As the director of a fast-growing utility I have long been sold on the benefits that American Water Works Association (AWWA) membership brings to our workforce. Recently however, we have decided to upgrade our membership from several individual members to a utility membership. I’m convinced that this approach is much more cost-effective for us, and I highly recommend that others look into the benefits of becoming a utility member.

Utility membership with AWWA comes with many benefits that are not included with an individual membership. In addition to the benefits individuals receive, AWWA provides utilities with additional resources to help manage a utility: tools for assessing infrastructure needs, rate setting, training and certification programs, communicating the value of water service to the public, and opportunities to craft regulatory policy.

I have worked closely with Andy Chase, the AWWA utility relationship manager, on our decision and its transition, and have asked him to address the issues that my utility considered in upgrading our membership.

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**Utility Membership**

Bill Young
Chair, FSAWWA

I’m incredibly proud to be the first utility relationship manager in the 137-year history of AWWA. I joined the member engagement and development team in January 2015, and I was charged with developing our utility recruitment process. I realized early on the power of partnering with sections and recruiting volunteers to join me in meetings with utilities and municipalities. We identify nonmember utilities through a variety of sources and group them geographically; I then reach out to section leadership and ask for volunteers to commit one day to visit the utilities with me.

When meeting with utilities, we discuss how each water utility benefits from its AWWA membership differently; but for most, at least three areas of value rise to the top.

First, AWWA is the preeminent forum for knowledge and solutions to help water professionals—and water utilities—do their jobs better and more efficiently. Through its international and local conferences, peer-reviewed Journal AWWA and other publications, and online training and webcasts, AWWA helps its members discover the right technologies, management strategies, and operational tactics to assure that each customer dollar is being spent efficiently and in a way that best protects public health.

Second, AWWA is the entity that produces water industry standards for materials, equipment, and practices used in water treatment and supply. All AWWA members have a voice in the creation of these standards, and utility members always have access to the full, updated set. The association also produces a robust set of manuals of practice to complement the standards. Members further enjoy deep discounts on a vast collection of handbooks, reports, and other tools created through the intellectual capital of those in the industry.

Third, AWWA provides the water sector with a critical voice in Washington D.C., where legislative and regulatory decisions can dramatically impact each of the more than 52,000 community water systems across the United States. Working closely with our utility members, AWWA’s government affairs group and its Water Utility Council bring sound science and the real-life experience of water utilities to the public policy dialogue. The association brings critical technical information to the regulatory process and frequently has its officers and members testify before Congress on legislative and other matters. Utility members stay informed through regular public affairs, legislative, and regulatory advisories, and a biweekly newsletter, Water Utility Insider.

We’ve enjoyed substantial success in the Florida Section. The AWWA membership engagement and development team has been working closely with the section to recruit new utility members. I’ve had the pleasure of meeting with utilities with Florida Section Chair Bill Young, St. Johns County Utilities; Chair-Elect Mike Bailey, Cooper City Utilities; Past Chair Mark Lehigh, Hillsborough County Water Resources; and Steve Soltau, Pinellas County Utilities.

We are excited to welcome the Jacksonville Electric Authority (JEA); Pasco County Utilities; St. John’s Utility Department; Polk County Utility, City of Coral Springs; City of Coconut Springs; and Village of Wellington as utility members. Utilities benefit from their utility membership, and the section benefits as well, since a portion of membership dues is returned to the section for operations to maintain member services locally.

Successes such as these help to maintain AWWA as the largest nonprofit, scientific, and educational association dedicated to managing and treating water, the world’s most important resource. With our 51,000 members, AWWA provides solutions to improve public health, protect the environment, strengthen the economy, and enhance our quality of life.

I urge you to consider a utility membership and decide if it’s right for your organization, but remember that any kind of membership in AWWA is money well spent!

**American Water Works Association Florida Section**