



Across New York State, wastewater utility leaders, department heads, and plant managers are facing some very common issues. Many of us are asking the same questions: How do we make the necessary investments in our infrastructure and staff when we are hampered, in many cases, by a shrinking tax base and a loss of jobs driven by the world economy? And, how do we best educate the public and our elected officials so that they can appreciate that the capital and personnel investments

we are planning are critical to our mission and vital to protecting one of our most important public assets—our wastewater collection and treatment facilities?

The public and some of our elected officials are usually not well informed about the complexity of the rules and regulations we face. Nor do they understand the degree of professionalism it takes to manage these immense and complicated facilities so that they function almost flawlessly day in and day out. If they did, our work, I am sure, would be made much simpler. This spring our parent organization, the Water Environment Federation, will be unveiling a brand new public education campaign entitled Water Is Life, and NYWEA will be helping to roll it out to our members and member organizations. I am convinced that “getting the message out” will be an increasingly important aspect of every wastewater utility’s business plan in the coming years.

Along those lines, for the past two years NYWEA has been an integral part of an elected official’s training and information program. In conjunction with the Department of Environmental Conservation, Rural Waters, and Syracuse University’s Maxwell School, our leadership has been involved with several seminars that have been given in various locations across the state to help our elected officials understand the importance, complexity, and cost of maintaining our wastewater infrastructure.

The articles in this issue of *Clearwaters* deal with a variety of utility management issues and go to the heart of what makes a modern wastewater organization successful. They span issues from strategic planning, labor relations, team building, and organizational motivation to rate setting and public education. How we plan for the future, inform our ratepayers, empower our personnel, and manage our physical assets in the face of increased scarcity of funds, aging facilities, rate sensitivity, and new unfunded mandates will be fundamental to our success in the coming years.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John R. Amend".

John R. Amend

A graphic for the "Water is Life" campaign. It features a close-up of a green leaf with numerous water droplets of various sizes. The text "water is life" is written in a large, white, lowercase serif font, with "and infrastructure makes it happen™" in a smaller, white, lowercase sans-serif font below it.

water is life
and infrastructure makes it happen™