

## **History of the Florida Water Environment Association**

The Florida Water Environment Association began its existence in 1941 under the name Florida Sewerage and Industrial Waste Association. Subsequent name changes over the years (to the Florida Pollution Control Association in 1960 and then to the Florida Water Environment Association in 1992) are reflective of the evolution of public attitudes about wastewater management and the environment. FWEA's name changes also paralleled those of its parent organization, beginning with the Federation of Sewerage and Industrial Waste Associations, which was later renamed the Water Pollution Control Federation and finally the Water Environment Federation.

The first officers of the Association were David B. Lee, President, Leland F. Drew, Vice President, and S.W. Wells, Secretary-Treasurer. The purpose of the Association was to share information and experiences about wastewater management among utilities around the state. The Association began holding annual conferences in 1942 in conjunction with the Florida Section of the American Water Works Association (FS/AWWA). In 1949, the members of the FSIWA and the FS/AWWA established the Overflow Newsletter which was subsequently renamed the Florida Water Resources Journal (in 1985).

By 1955, membership in the FSIWA had grown to 200 people. Membership has continued to grow over the years, reaching 500 in 1963 and 1,000 in 1974. Today, FWEA's membership exceeds 1,700.

The Florida Pollution Control Association (FPCA) was incorporated in 1963. The name of the association was changed in 1992 to the Florida Water Environment Association (FWEA), after years of careful consideration, to better reflect the emphasis of the organizational mission. The FWEA's mission is to unite water quality professionals responsible for protecting Florida's clean water environment through education programs, professional development, and promotion of sound public policy. These three goals are carried out by the association's committees, local chapters, student chapters, and the FWEA Utility Council.

The FWEA Utility Council was formed in 1998 to promote sound public policy in the water quality and wastewater industry. The Utility Council consists of wastewater utilities throughout the state who are working together to address legislative and regulatory issues. The Utility Council monitors proposed legislation and regulations and keeps its members informed of the latest developments. The Utility Council also works to educate policy makers about the intricacies of water quality and wastewater management.

Our seven local chapters provide opportunities for professional development and networking through regular chapter meetings. Each meeting focuses on a topic of local interest related to the wastewater industry or water quality. Currently, local chapters are active in Central, Northeast, Southeast, and Southwest Florida, the West Coast, Big Bend, and Treasure Coast.

FWEA also sponsors student chapters at five state universities, including UF, UM, UCF, USF, and FIU. Student activities include meetings featuring speakers from the water and wastewater industry, career fairs, and a design competition that enables student teams to receive credit and compete for a \$2000 scholarship, a \$500 cash prize and

memberships in WEF. The design competition has been praised by students as an opportunity to work on “real world” problems, and has also resulted in job offers to several of the participating design team members. FWEA pays for the winning Student Design Competition to travel to and compete in the WEF national competition, which was started in 2002 and modeled after FWEA’s student design competition.

Our 24 committees provide technical education and professional development programs for our members through seminars, workshops, and access to technical experts in the wastewater field. During the last two years, FWEA committees have offered seminars on Biosolids, Stormwater Management, Emerging Issues in Reclaimed Water, Implementation of CMOM, and Workplace Efficiency. Committees also offer outstanding opportunities for networking and leadership development. Active committees include Air Quality, Awards, Biosolids, Collection Systems, Communications, History & Constitution, Industrial, International, Leadership Development, Membership, Nominating, Operations Challenge, Organization Performance, Operations Research, Policies & Procedures, Phelps Award, Public Education, Safety, Seminars, Stormwater, Young Professionals, Training, Water Reuse, and Student Activities.

At the annual conference, the FWEA presents a number of prestigious awards to recognize outstanding accomplishments of its members. These include the following:

- Arthur S. Bedell Award which recognizes extraordinary personal service to the association (established in 1951)
- Leroy H. Scott Award given for demonstrated willingness to help others solve utility-related problems (established in 1952)
- William D. Hatfield Award which recognizes outstanding performance, management, and advancement of knowledge in the field of water pollution control and recognizes outstanding treatment plant operation (established in 1956)
- L. L. Hedgepath Award for outstanding work in industrial waste treatment or industrial waste programs (established in 1960)
- Earl B. Phelps Award for outstanding treatment plants (established in 1964)
- Ralph H. Baker Award which is presented to an FWEA member who has done outstanding work in membership recruitment (established in 1974)
- Al Herndon Award which recognizes outstanding industrial pretreatment programs
- David York Reuse Award recognizing individuals or utilities which have contributed to the advancement of reclaimed water use in the state

The Florida Water Environment Association along with its two sister organizations (Florida Water & Pollution Control Operators Association, and the Florida Section/American Water Works Association) cooperated to form two independent Florida corporations in 1989 to manage what were becoming two enormous undertakings: the annual joint conference, and the joint magazine. The Florida Water Resources Conference, Inc. (FWRC) and the Florida Water Resources Journal, Inc. (FWRJ) now function as two distinct entities, both of which have received federal not for profit tax status. The annual conference regularly draws over 2000 professionals for its four days of meetings and equipment exhibit. The Florida Water Resources Journal, Inc. is published monthly, carrying several lengthy technical articles, organizational news, and regular reporting columns by environmental attorneys, state regulators, guest columnists and the presidents of each of the three originating organizations.

The FWEA also presents a unique award each year at the annual conference to individuals who have made significant contributions to the FWEA, the FWRC and/or the FWRJ. The highly coveted sludge shovel is presented each year to a consultant, vendor and utility owner/operator to recognize their induction into the Florida Select Society of Sanitary Sludge Shovelers. Members are easily recognizable by the distinctive silver shovels they must wear at all times.

FWEA is proud of its history and contributions to protecting Florida's water environment. For further information about FWEA or becoming a member, visit our award-winning web site at [www.fwea.org](http://www.fwea.org).