

2011 Presidents Message – Robert Bible

I can remember like it was yesterday the first time I learned about the WPWPCA and attended an Association event. I just graduated from college and was a year or so into my first job. The owner of the company told me to sign up for an Operator Certification Review class sponsored by the Western Pennsylvania Water Pollution Control Association. I was 23 years old; I was clueless. First, I asked myself “why does he want me to take this review class?” I am an engineer, not an operator. Then I asked “what is the Western Pennsylvania Water Pollution Control Association?” Well, I participated in that review class and as the months passed, those questions were answered. Instructors for that review class were the likes of Dan Slagle, Chuck Music and Mike Henry, among others, long time members of this association who continue to this day to volunteer their time to share their knowledge and experiences in the environmental field with members of this association and others in our profession.

In the mid to late 90s, I got involved with the Seminar Committee and became Chairman in 2000. Over the past 10 years, this committee has evolved due mostly to the Operators Certification Act. It is now the Training Committee and the Association, through this committee, offers up to 24 contact hours per year to members towards their water and wastewater certification. This activity is the essence of this Association. The mission statement in part reads “advancement of the knowledge of design, construction, operation, maintenance, and management of sewage and industrial wastes works, and the encouragement, through seminars and other training activities, of the exchange of information and experience”. This committee will continue to provide this training to the membership.

One change I am putting into effect for 2011 is moving general business meetings and plant tours to Fridays. Yes, I have already heard the cheers and jeers from some and I am sure to hear more. My reason for this is quite frankly to increase attendance at the meetings. We typically see about 10 percent of the membership attend our general business meetings / plant tours. I would like to

see this number increase. Will it? Your guess is as good as mine, but the pros certainly outweigh the cons. As of the end of January, our schedule for 2011 is not set in stone. The schedule includes a trip to the Pittsburgh Zoo in March. Yes, the zoo. Even the zoo has to deal with environmental issues. The animal waste has to go somewhere. We will again have a golf outing that benefits the scholarship fund and a picnic in August. In the past few years, the Association has sponsored a clay shoot that benefits the Association's Operation Challenge Team (Die Jesters). Funds from this event help subsidize registration fees for the team at WEFTEC. We will consider a clay shoot or other social event again in 2011.

Several of us on the executive board met with representatives of PWEA and the eastern and central sections at PennTEC in June. The purpose of the meeting was to review PWEA's strategic plan. The major focus of our first meeting was to discuss ways to improve communications between PWEA and the sections and piggyback on training opportunities. I would expect more meetings to follow in 2011 to expand on this initial discussion. With this in mind, we are offering Lab Ethics training through PWEA's Lab Committee in March. In addition, we plan to offer Water / Wastewater Systems Security Training through the PWEA Training Committee. These training opportunities will be in addition to the four (4) training workshops we typically offer during the year.

When Doug Pike and Dan Slagle approached me 6 years ago to see if I was interested in being on the executive board, I was reluctant to accept. I accepted with some coaxing. No, they didn't have to do bodily harm. For the most part, they indicated that the Association needed young blood involved on the committee level and on the executive board to move this organization forward. Now that I have gone through the executive board positions, as President, I can repeat what I was told several years ago. I urge all of you to participate in this Association in one way or another. There are plenty of committees to pick from. Also, I would urge all of you supervisors and managers to encourage others at your workplace to join and become involved. All those years ago, my employer

gave me the opportunity to serve in this Association. I thank them and my company Board of Directors for urging us to become involved in this and other professional organizations.

I rarely see individual Authority Board members attend our general meetings / plant tours. I will not name names, but I have heard from Board members that they see no benefit from having employees being actively involved in this or similar organizations. I assure you that is far from the truth. I have grown personally and professionally in part due to my involvement in this organization. I urge you to invite your Board members to our meetings so they can see for themselves the benefits of this Association.

In closing, it will be an extreme pleasure to serve as your President in the upcoming year. I will work closely with the committee chairs to meet the goals of this Association. Although this organization is led by the Executive Board, this is your organization. If any of you have any comments or suggestions that you feel will benefit the membership, my office is always open. Please feel free to contact me or other executive board members.