan Moreno P.E. & Andrea Etcheverry

Manufacturers/Associates Council Chair
Eric Corey & Tyler Tedcastle, P.E.

Contractors Council Chair
Jorge Valdes

Water for People Chair
Robert Regalado, P.E. & Carla Sanchez

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