New York Water Environment Association Presents Public Education Award to Buffalo Sewer Authority

Syracuse – The New York Water Environment Association (NYWEA), a statewide organization of water quality management professionals, has awarded Buffalo Sewer Authority (BSA) its annual Public Education Award, recognizing a utility that made an outstanding contribution to public education related to water and wastewater management in New York State. During NYWEA’s 92nd Annual Meeting Awards Luncheon on Wednesday, February 5.

BSA has focused significant efforts on advancing awareness and understanding of the BSA’s combined sewer system and its Bird Island Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP). The BSA has employed a multi-pronged approach, consisting of the following elements:

• “Rain Check 2.0”: in 2019, the BSA released Rain Check 2.0, which is an effort to encapsulate the BSA’s green infrastructure (GI) program. This release included issuance of an “Opportunity Report” discussing the next generation of GI in Buffalo as well as an updated website featuring the program. In the report, the BSA describes its strategies to incorporate GI into K-12 public school curricula, develop GI demonstration sites as schools, host GI field trips, support community organizations involved in GI workforce development, creating a scholarship program for GI training for City of Buffalo residents, and more.

• Rain Barrels: the BSA has implemented over 1,300 rain barrel installations. As a key part of its GI program, this initiative requires significant efforts to educate homeowners on the need and benefits.

• Tours: the BSA hosts a number of tours at the Bird Island WWTP. Additionally, virtual tours of GI highlights are available on the internet.

• Partnerships: the BSA has partnered with PUSH Buffalo and the Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper on initiatives such as training of local workers in the GI industry, the local “water academy”

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program, and more. Additionally, the BSA has worked with national organizations such as the US Water Alliance, NACWA, and more as featured presenters on the topic.

• Signage: the BSA has included signage at numerous GI installations to provide the public with information on the topic.

• Fairs/events/parades: the BSA has been active with public information booths, floats, and other engagement activities at various fairs and events, including the national night out, Juneteenth festival, pride day parade, and many more community events

• Presentations: the BSA has been proactive in giving presentations to local schools and organizations, as well as at Local, State, and National conferences.

• BSA website: the revamped https://buffalosewer.org includes realtime CSO status information, important documentation, and data for the public

About NYWEA: Founded in 1929 by professionals in the field of water quality as a nonprofit educational organization, NYWEA has 2,700 members statewide and hosts several technical conferences each year for environmental engineers, scientists, public officials and others who work in water and wastewater quality management. In addition, NYWEA sponsors a scholarship program, publishes Clear Waters, a quarterly educational magazine, and administers the wastewater operator certification program. NYWEA also supports humanitarian clean water projects. Headquartered in Syracuse, NYWEA has seven regional chapters, 14 college student chapters and is a Member Association of the international Water Environment Federation. For more information, visit www.nywea.org.

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