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Water Environment Federation and New York Water Environment Association Recognize Robert E. Wither of Glenville, NY with Arthur Sidney Bedell Award

Syracuse, NY – The Water Environment Federation (WEF) and the New York Water Environment Association (NYWEA) recognized Robert E. Wither with the Arthur Sidney Bedell Award at the awards ceremony during NYWEA’s 95th Annual Meeting. The award acknowledges extraordinary personal service to the Member Associations of the Federation and is given annually to a member of NYWEA.

Wither is being recognized for his over 25 years of service to NYWEA and WEF. He is a graduate of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute with a B.S. in Chemical Engineering, and is a NYS licensed P.E. and New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) Certified Operator Trainer. Wither is currently a seasonal Environmental Engineering Technician at NYSDEC and a lecturer at the SUNY Morrisville Environmental Training Center. His primary job responsibilities at NYSDEC include evaluating course curricula for NYS Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator Precertification Basic Operations, Activated Sludge, Grade 3 Technical Operations and Supervision courses, updating curricula to ensure the courses provide the necessary information for operators to perform their job duties and pass the Wastewater Operator Certification Exam. Wither also provides instruction to wastewater treatment plant operator trainees during the Basic Operations of Wastewater Treatment Plants and Grade 3 Supervision and Technical Operations wastewater treatment plant operator pre-certification courses.

His past work experience is with NYSDEC, where he worked from 1985 until his “retirement” in 2019 as an Environmental Engineer. Wither fulfilled various roles at NYSDEC, including: (1) Division of Water (DOW), Bureau of Water Permits: managed staff responsible for developing and implementing general permits for municipal separate storm sewer systems (MS4s), construction stormwater, multi-sector general permit programs, stormwater design manual, and blue book. He was responsible for permit development, treatment system engineering evaluations and approvals, providing guidance to inspectors and permit writing staff to ensure all permits complied with state and federal requirements. He was also team leader for the evaluation of the Division of Water’s SPDES permit writing program. The permitting program made recommendations to improve program efficiencies and reduction of the permit backlog. Recommendations lead to the PCI pilot programs and detailed regulatory review of the permit hearing process. (2) Facilities Operation Assistance Section: Managed staff responsible for wastewater treatment plant operator certification, coordinated and delivered wastewater treatment plant operator training programs, and provided technical assistance to municipal wastewater treatment plant operators. He also managed the Division of Water Training Workgroup.

Wither’s involvement in WEF and NYWEA includes service as committee chair for NYWEA’s Industrial Wastewater Committee, 2000-2007; chair for the Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator Certification Governance Council, 2011-2016; NYWEA President, 2019; NYWEA representative to WEF House of
Delegates, October 2019 - present; and NYWEA Executive Committee, February 2016 – February 2021 and October 2022 - present; and Coordinator for NYWEA Operations Challenge Process Control Event, 2009-present.

About NYWEA: Founded in 1929 by professionals in the field of water quality as a nonprofit educational organization, NYWEA has 2,500 members statewide and hosts several technical conferences each year for environmental engineers, scientists, water resource recovery operators, 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, administers wastewater operator training and certification, and supports humanitarian clean water projects. Headquartered in Syracuse, NYWEA has seven regional chapters, 15 college student chapters and is a Member Association of the international Water Environment Federation. For more information, please visit [www.nywea.org](http://www.nywea.org).

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