

American Slow Sand Association: Farewell, and Thank You!

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The Book of Ecclesiastes teaches us: There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under Heaven:

A time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot. Eccl 3:1-2

Well folks, "The American Slow Sand Association", formerly "Slow Sand Operators For New York State", has decided it is time

to uproot. As of September 10th, 2004, Mr. Michael E. McCormack, Superintendent and Chief Plant Operator for the Ilion Water Commission, will begin his well-earned retirement. Mike is a former member of the New York Rural Water Association Board of Directors.

He began employment with The Village of Ilion as a paid fireman June 10th, 1974. Five years later, he began serving as Water Treatment Plant Foreman. In August of 1984, he began what he presumed to be a 'short term' position as Superintendent of Water, serving under a Board of Water Commissioners. Ilion's slow sand system now treats one to one and a half million gallons per day.

The Slow Sand Operators For New York State began in early 1982, as an operator's forum, meeting semi-annually. Originally, there were about 15 slow sand treatment systems in New York State.

The association was predicated on a study by Syracuse University, of using slow sand filtration as a treatment technology.

Mr. John Cunnan, with the New York State Department of Health, was very instrumental in keeping the association going as long as it did, and served as its president for two years or so, until health problems forced him to step down. Today he is retired and living in Fort Plain, New York.

The main objective of the association was to provide credibility to the concept of slow sand filtration as a treatment technology and to get the technology introduced worldwide as a viable system of water treatment in today's age. Through the years, it became clear that the name needed to be changed to The American Slow Sand Association as membership grew to include about ten more systems in New York and systems in Canada. Membership expanded to include water systems in Japan and The Thames Water Authority in London, England. At disbandment, there were about 100 members, 57 of whom had voting rights. There were organizational and individual membership levels with voting rights, and associate and non-voting members, without voting privileges.

Mike reassumed the responsibilities of Association President, and has served ever since. Due to increasing time constraints and the complexities of operating a water system today, with complex regulations coming on the horizon ever

more frequently, it has proven difficult to get a replacement for Mike as president.

Also, having accomplished the association's main goal of establishing slow sand as a modern viable technology, the membership voted to disband. Mike tells me the membership also voted nearly unanimously to fold their remaining treasury, a considerable sum, into the National Rural Water Association network, whose plans, I believe, are to perpetuate The American Slow Sand Association's work by using the funds in research work.

When I asked Mike about his plans for the future, he said: "At this point, I'm not sure what I want to be when I grow up!" "I'm open to input!"

Mike has seen many changes throughout his years of public service. He is a strong advocate for public employees being trained, equipped, PAID, and supported! He feels the people making and treating your drinking water are specialists and should be regarded and treated as such.

Mike adds that he feels privileged to have worked with an interested and active Board of Water Commissioners. "It's been a great job!" He says. "I'm glad I did it, BUT, I'm glad it's over too!"

The folks at New York Rural Water Association wish you well Mike. And we thank you for your many years of



Receiving the donation from left to right:
Mike Steck, Village of Waverly; Pat Scalera, NYRWA;
Janet Darling & Mike McCormack, Ilion Water
Commission

dedicated service to your profession, your community, and to The American Slow Sand Association! Please keep us informed as to what you 'grow into'! (Lucky dog!)

As for the American Slow Sand Association, though you have disbanded, you will not be forgotten. We sincerely thank you for your considerable act of generosity. You have individually and collectively established a record of

accomplishment you can all be proud of. You set an example of what 'like-minded' people can achieve if they desire.

Roman 13:7 says to pay tribute to whom tribute is due. Well, that is the intent of this article, tribute is due each of you. As you continue to serve your people in your water systems, we thank each of you for your dedicated service and wish you well in the future.