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New York Water Environment Association and Erie County Executive Mark C. Poloncarz Celebrate Essential Wastewater Personnel Day 2023 at the Greater Buffalo Environmental Conference in Buffalo, NY

Syracuse, NY – The New York Water Environment Association (NYWEA) and Erie County Executive Mark C. Poloncarz honored the essential wastewater personnel of Erie County that worked through the December 2022 Buffalo Blizzard. The Western Chapter of NYWEA held their annual Greater Buffalo Environmental Conference yesterday at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Buffalo, New York. County Executive Poloncarz issued an official proclamation, to mark the occasion and recognize the tireless work of our water heroes, the dedicated personnel that operate water resource recovery infrastructure. He proclaimed March 14, 2023 to be Essential Wastewater Personnel Day in Erie County to recognize these dedicated, essential frontline workers.

NYWEA President Donna Grudier highlighted the important work of wastewater operators and other essential wastewater professionals during her welcome address, and shared the County Executive’s proclamation with the over 270 water professionals in attendance at the Greater Buffalo Environmental Conference, including many frontline personnel, including those on duty through the blizzard of December 2022.

The proclamation acknowledged Erie County’s tremendous natural resources in Lake Erie, the Niagara River, and upstream tributaries, as well as the importance of water resource recovery facilities (i.e. wastewater treatment plants). The operation of these facilities are critical to not only safeguarding waterways, but also protecting public health and supporting the local economy. The proclamation served to recognize the many often unsung heroes of the water sector – including water resource recovery facility operators, collection system workers, mechanics and electricians, laboratory technicians, administrative staff, and more – who are essential personnel serving their community 24/7/365.

The proclamation further declared:
“Whereas these essential personnel often face extremely difficult circumstances while performing their important work, such as the December 2022 blizzard in the City of Buffalo and surrounding communities; and

Whereas, despite working long-hours away from their families, many times at night, during weekends, and/or on holidays, these essential personnel continue their important work at all times, including blizzards and other emergency events, to the benefit of our community.

Now therefore, be it resolved, that I, Mark C. Poloncarz, Erie County Executive, do hereby proclaim March 14, 2023 as Essential Wastewater Personnel Day in Erie County. I encourage all residents to thank and acknowledge the essential personnel at sanitary sewer districts and water resource recovery facilities in
Western New York for their important work every day, including emergency situations, to protect water quality, protect public health, and support our communities.”

President Grudier is a New York State-certified wastewater operator and is a passionate advocate for operators across New York State and beyond.

“The Western NY essential personnel stepped up and sacrificed time with their families to ensure that public health was protected,” said Grudier. “It was an inspiring reminder of the importance of the work that water resource recovery operators do every day!”

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.

(l-r) Joseph McDonald, an operator from Erie County Division of Sewerage Management and Lucy Grassano Operator Scholarship winner, with NYWEA President Donna Grudier at the Greater Buffalo Environmental Conference

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