

Message from the President

Who are these Board members and just what do they do for NYRWA?

by Florence Braunius,
NYRWA President



I hope everyone is finding some time to enjoy the summer weather. In the Adirondacks, our small communities' populations increase, as our seasonal residents arrive for the three months of what may or may not be Summer. I had a difficult time finding a topic to write about for this issue. Everything seemed like "old news", elections are finally over in NY, the stimulus topic has been vocalized in every which way imaginable and work topics are something better left for another time of year. I am taking the opportunity to write about the NYRWA Board of Directors, our role with NYRWA and our contributions to the Association.

The Board of Directors is a volunteer board representing five regions of NYS, as well as, a Director at Large. We also have a National Director who represents New York on the National Rural Water Board. I am going to begin with our most Western Region of NYS and the Director is Jerry Barron. Jerry is from the Town of Holland and has served for twenty plus years on the board and is a past President. Jerry's experiences working with a small community have overlapped with our Board. He looks out for his Town's interest with its water system, and is dedicated to providing the best water quality at an affordable cost to his water users. Jerry has played a big part with our Technical Conference Committee. Many of the changes that have taken place over the past years have been through Jerry's work on this committee. He is always willing to listen to suggestions and ideas and to see them work for the betterment of the Association. So when you see Jerry Barron, please take the time to thank him for his years of commitment to NYRWA and his willingness to continue.

Traveling east, we come to the Manchester/Shortsville area, where Brian Romeiser is the Chief Operator of the wastewater system. Brian is the newest member of our Board and he is our Secretary/Treasurer. Brian is diligent in reviewing our budget as it is presented each year and also keeps a keen eye on the monthly reports that we receive at our Board meetings. With respect to the Board, Brian is one of three members who are actively working as a wastewater operator. There are times when we have struggled to keep the wastewater issues as predominant as water issues and Brian has been instrumental in keeping this perspective in check. Thank

you Brian, for your willingness to represent the Finger Lakes Region.

The central portion of NYS is represented by Steve Freeman, from Boonville. Steve has served for many years and is a past President. Steve also pays attention to details when we have issues to discuss and there are decisions to be made. Steve is always helpful and has served on several committees. His willingness to help is displayed in his own community where he is often found assisting his neighbors in surrounding towns. Steve's sense of humor is always appreciated at our meetings and he has the ability to help all of us see the situation from other angles. Steve is the father of two elementary aged children and I appreciate his generosity with his time to attend NRWA Rally and other events that take him away from his family and his job.

Heading South, to the southern portion of the state, we get to the Village of Maybrook and the home of Matt Thorp. Matt is one person who puts his heart into his volunteer efforts, and he has a few. I would have to say Matt is a true ambassador to our members. He is always willing to share information with anyone and he takes time to listen to your concerns. Matt has been instrumental in preparation for our 2nd Annual Expo this September in Dutchess County and we all appreciate his help. He is our Vice President and has been a member of the Board for several years. Matt is enthusiastic about Rural Water and it shows when you speak with him about the issues that our communities face every day. He too is generous with his time for our Association, serving previously as Secretary/Treasurer and on committees.

John O'Connell wears two hats. First, he was elected to our Board as Director At Large, and his other role is as National Director. I cannot begin to explain and do justice to the role that the National Director has to fill. If you consider the duties that John's role as National Director has, just take those and make them nationwide for starters. The National Board of Directors meets on a regular basis, always in Washington, DC, at Rally Week and again at the National Rural Water Conference. The National Board also has a full menu of committees and John is currently serving on the Program Review Committee. Everyone is always trying to find ways to do more for the states they serve and find ways to insure

that our federal funding stays intact and John's committee is at the forefront of those efforts. John also serves on the National Awards Committee and the Scholarship Committee. To say that serving as National Director is just an enhanced version of a state board member is an understatement. John has a big responsibility and a big commitment in his role as National Director and I cannot thank him enough for the work he does at the national level.

Our Associate Members are represented by a Delegate to our Board. Currently Jim Heiser from Lamont Engineers is representing our Associate Members. Jim brings a good perspective of the issues that our Associate Members deal with at our Technical Conference and other times throughout the year to the Board. I have been attending the conference for 15 years and I can only remember one year that Jim was not in attendance. We appreciate Jim's ability to talk to the Associate Members and bring their suggestions to the Board.

That leaves the Capital Region of New York State, which is represented by yours truly. I have been on the board since September of 2000, and currently serve as President. It is a privilege to be a part of this Board of dedicated individuals. I learn from these people every

time we get together. The Board works as a whole to oversee the financial responsibility of the Association and to keep the Association focused on what our members are hoping to achieve through their membership with us. So that is our Rural Water Board of Directors family and we are a family. We stay in touch, we have our little rifts as any family does, but we work together for the betterment of the Association to the best of our abilities.

Thank you everyone for your generosity with your time and your talents. ●

