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AERIAL VIEW OF
VILLAGE OF MARATHON CITY WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT,
MARATHON CITY WI

The Clarifier

VOL. 258 DECEMBER 2024

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The Clarifier is the publication of the Wisconsin Wastewater Operators' Association and is intended to inform and educate the membership on issues related to the treatment and control of wastewater. The Clarifier is produced five (5) times each year: February, April, June, September, and December. All members are encouraged to contribute to the mission of the Clarifier.

The Wisconsin Wastewater Operators' Association is a non-profit organization dedicated to educating, informing, and advancing the wastewater profession. WWOA has approximately 2,000 members divided throughout six regions: Southeast, Southern, Lake Michigan, North Central, Northwest, and West Central.

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Utilities General Manager
City of New Holstein
2110 Washington St
New Holstein WI 53061
Cell: 920-251-8100
marcstephanie@outlook.com

Joshua Voigt **Past President**

Direct Sales Representative
Flygt a Xylem Brand
411 Riverview Drive
Neosho WI 53059
Work: 262-506-2343
Cell: 414-719-5567
joshua.voigt@xylem.com

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Superintendent
City of Wausau Waterworks
430 Adrian Street
Wausau WI 54403
Work: 715-261-6941
Cell: 715-965-2206
ben.brooks@ci.wausau.wi.us

Jenny Pagel **Vice President**

Wastewater Foreman
City of Clintonville
350 E 15th Street
Clintonville WI 54929
Cell: 715-250-0623
jpagel@clintonvillewi.org

Aaron Eichhorst **(2023-2025)**

Director
Wastewater Treatment Leader
NEW Water
2231 N Quincy Street
Green Bay WI 54302
Work: 920-438-1007
Cell: 920-461-2424
aeichhorst@newwater.us

Katie Jo Jerzak **(2023-2025)**

Director
Wastewater Compliance
Engineer-Wisconsin DNR
Eau Claire WI 54701
Cell: 715-313-0754
Katiejojerzak@msn.com

Nate Tillis (2024-2025) **Director**

Wastewater Utility Director
Racine Wastewater Utility
800 Center St. Rm. 227
Racine WI 53403
Work: 262-636-9434
Cell: 262-822-8475
nate.tillis@cityofracine.org

Cody Schoepke **(2024-2026)**

Director
Superintendent
Fond du Lac WTRRF
700 Doty Street
Fond du Lac WI 54936
Cell: 920-251-9859
cschoepke@fdl.wi.gov

Kevin Berg **(2024-2026)**

Director
Engineering Services Dir.
Walworth County
Metropolitan Sewerage
District
975 W Walworth Ave
Delavan WI 53115
Cell: 262-755-9229
kberg@walcomet.com

Courtney Harris **Executive Secretary**

262 W Main Street
Wales, WI 53183
Phone: 414-908-4950
customercare@wwoa.org

Clarifier Staff

Jon Butt 414-755-1149
jon.butt@meadhunt.com

Ron Dickrell 715-387-1464
Cell: 715-897-2863
rdickrell@gmail.com

Doralee Piering
262-377-6360
doralee@energenecs.com

Presidents Message: Giving thanks and encouraging a future of continued growth within the WWOA

As we transition from the end of 2024 and look toward the new year, I am excited and honored to take on the role as your WWOA president. I have been part of the wastewater industry for over 20 years and during this journey, have witnessed many generations of exceptional board members and vendors develop and contribute to the legacy of what the WWOA stands for. I strive to continue to build this legacy for the future generations to come.



Before we can move forward with future growth, I would like to take a moment to thank key participants that have made not only the 2024 year successful, but also years prior.

To our board members (both current and past): Thank you for your hard work, dedication, and stewardship to this organization. Your role is critical to not only maintaining the mission of our organization, but its financial success.

To our vendors, sponsors, and consultants: Thank you for volunteering your time and supporting our major events throughout the year by hosting activities and contributing to our educational fund.

To our attendees and your communities: Thank you for pursuing your continued professional development by attending and participating in our annual conference. We would also like to thank your communities for valuing this educational/networking opportunity. By supporting your time away from work, you are able to develop and implement new ideas and processes within your own municipalities.

Most importantly, we would like to thank all the volunteers that commit valuable time and energy into creating an

educational and enjoyable event for all involved.

In the spirit of the holiday season, I invite operators to continue to volunteer within your communities and within our organization. Donating your time and talent is an essential building block for maintaining the WWOA's continued growth, longevity, and the level of service we contribute back to you as its members. Infusion of new ideas and fresh perspectives are crucial in keeping this organization relevant and effective and I welcome all within our profession to contribute.

From my family to yours, we wish you a Happy Holiday

Clarifier deadlines 2025

Issue	Deadline
February	January 17
April	March 14
June	May 16
September	August 15
December	November 14

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Village of Marathon City Wastewater Treatment Plant

By: Ken Bloom, Steve Cherek/Village of Marathon City and Tina Sebold/Strand Associates, Inc.®

Public Works Supervisor: Chris Trice
Director of Public Works & Utilities: Ken Bloom
Village Administrator: Steve Cherek
UW-Stevens Point Summer Intern: Nicholas Wolski
Waterworks Operator: Aaron Martin
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Plant History

The first wastewater treatment plant for the Village of Marathon City was constructed on the current plant site in 1934 and included primary treatment, anaerobic sludge digestion, and sludge drying beds. Treated wastewater was discharged to the Big Rib River and dried sludge was applied to agricultural land. Some equipment additions were made in 1958, but the next major upgrade was not completed until 1973. This upgrade included manual screening, a comminutor, aerated grit removal, activated sludge secondary treatment, chlorine disinfection, a second anaerobic digester, a new blower and pump building, expansion of the Control Building, and new plant effluent piping and outfall.

An ultraviolet (UV) light disinfection system was installed at the plant in 1994, replacing the chlorine disinfection system and eliminating the need for chlorine storage at the plant that is only about 250 feet from the Marathon High School.

The new phosphorus effluent limit regulations promulgated in the early 1990s required additional upgrades to meet the 1.0 mg/L limit by 2000. These upgrades to the Marathon City WWTP also addressed aging equipment and added sludge handling facilities. Preliminary treatment was modified to include a mechanical fine step screen and vortex grit removal system. A second primary clarifier was added. Fine bubble diffusers replaced coarse bubble

diffusers in the aeration tanks and dissolved oxygen control was implemented. New mechanisms were installed in the two 25-foot secondary clarifiers. The UV disinfection system ballasts and controls were relocated to a dedicated small, prefabricated building. Phosphorus removal was addressed with a biological phosphorus removal (BPR) system, including three anaerobic/anoxic tanks with ORP monitoring and a chemical phosphorus removal polishing/backup system with a 1,100-gallon chemical storage tank.

Sludge management improvements included replacement of RAS and WAS pumps, a new 0.8-meter gravity belt thickener, new WAS and thickened WAS storage tanks, sludge transfer and recirculation pumps for those tanks, and a new 280,000-gallon biosolids storage tank to meet the 180-day biosolids storage requirements.



2021

A flood wall was added around the northwest part of the plant to provide flood protection since that part of the plant is within the 100-year flood plain. A duplex effluent pump station was also installed to address backflow into the plant during flooding of the Big Rib River.

Path to 2022 Improvements Project

In 2010, phosphorus rules were revised again, and the Village was one of the first WWTPs in the state to have a phosphorus compliance schedule added to its discharge permit. Facilities planning focused on phosphorus compliance was completed in 2016, however, because Marathon City was within the Wisconsin River basin, the new phosphorus discharge limit would not be known until the ongoing Wisconsin River Basin TMDL was completed. By 2019, when the TMDL was completed, the plant was

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experiencing regular equipment failures, requiring significant equipment repair and labor. The plant also



experienced several overflows during wet-weather events that ultimately resulted in an agreement with the Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) to implement plant improvements to address overflows.

Channel overflow

The 2016 Facilities Plan was updated in 2020 to address the additional plant issues. The selected secondary treatment alternative was an Aero-Mod treatment system. This alternative could meet many of the needs of the facility, including the tight site conditions because of common wall construction and reduced footprint, elimination of hydraulic bottlenecks, addition of BPR, replacement of the aging anaerobic digestion system with aerobic digestion, and the potential to meet future nitrogen limits. The selected phosphorus compliance alternative included a third-party phosphorus reduction project with a local agricultural producer under the multi-discharger variance.

2022-2024 Project Improvements

Many improvements were made to the existing facilities and site from 2022 through 2024 to assure that the plant could meet its current as well as potential future permit limits, while meeting the fiscal constraints of a smaller community. The improvements covered four major areas:

1. Replacement of flow processes and improvements of solids handling.
2. Newly constructed blower and chemical building.
3. Existing treatment plant raised and turned into green space for potential future plant expansion.

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WATER TECHNOLOGIES



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4. Site improvements to make the facility more accessible and secure and promote better drainage.



New facility

All the forward flow processes were replaced and solids handling was modified with the additional goal of reducing labor and biosolids volume. This included the following

improvements:

- Preliminary treatment. The existing building was retained and the screening channel expanded to provide more hydraulic capacity, installation of a new step screen and wash press, replacement of the 360-degree vortex grit removal system equipment and grit pump, and installation of a new, reduced footprint grit classifier.
- Influent pumping and metering. The existing BPR tanks were repurposed into an influent pumping station wet well and valve pit. Four pumps with VFDs were provided to cover the wide range of flow from the design average flow of 0.36 mgd to the peak hourly flow of 2.2 mgd.
- Secondary treatment. Addition



Step screen and grit classifier

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BPR tanks before upgrade



Influent pumping station after upgrade



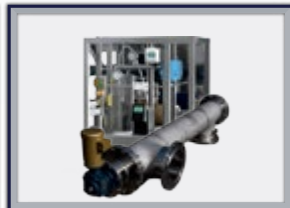
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of an Aero-Mod Treatment System consisting of a BPR fermenter tank and a BPR selector tank, followed by two trains of four tanks per train, including three aeration stages and a final clarifier with no moving parts.

• Disinfection. Addition of a UV disinfection system to replace the old system from the 1990s that could not be turned down to save energy during periods of low flow.



UV disinfection system

• Plant effluent sewer and new outfall. The existing buried plant effluent sewer could not be located or televised to determine its condition. Therefore, a new concrete sewer and outfall

were approved by the WDNR to discharge to an existing stormwater swale tributary to the Big Rib River, just north of the plant. This saved significant costs compared to investigating and repairing the existing 12-inch sewer that had insufficient capacity and was significantly longer and deeper than the new 18-inch plant effluent line.

• Digestion. Aerobic digestion is included in the Aero-Mod treatment system. Mixed liquor is wasted to the digester automatically with an air lift pump from the second stage aeration tanks.

A new blower and chemical building was constructed to house the equipment associated with the Aero-Mod system as well as other ancillary systems.

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Blower and chemical building







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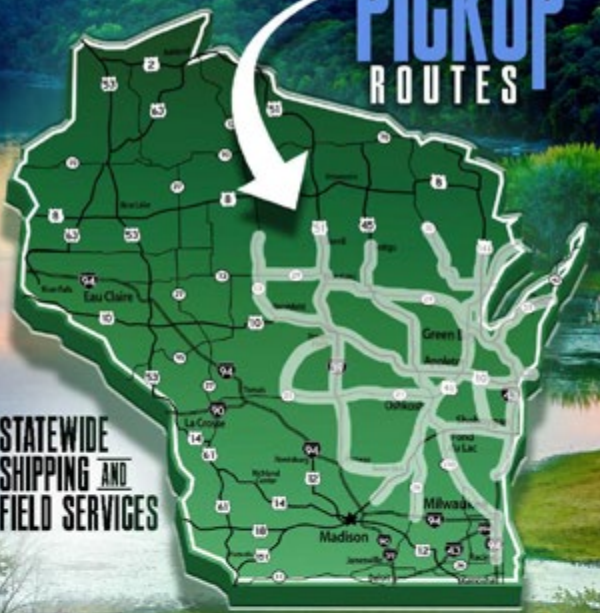
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continued from page 10

Aero-Mod-related equipment in this building includes three positive displacement blowers, air compressors and a desiccant dryer to serve the pneumatic valves used to control the Aero-Mod process, and the control panel and electrical gear.



Positive displacement blowers



Pneumatic air control valves

Other equipment in this building includes:

- Rotary lobe pumps used to transfer digested sludge from the digesters to the WAS storage tank in the control building. This tank was retained for this purpose and a small blower and diffuser grid added to allow longer storage while preventing secondary phosphorus release.
- CPR polishing and backup phosphorus removal system in a dedicated room consisting of a 5,300-gallon tank, allowing delivery of a full load of chemical (alum), a chemical metering pump skid, and related accessories.

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CPR system

- Effluent sampler, plant water supply system with automatic strainer, and the phosphorus analyzer to control dosing of alum when needed.

The existing plant control building had gone through three additions during previous plant upgrades but was still in

good condition. Nonetheless, improvements were made to windows and doors, interior leaks addressed, and the roof replaced. The anaerobic digestion tanks are part of the building structure and were abandoned in-place. All

anaerobic digestion-related pumps, heat exchangers, and the boiler were removed, opening a lot of space for storage and other uses. The recirculation pumps serving the WAS and TWAS tanks were kept in service and the primary transfer pump used for pumping to the storage tank and loading trucks was also kept but reoriented for the new system and to allow an addition of a second pump in the future.



Relocated sludge transfer and loading pump

Many smaller improvements were also made to allow better access and improve maintenance, and to provide operational flexibility.

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Gravity belt thickener (GBT) curbing and drainage

After the Aero-Mod plant was in service and successfully meeting effluent limits, the existing treatment plant, except for the control building, was demolished and transformed into green space. This area is reserved for potential future plant expansion.

Site improvements were made to make the facility more accessible and secure and promote better drainage. A new plant access road located outside of the floodplain was constructed at the east side of the plant to allow trucks making chemical deliveries to drive straight through the site. New parking spaces for staff and visitors were also added near the control building.



New roadway, parking area, and retaining wall

The Village of Marathon City WWTP improvements project was advertised for bids in February 2022 and substantially complete in December 2023.

Performance

The Marathon City WWTP has an average design flow of 0.36 mgd. WPDES permit limits for discharge to the Big Rib River are:

- CBOD₅ 25 mg/L (monthly), 40 (weekly)
- TSS 30 mg/L (monthly), 45 (weekly)
- Total Phosphorus 0.8 mg/L (MDV)


Plant performance since startup, in late 2023, has been good considering the wet weather in the spring and early summer of 2024, which dilutes influent and reduces the efficiency of the BPR system. The average effluent results for January to August are:

- Average flow 0.30 mgd
- Effluent CBOD₅ 3.9 mg/L
- Effluent TSS 8.2 mg/L
- Effluent TP 0.42 mg/L


The new plant systems require much less equipment to operate and, therefore, are easier to maintain. For example, the time spent by plant staff running the GBT has gone

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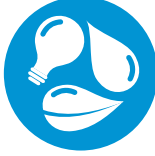
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down from 3 days per week to 1 day per week. Time saving improvements, such as this, are extremely valuable to a small community with limited staff who regularly wear multiple hats, as it allows them to spend more time on other issues throughout the village.

Finally, these improvements mean the Village of Marathon City can rest assured that it is meeting its WPDES permit limits and can be confident that they will be able to do so for many years to come. 🌱

Scholarships and tuition aid available

WWOA offers several scholarships each year to aid full time students enrolled in degree programs related to the field of wastewater treatment and water resource management. Annual application deadline for all scholarships is July 1.

WWOA also offers two (2) tuition aid opportunities. One is for \$250 and another is for \$1000. The Southeast Region and the Southern Region of WWOA also offers tuition aid.

For more information and requirements go to <https://www.wwoa.org/education/scholarship-tuition-aid> 🌱

Innovation – share your ideas!

How do you replace a valve on a biogas line that has failed? Thanks to an operator, we know you could inject shaving cream upstream from the valve to hold back the biogas until the valve can be replaced. This innovative idea came from Beloit.

I bet every operator has that one innovative idea that he or she uses almost everyday. Operators are some of the smartest and most innovative people I know. Maybe it is something you do to help with the treatment process. Maybe it is something you do to make maintenance easier. No matter what it is, your fellow operators want to hear your ideas. Maybe something you do might help someone else.

Here what I want you to do – email me your idea. Or you can call. I'll draft a short article on your behalf about your idea. You approve the article, and we'll include it in an issue of the Clarifier. What could be easier?

Jon Butt, Clarifier Editor c/o Mead & Hunt
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WWOA honorary member tribute Pete Albers, August 8, 1931 –August 28, 2024



The WWOA Clarifier would like to publish a tribute to Pete Albers who passed away on August 26, 2024. At Pete’s Celebration of Life Reception on September 24th a group of Honorary Members and good friends got together and planned for a tribute in his honor. I was asked if I would the lead the effort as a former Clarifier Editor. As a fellow Honorary Member and good

friend of Pete’s I was honored and accepted. The initiation was supposed to take place at the October Annual Meeting in Appleton, but due to a death in my family I was unable to attend and therefore we were not able announce what the plans were and solicit information from the membership.

I am now requesting that everyone and anyone who had stories, memories and pranks with Pete to submit them so they can be assembled into a story / tribute to Pete and his many years with WWOC and WWOA. If I remember correctly (not likely) I did the same thing with Koby Crabtree and Ward Holz many years ago. Don’t worry about style, or how you format it, just get your thoughts and memories in so they can be shared. Between myself and with professional help from Doralee we will get them all blended into an appropriate tribute.

The plan is to publish in the February issue of the Clarifier which has a submittal date of January 17. I know from

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may years of experience to tell you this now, don't wait until January 16th to start your submittal, it will likely not happen. When you finish reading this sit right down and get your thoughts on paper or on screen, whichever is your preference.

I would prefer to have a week to assemble and format so I am setting a deadline for information sent to me of January 13, 2025. You can submit digitally to me at; dabusch1014@gmail.com or if you wish you can send your old fashion written notes to me at 3626 Fairview Rd, Green Bay, WI 54313.

Thank you for your time and attention. As always, the Clarifier is a publication of the WWOA membership and is there for your benefit. You now have an opportunity to contribute to your organization. I'm looking forward to hearing from many of you.

Dan Busch
 WWOA Honorary Member
 Past Clarifier Editor



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Koby Crabtree Award



Ken Sedmac presenting to Tom Crouse

Albers-Templeton Service Award



Randy Langer presenting to Troy Larson



Newcomers of the Year Award



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Tom Pluess presenting to Dennis Largent

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North Central Operator of the Year



Ben Brooks presenting to Brad Wendtland

Northwest Operator of the Year



Larry Reinke presenting to Mark Espeseth

Southern Operator of the Year



Randy Herwig presenting to Wade Peterson

Southeast Operator of the Year



Ben Huffman presenting to Mary Francis Klimek

West Central Operator of the Year



Katie Jo Jerzak presenting to Dan Mattson

Region of the Year Southeast Region



Aaron Eichhorst presenting to Emily Nurmi Southeast Region

Past George F Bernauer Award



Jeff Bratz and Autumn Fischer

Past Koby Crabtree Award



Troy Larson, Rick Mealy, Ken Sedmak, Roy Lembcke, Kay Curtin

Past Albers-Templeton Service Award



Tom Crouse, Kay Curtin, Dale Neis, Jeff Bratz, Randy Herwig, Kevin Freber, Jon Butt, Tom Mulcahy

WWOA lifetime members



*Back: Troy Larson, Marty Dierker, John Bond, Jon Butt, Rory Strehlow, Dale Neis, Bert Sawyer, Ken Sedmak
Middle: Jerry Kitelinger, Roy Lembcke, Kay Curtin, Bob Moser, Jeff Mayou, Kathy Garfinkel, Todd Fischer, Dan Markart,
Mary Francis Klimek, Gary Newton
Front: Don Litner, Tom Kruzick, Jeff Bratz, Randy Herwig, Kevin Freber, Larry Reinke, Jeff "Juice" Simpson, Tom Mulcahy*

Past presidents



*Back: Jeremy Cramer, John Bond, Rick Mealy, Don Litner, Jeff Smudde, Lyle Lutz
Middle: Tom Kruzick, Kay Curtin, Dale Neis, Jeff "Juice" Simpson, Kevin Freber
Front: Jeff Bratz, Randy Herwig*

2024-2025 Board of Directors



Josh Voigt, Jenny Pagel, Ben Brooks, Nate Willis, Aaron Eichhorst, Marc Stephanie, Cody Schoepke, Katie Jo Jerzak, Kevin Berg, Courtney Harris

Gavel pass



Josh Voigt to Marc Stephanie

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2024 scholarship recipients

Crane Engineering

Crane Engineering awarded a \$2000 scholarship to UWEC student Annika Yoney. Annika is majoring in environmental public health and has interned with the Pew Charitable Trust working on multiple environmental policy campaigns. She has also worked with a local wastewater treatment facility and has interned with the Area Health Education Center in Pierce County's public health department. She plans to work in a career focused on environmental justice and equity.



Jeff Simpson presenting to Annika Yoney

Ryan Giefer Memorial Scholarship

This year, the North Central region of the WWOA and Rachel Giefer awarded the first annual Ryan Giefer memorial scholarship of \$2000 to UWSP student Austin Cramer. Austin is studying waste management and plans on working as a wastewater operator after graduation. Austin is an avid outdoorsman who has interned at the Sun Prairie wastewater facility.



Pat Morrow and Rachel Giefer presenting to Austin Cramer

North Central Laboratories

Grace Loosen, UWSP student in the waste management program was awarded a \$5000 scholarship. Grace has worked at the Waukesha WWTP and interned at the Sussex plant. Grace is planning on working as a certified operator after graduation.



Mark Mahoney presenting to Grace Loosen

NCL awarded Kara Kuge a scholarship of \$1000. Kara is a UWSP freshman this year studying waste resource and soil science. Kara was a youth apprentice at the Fon du Lac plant during high school and she credits her interest in the field to this experience.



Mark Mahoney presenting to Kara Kuge

continued on page 29

2024 scholarship recipients

continued from page 28

The WWOA awarded three \$2000 scholarships this year. Fox Valley Technical College student Brandy Hermann is pursuing her degree in the natural resources technician program. Brandy plans to work as a wastewater operator after college and would eventually like to become a director of a plant to positively serve her community. Brandy has also honorably served in the US Army for nearly a decade.



Jenny Pagel presenting to Brandy Hermann

UWSP student Theodore Peterschmidt is studying soil and waste management. He is planning on working as an operator at a wastewater treatment facility after graduation. Once in a treatment role, he plans to explore leadership opportunities in the field. Theo has interned at the Wisconsin Rapids wwtp.



Jenny Pagel presenting to Theodore Peterschmidt

WWOA

UWSP student Daniel Swanson is studying soil and waste resources. He is planning on working as a certified operator after graduation with a long-term goal of eventually working in a superintendent role. Daniel has interned at the Stevens Point wwtp.



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2024 scholarship recipients

continued from page 29

This year, the WWOA offered a \$1000 scholarship for a student attending university or technical college part-time. WWOA member Wayne Castle was awarded this scholarship. Wayne is working for the village of Mukwonago and studying organizational leadership at UWGB.



Katie Jo Jerzak presenting to Wayne Castle

Education Fund

Through generous donations to the education fund, the WWOA was able to offer three additional scholarships in 2024.

A \$1000 scholarship was awarded to Levi Meyers. Levi is a full-time wastewater operator at the Hudson wwtp. He is also pursuing his master of public administration through Northern Illinois University part time. Levi plans to eventually move into a public utilities or wastewater director role after graduation.



Jenny Pagel presenting to Levi Meyers

Education Fund

A \$1000 scholarship was awarded to Dustin Olsen (not pictured). Dustin is studying water science at UWGB after graduating from NWTTC's environmental engineering program. He has interned at the Oconto wwtp.

A \$2000 scholarship was awarded to UWSP student Cade Strom. Cade is majoring in fish and water resources. He has interned with NEW water in Green Bay as a treatment intern and hopes to join their team full time as a treatment operator after graduation.



Jenny Pagel presenting to Cade Strom

Member Benefit – Tuition Reimbursement

This year, WWOA member Ryan St. John (not pictured) was awarded \$1000 in tuition reimbursement. Ryan is working as the water quality technology instructor at Moraine Park Technical College. He is also pursuing a degree from UW-Stout in business management part time. 🌐

Sportsman's board

Have a picture for the Sportsman's board? Send the picture and a description of where you were hunting or fishing to doralee.piering@energenecs.com.

We will do our best to put it in the next available issue of the Clarifier. 🌐

Call for technical papers WWOA 2025, Oct. 14-17 in LaCrosse

Do you have an idea for a technical presentation that you would like to share with the WWOA annual conference attendees? The WWOA technical program committee looks forward to hearing from you. We hope to put together one of our best technical session line ups yet and we can only do that with your help.

Have you recently completed a construction project or upgrade at your facility and could save others in the planning stages some headaches with what you've learned? Are you doing something in a new way and having great results? Do you visit multiple facilities and find that several of them are experiencing similar challenges that you have a solution to? Have you been working on a study for years and are finally ready to share what you've been doing with your peers? Do you have something to share related to the management of our water resource? Please consider doing a technical presentation. If you know someone in your field that has knowledge to share, please encourage them to submit a presentation.

The technical committee is requesting and will be accepting proposals for technical session presentations

from now until February 6th, 2025. In order to submit your presentation proposal, please fill out the google form at <https://www.wwoa.org/2025-call-for-proposals>. All of the required fields must be completed in order for the submission to be received.

If you have questions or issues submitting proposals, feel free to e-mail tech_chair@wwoa.org or call 715-823-7675.

Thank you,
Jenny Pagel 2025 technical program committee chair



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2024 WWOA Operator Competition teams

1st place team



Fondy Water Bears 2
Tyler Burbach, Johannah Trudeau, Ashton Arnold

2nd place team



RASzzle Dazzle
Jon Milheiser, Alex Moon, Sam Maroszek

3rd place team



The Sewage Squad
Charlie Higgs, Adam Freitag, Jamey Burns

4th place team



The Deuce is Loose
Nate Beal, Jake Bierman, Tom Olson



2024 WWOA Operator Competition judges



Judges

Front: Troy Larson, Joe Watson, Jeff Mayou, Ben Hoffman, Jenny Pagel, Ed Bellin, Diane Thoune

Back: Adam Clark, Mark Deurr, Casey Kleven, Josh Voigt, Holly Blazer, Krista Edmunds, Brian Vitala, Aaron Eichhorst

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2024 WWOA annual sporting clays shoot

The Sporting Clays Shoot this year was a huge success with a new record of 124 registered attendees. The event, which was held at Triple J Wing and Clay on Tuesday October 22, consisted of a 50 bird sporting clay shoot at 16 different stations. After the shoot was over, everyone enjoyed a delicious lunch and door prize drawings, along with some great comradery. This year the Top Gun prize for the best individual



Triple J inside

shooter went to Steve Prish with a 47 out of 50. The first place team was Alex Ellis, Wes Wild, Ben Propson, and Dustin Beckman.

Thanks to the generosity of many sponsors, there were almost \$10,000 in door prizes given away during the event. Every attendee won a door prize. Special recognition goes out to the major sponsors for the event: Aquachem of America Inc., Boerger, Crane Engineering, Donohue & Associates, Grundfos,



Top Gun Steve Prish

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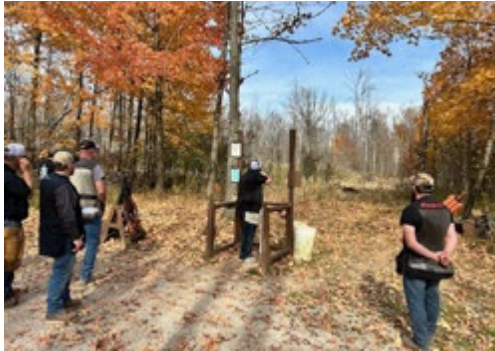


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Jacobs Engineering, Martelle Water Treatment, Midwest Chemical, NEXT Electric, Sherwin Williams, SEH, Trotter Associates, USALCO, and William Reid. Thank you also to our station sponsors and other gift sponsors: Adaptor Inc, Aquachem of America, Crane Engineering, Dorner, Energenecs, Grundfos, J.F. Ahern, NEXT Electric, Midwest Meter Inc., MSA Professional Services, NEXT Electric, SEH, and USALCO LLC.



Out in the field

Another big thanks to Strand Associates for providing the sponsor signage and to all those that pitched in the day of the event.

The committee that planned, organized, and executed the 2024 event included Ben Propson, Josh Voigt, Diane Thoune, Jeff Simpson, and Jeff Smudde.

First Place Team



L to R: Alex Ellis, Ben Propson, Dustin Beckman, Wes Wild

Mark your calendars for Tuesday October 15, 2025 for the next annual shoot in the La Crosse area. The planning team will be evaluating several courses to decide where it will be held. We hope you can join us. 🏌️

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A twist on recruiting for an industry needing growth

Cody Schoepke, Fond du Lac WTRRF Wastewater Superintendent and Kara Kuge, former Fond du Lac WTRRF Youth Apprentice (YA) and current UWSP Student

Many employers are dealing with the frustrations and hardships of job vacancies, especially since the pandemic. You see signs of this wherever you go. However, I feel we in the wastewater industry have been handling these situations for much longer, we just aren't as loud about it. We had the Boomers working 30-40 years in the industry before retiring, but because they were similarly aged, we've seen an increase in vacancies over the last decade. Thus, the supply isn't keeping up with the demand. Our reasons vary as to why we haven't seen an improvement in both the quality and quantity of applicants. Whether that's because the work never slows down and we have the moral compass to just "get it done" with less staff or because we don't have staff or time to advertise the great opportunities available that will support a fulfilling career. Maybe it's because you've already put forth a lot of effort to engage folks, but feel those efforts have been relatively unsuccessful. It can be very challenging

to put an exciting spin on our industry that is productive in attracting new blood in a room full of students who can't wait for the bell to ring or who are too concerned about the smell on a tour. After all, that is what we want as members of this great organization. We want to spread the word and grow our community to help each other continue doing great things to provide clean water. But we need help. For many of us, we have been promoting our industry and our facilities, and yet here I am writing an article on a different way to approach recruitment.

A new opportunity is available to your business or municipality that most of us aren't aware of, I certainly wasn't. Until I began getting more involved in my local high schools and middle schools, I'd never heard of the Youth



Department of Workforce Development

Apprenticeship (YA) program. YA has been a statewide program since

1991 and is facilitated in my region by the Cooperative Education Service Agency (CESA) 6 consortium. If you would like to find out who your regional YA contact is, please visit <https://dwd.wisconsin.gov/apprenticeship/contacts.htm> and select Youth Apprenticeship. You will then be able to search by school district or contact the state YA staff.

CESA 6 provides oversight and YA coordinators to facilitate the hands-on experiences available to high school students. They put them in touch with an employer in their area offering experiences in that career pathway. They work with the students, teachers, administrators, and the employer to coordinate the experience. It wasn't until 2021 that they added a Natural Resource Career Pathway in Water Resources.



<https://www.yawisconsin.org/program-pathways/agriculture-food-natural-resources/>

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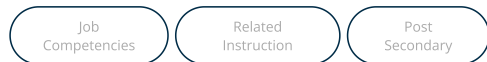
continued from page 36



Environmental Systems: Basic and Advanced Water Resources

Environmental systems youth apprentices learn core skills needed by the water industry to promote protection, improvement, and sustainability of water resources.

Length of the Apprenticeship: One year or two years



For students interested in protecting the environment, clean water, or anything regarding a career in Water & Wastewater there is now a category for them to review enabling them

to request more information. Now, what we do is visible to the students at all times! But who employs these people and what does that career look like? That's where the 2nd piece, and likely the most important aspect, comes into play, Inspire WI. Where I think most of us need help is in the advertisement and promotion of our industry to the younger generations. Many of them haven't decided what they want to do yet. We need to be visible to them at the same time as competing opportunities are available.

WVOA is partnering with Inspire WI to promote our membership's opportunities for employment, education, and involvement with local students. Inspire WI works in unison with CESA, they promote the industry to aid in that connection between students, educators, and our incredible career pathways. This network puts our industry in touch with interested people we may not have had a chance to reach and it does this through a few clicks of a mouse at any time. Through this partnership, WVOA members can be visible and engaged. This can be a proactive approach for future vacancies or provide an opportunity to fill a seasonal role and at the same time provide that experience to hopefully promote a desire to continue in our field, either through education or a career.



There are some requirements for an employer to be involved in the YA program. The youth apprenticeship is a paid position that must meet minimum wage. There is a minimum of 450 hours that must be achieved throughout the summer and the corresponding school year. Of the 450, 200 hours can be counted in the summer toward the YA.

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continued from page 37

Students continue the remaining 250 hours throughout the school year so schedule flexibility can play a role in meeting that requirement. These are all discussions to be had with the representative in your area as well as the student and school staff.

Fond du Lac WTRRF has participated in the CESA YA program for the last 2.5 years. Our first YA was Kara Kuge. She was an eager, shining example of what we would hope all youth apprentices would be like. She was able to be involved in the various areas of daily operation, lab, and



Kara Kuge

maintenance at the treatment facility. If you were at the annual conference a few weeks ago, you likely saw her not only accept a scholarship but also get up on stage in front of a few hundred people to talk about her experience. That took a lot of courage, I don't think I could have done that as a freshman in college. For those of you unable to attend she has agreed to tell you more about her experience and why it is worth your effort to explore this opportunity.

“When I was in high school eager to begin working and finding my interests, I looked towards the widely advertised youth apprenticeship program. However, when researching this program, there were nearly no opportunities within the field of natural resources, nonetheless anything in wastewater. I don't particularly remember how the idea came up, but I got into contact with Cody at Fond du Lac WTRRF and had the opportunity to tour the facility. This for me was the point where I knew that I wanted to learn more about the field and somehow get this youth apprenticeship program to work. I know now that I had only seen about a quarter - if even that of the facility, but all of the different processes and levels of treatment were what made me want

to keep learning more and become a youth apprentice at the facility. I think that an experience like this can happen to so many other high school students, and if not get them into the field, at least get them thinking about wastewater. This is where the YA program would help, by allowing students to look into the pathway or even reach out to nearby facilities and be intrigued like I was. I know that this program can be a risk because there will always be students who will take opportunities like this for granted or even make the program feel like a waste of time for facilities. Yet, I think for each one of those students, some students are motivated and eager to learn more.

This opportunity has helped me meet so many great people in the wastewater industry and grow as a person. Also, it has helped me to develop better hands-on skills, problem-solving skills, and networking/social skills. Even in my current schoolwork, I can find relationships between what I have learned in class and the processes that wastewater undergoes, which has greatly helped me understand the content. Yet, I think the education part of the wastewater YA experience is the hardest part. As a high school student, it was a leap to try to understand phosphorus and nitrogen removal since I did not know their cycles at the time (which I have recently learned and been having “Oh, that's why we do that!” moments all the time). Yet, I think the explanations of my superiors and them quizzing me on things that we do, helped me develop a decent understanding or base for my knowledge. I love that in wastewater there is always something new to learn, in which the industry is constantly changing and developing, or I am literally seeing something I have never seen before. There are plenty of students out there, enthusiastic and willing to learn more, and when presented with the opportunity, could be great additions to the wastewater industry.” Kara Kuge, former Youth Apprentice in Water Resources, UW-Stevens Point Student.

Some municipalities and businesses have explored youth apprenticeship so they are familiar with it. I wonder if it is as structured as this or comes with the level of focus that Inspire WI and CESA provide to promote our opportunities and work with students to find them. We want interested individuals and I think that's at the core of this; finding the right fit for a student interested in our pathway, but still looking at what career will suit them.and potentially be a benefit to us for years to come. I'd ask that you take a few minutes to research CESA and Inspire WI and see what it's all about. I think you'll find it's a very elaborate process, however, the burden of coordination, follow-up, and review does not fall on you or your staff alone. Representatives

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from CESA work with the employer, the student, and the teacher throughout to ensure everyone's goals are being met. Their support is what I've been most impressed with and will appreciate it even more when it is needed. The results from an opportunity like this may not be seen for a few years, it is an investment for our future. Overall, this can be a means to grow our industry.

Please reach out to me or Inspire WI & CESA with questions or for more information using the contact info below. In the next few months, you will see more advertising in this magazine and on both the WWOA and Inspire WI's websites. Will you give it a look? Let's continue to grow!

<https://www.cesa6.org/> <https://inspirewi.org/>

Cody Schoepke
920-322-3662
cschoepke@fdl.wi.gov

Rebecca Droessler
rdroesslermersch@cesa6.org



Save the Date

WWOA Spring Sporting Clays

Thursday April 24th, 2025

**Wild Wings Sportsman's Club
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**Registration to follow
in the February issue of the Clarifier.**



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Water week 2025 and DC policy fly in

Central States Water Environment Association and WWOA leadership invite YOU to participate in Water Week 2025, which will be held from April 7–13 in Washington, DC, featuring the annual Stormwater Policy Forum and the National Water Policy Fly-In. These events represent the largest opportunity for advocating to our elected officials on behalf of water and wastewater needs in Wisconsin. We will hear from key EPA representatives about upcoming policy direction and changes.

The National Water Policy Fly-In is jointly presented by the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA), the Water Environment Federation (WEF), the Water Research Foundation (WRF), and the WaterReuse Association. For 2025, WWOA is requesting that one of our members participate in this event, with Chris Tippery of CSWEA, and represent Wisconsin’s Water and Wastewater communities before our legislative leaders in the House and Senate. Previously, a coalition was developed between Central States Water Environment Association – Wisconsin Section, Wisconsin Wastewater


Operators Association, American Water Works Association – Wisconsin Section, American Society of Civil Engineers, Municipal Environmental Group (MEG) – Wastewater Division, Wisconsin Rural Water Association, and the League of Wisconsin Municipalities to provide a united message to our elected officials. For 2025, this group now also includes the Milwaukee Riverkeepers. If you’re interested, you’ll be advocating for communities’ needs in terms of additional funding, policy and regulations. 2025 is also an important year to get our message out as there will be a new President and new congress with potential means to implement new policies.

If WWOA members would like to participate or have specific items that they would like addressed with our legislators, please reach out to Chris Tippery at tipperycj@cdmsmith.com or give him a call at (414) 203-3936.


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WISCONSIN WASTEWATER OPERATORS ASSOCIATION, INC. BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING AGENDA

11:00 a.m. – 5:00 pm Thursday, August 1, 2024
8:00 a.m. – 11:00 am Friday, August 2, 2024 Meeting
Room: Lake Tomahawk

1. Call to order, Roll Call – J. Voigt
Jeremy Cramer, Past President
Katie Jo Jerzak
Josh Voigt, Pres.
Cody Schoepke
Marc Stephanie, Pres. Elect
Nate Tillis
Ben Brooks, V.P.
Aaron Eichhorst
Jenny Pagel
Courtney Harris, Exc. Secretary

2. Agenda Changes, Additions, or Correspondence

3. Approval of Minutes: April 2024 Meeting – MOTION to approve the April meeting minutes. M. Stephanie; 2nd J. Pagel. APPROVED.

4. Committee Reports – J. Voigt
Clarifier - Jenny/Jon Butt/Katie Jo
 - PDF Word files of the program booklet went to the Clarifier. Executive Committee - Josh

Exhibits, Manufacturers & Consultants - Tom Mulcahy

Nominations - Jeremy Cramer

Resolutions & Bylaws - Jeremy Cramer No report

Technical Committee - Ben Brooks

- Ben is in the process of writing a Standard Operating Procedure for being a tech chair

Annual Awards - Marc Stephanie

- Nominations were received for all the major association awards with Koby Crabtree and Newcomer having two each. The information for each nominee is attached to this report.
- There are 20 new lifetime members that will be awarded at this year's conference.

- The membership award is a tie between two individuals.
- The regions all reported that they have picked their operator of the year
- MOTION to approve awards as presented. M. Stephanie; 2nd N. Tillis.
APPROVED.

Annual Award Plaques - Randy Herwig Arrangements, Local – Chris Templton?

Arrangements, Permanent - Kevin Freber

Career Development /Young Professionals - Katie Jo/Nate Tillis

- Working with WEF on the Midwest Student Design competition but have not heard any updates. Centrisys tour at Kenosha is scheduled for 8/1, and Brewer outing on 8/28

CSWEA Liaison – Schoepke

Conf. Events: Bike Outing - Tom Crouse Conf. Events: Golf Outing - Mulcahy

Conf. Events: Sporting Clays - Smudde/Josh Voigt/Bucky Walters

- Working on getting door prizes from Scheels

Conf. Events: Operators Competition - Jenny Pagel/Aaron Eichhorst

- Got a new banner for the event
 - Going to be same as last year, most judges coming back.
 - Two teams registered so far, going to have at least 5.
- Events-Government Affairs - Cody Schoepke/Ben Brooks/Jeff Smudde

Events-MWOWE - Tillis/Cody Schoepke

- Kickoff meeting occurred 7/11
- Possibly do a raffle in seminars to keep people in the room
- Work on better signage

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- Events-Spring Biosolids – Ben Brooks/Aaron Eichhorst
- CSWEA is the Chair for the 2025 SBS event and the event will be held at the Holiday Inn and Conference Center, Stevens Point, Wi. or possibly the Food & Farm Exploration Center, Plover, Wi. Date to be determined.
 - The SBS Planning Committee plans to meet soon to begin the planning of the 2025 event.

Historical – Photos - Tom Crouse Historical – Records - Jeremy Cramer Membership / Directory - Courtney Harris

- Operator Training - Nate Tillis/Aaron Eichhorst
- The next one is August 7th

Promotional Items - Marc Stephanie/Aaron Eichhorst
Publicity - Katie Jo Jerzak

Regional Coordinator - Aaron Eichhorst

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- Scholarships - Jenny Pagel/Katie Jo Jerzak
- NCL offered an additional \$1,000
 - MOTION to accept scholarship winners as presented. M. Stephanie. 2nd A. Eichhorst. APPROVED.
 - MOTION to approve an additional part-time scholarship from the education fund along with associated costs of the winner prizes. M. Stephanie; 2nd N. Tillis. APPROVED.
 - MOTION to award Ryan St. John the scholarship reimbursement. J. Pagel; 2nd N. Tillis. APPROVED.

Website - Nate Tillis/Jeff Bratz

5. Old Business: All
 - a. Regional yearly fees
 - b. Permanent Operator Competition committee member NON BOD
 - c. CESA/Inspire WI YA Program– WWOA Involvement– C. Schoepke
 - i. MOTION to add \$3,000 to the 2025 budget for the Inspire WI YA Program services. C. Schoepke, 2nd A. Eichhorst. APPROVED.
 - d. DNR exams – want to do it at the 2025 conference\
 - i. Would possibly add as an additional pre-conference session.
6. New Business – All
 - a. CD Renewal – Ben, Jenny, Marc, Nate, Josh The Board met via Zoom on August 9th at 12:00 PM.
 - i. MOTION to reinvest CD and move funds out of Associated Bank and move to Landmark Credit Union. N. Tillis. 2nd. M. Stephanie. APPROVED.
 - ii. MOTION to give Cody \$1,500 to Inspire for the Youth Apprenticeship program YM. M. Stephanie. 2nd. J. Pagel. APPROVED.
7. Important meeting dates
 - February - Technical Committee Meeting
 - February - MWOE
 - February - Government Affairs
 - March - Spring Biosolids
 - April - BOD Meeting
 - August - BOD Meeting
8. Adjournment

MOTION to Adjourn. M. Stephanie; 2nd C. Schoepke 4:45 pm. APPROVED. 🗳️

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