

# ARWA 2016 AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

The Alabama Rural Water Association just completed its 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Technical Training Conference which took place on March 20 – March 23, 2016 at the Mobile Convention Center in Mobile, Alabama. One of the most anticipated events that takes place during the conference is the Awards Luncheon. This event recognizes those individuals that have dedicated their lives to the endeavor of providing safe, clean drinking water to their customers, to those individuals that are responsible for the treatment of wastewater so that it can be safely released back to the environment, to those individuals that handle the day to day water office operations including accounting, billing, record keeping, etc., to those on the Boards and Councils that establish policies and procedures for efficient water utility management and to those individuals whose careers in water research and planning have benefitted the public water supply industry in so many ways. Congratulations to all of those that were nominated!



Kathy Horne, ARWA with James Conn, Gunterville Water Works & Sewer Board, Water Operator of the Year

## WATER OPERATOR OF THE YEAR

### ***James Conn, Gunterville Water Works & Sewer Board***

A Water Operator is often called upon to do many tasks. An operator's life is anything but usual. On call literally 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and always with a cell phone or radio close by ready to give up time with family to answer the call of his system and community.

When James Conn began work with the Gunterville Water Works & Sewer Board 44 years ago, he was hired as an operator trainee. Through the years, he has learned, and experienced most everything a Water Plant operator can ever see in a lifelong profession. James' duties as Senior Plant Operator include making all major decisions on treatment processes and chemical feeds, overseeing all reporting data for ADEM and EPA, the supervision of all plant operators, the organization of all operator procedures and safety meetings each month, the organization of training for all operators and trainees. The Water Treatment plants he operates have been the recipient of several awards including the ADEM Optimization Plant Award for 5 years since 2003.

James's expertise as a Grade 4 operator was never more prevalent than when he acted as the Operator liaison with the Consulting Engineers and Contractors on 2 expansions at the Sunset Plant totaled over \$12 Million dollars. During this 2 year project, he served as key advisor to the design engineer and the construction contractor and he set up operation procedures for the water treatment plant with the General Manager, Engineers and the other operators. He did all of this while still running the Water Treatment Plant under his charge. Congratulations James Conn, Water Operator of the Year!

## WASTEWATER OPERATOR OF THE YEAR

### ***James Dixon, Geneva Water Works & Sewer Board***

The Wastewater of the Year Award recognizes a State of Alabama Certified Wastewater Treatment Operator with outstanding leadership abilities and accomplishments in wastewater utility operations. James Dixon manages the general day to day operations for the Geneva Water Works & Sewer Board. He is responsible for all the financial decisions, for all the personnel decisions, for maintaining inventory, for all purchasing and he excels in procuring grant and loan dollars which go towards maintenance and utility improvements.



## WASTEWATER OPERATOR OF THE YEAR CONTINUED



Kathy Horne, Executive Director with James Dixon, Geneva Water Works & Sewer Board, Wastewater Operator of the Year

Throughout his professional career, he has been involved in every facet of the wastewater industry. As General Manager, James has led the effort to make his wastewater treatment plant operations a model of efficiency. He has done this by utilizing new technological innovations, analyzing his power consumption requirements, etc. In addition, James is always willing to help neighboring systems near and far by sharing his knowledge and expertise. As an example, he provided a backup pump and generator to a North Alabama water system affected by the tornadoes several years ago.

James' latest treatment plant improvements and successes include the installation of a high speed turbo compressor to reduce power consumption at the wastewater treatment plant. This compressor has substantially reduced Geneva's electrical costs. The procurement of a telemetry system which James and his staff installed also helps to better manage his utility. The installation of radio read meters which provided a huge cost savings as well as curtailed his water loss per month was instrumental. James oversaw the mapping of his utility utilizing a state of the art survey grade GPS system. He mapped all of his field assets both water and wastewater. By doing this, new employees will have a better understanding of the layout of the system making for a much shorter learning curve.

In 2014 James commissioned a Water Cost of Service Study so that he and his Board would know what measures will need to be implemented in order to meet Geneva's current as well as future needs.

In addition, after 39 years on the job, he still finds time to be an active booster of the sports in his area, Rotary Club member, he serves on the Geneva Water Festival Committee and he is an Alabama Rural Water Association Board of Director. Congratulations James Dixon, Wastewater Operator of the Year!

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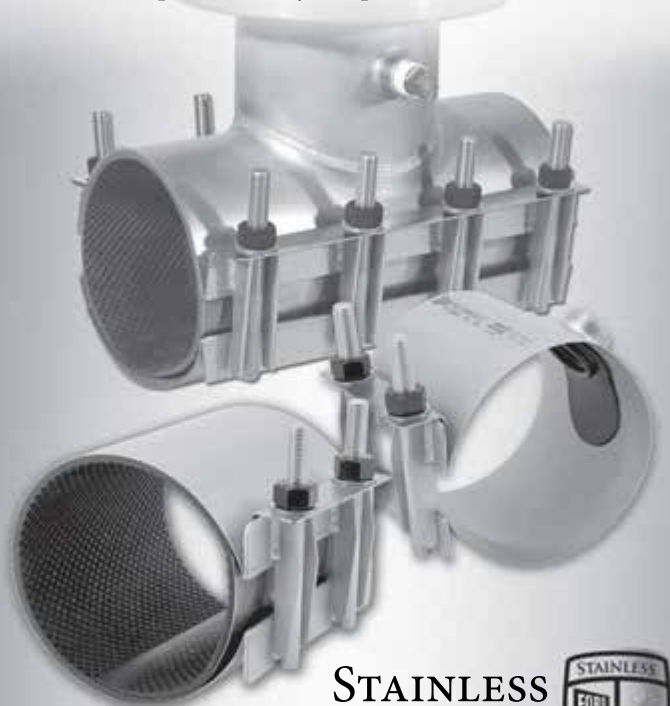
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**Kathy Horne, ARWA with Renee Brown, Parrish Water Works & Sewer Board, Office Worker of the Year**

## OFFICE WORKER OF THE YEAR

### ***Renee Brown, Parrish Water Works & Sewer Board***

The Office Worker of the Year Award recognizes an administrative employee for outstanding performance in office management and procedures. As all operators know, the office employees are the front line of our industry. They are the most recognizable and available. They wear many, many hats.

They often feel the need to remind operators and managers alike of what needs to be done and in what order it should be done. The truth is, we would really be somewhat lost if our office workers called in sick for more than a day or two!

Renee handles all facets of the office duties including billing the accounts, collecting money, making the deposits, and preparing 100s if not 1000s of work orders including everything from leaks to re-reads. She is first in line to handle customer complaints.

Renee has been with the Parrish Water Works & Sewer Board for 21 years and currently holds the position of Head Clerk. She has played an intricate part in the creation, formulation, and approval of various programs including: the education assistance program, the sick leave donation program and instituting a bereavement leave policy. She graciously volunteers her time to help with the Water Festival organization, and office management assistance of the Town.

Renee is a shining example of a true water professional. Regardless of the circumstances and situations presented in her daily work, she has continuously and unselfishly dedicated her life to the betterment of her profession. She possesses a high moral character and an exceptional work ethic.

Her drive for perfection in all she does is inspiring, yet she maintains an understanding and compassion for her customer's needs and concerns. The fine balance between managing the office, providing critical information for the Board of Directors and serving the public can be a difficult and daunting task for most, but she embraces it daily with a warm and caring demeanor. Congratulations Renee Brown, Office Worker of the Year!



**Pictured right, William Snyder, General Manager with the Monroeville Water Works presents Fred Brake, Board Member of the Uriah Water System with the Board Member/Director of the Year Award**

## BOARD MEMBER/DIRECTOR OF THE YEAR

### ***Fred Brake, Uriah Water System***

The Board Member/Director of the Year Award - recognizes an individual who serves as a board member responsible for governing decisions resulting in significant contributions toward the success, growth and customer satisfaction of the utility.

Fred Brake is an active participant on his Board of Directors. As Chairman, he leads the Board of Directors on all major initiatives. He often goes into the field with his operators and does whatever it takes to keep his water system going. He assists customers in locating leaks on their property, comes out in inclement weather to assist customers in fixing their leaks, and the list goes on. He is well loved in his community and has been known on more than one occasion to help the less fortunate customers on his system to keep their water service on.

He regularly takes the initiative to seek and successfully secure operational and management improvements for his utility. Just last year through his leadership, his system acquired a grant from USDA for system improvements. He regularly attends CEH Training with his operators to further their skills and knowledge but also to get the hours to maintain his GRADE 2 Water Certification License.

Fred has served on Uriah's Board for over 30 years. He has also worked as a Certified Water Operator for most of that time on and off when needed. He has always been one call away if you needed help in the field and he was usually the one down in the hole and right in the middle of the repair. He still comes into the office most every day to make sure all is in order. In addition to being Chairman of the Water Board, Grade 2 Certified Operator, freelance community handy man he also finds time to serve as Fire Chief for the local fire department. Fred recently celebrated his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday and his 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary! Congratulations Fred Brake, Board Member/Director of the Year!



## 2016 JOHN A GARRETT OUTSTANDING SERVICE AWARD

### *Marlon Cook, Cook Hydrogeology*

Marlon Cook is the former Director of the Geological Survey of Alabama Groundwater Assessment Program. Marlon retired from the GSA in January 2016. Marlon obtained his BS in Geology and his MS in Hydrogeology from The University of Alabama. His experience includes 8 years as an Exploration Geophysicist in oil and gas exploration in Tulsa, OK; Jackson, MS and Houston, TX. For the past 25 years Marlon has been a Hydrogeologist with the Geological Survey of Alabama. As a hydrogeologist, Marlon was responsible for project design and management, field data collection and data interpretation. He authored numerous reports and publications related to surface water and ground water resources of the State of Alabama. He was involved with education and outreach to Alabama citizens regarding water resource issues.

Marlon managed a surface water and groundwater hydrogeology program and was the principal investigator for funded and non-funded hydrogeological projects.

Marlon participated in the Tuscumbia Spring recharge study, he participated in a comprehensive hydrogeological and geochemical evaluation of the Eutaw Aquifer.

Marlon was appointed as a Technical Advisor to the Choctawhatchee, Pea and Yellow Rivers Watershed Authority (CPYRWMA). He was the principle investigator for 19 jointly funded hydrogeological studies and projects for the CPROWMA to evaluate ground water and surface water resources of southeast Alabama.

Marlon prepared a comprehensive workshop on ground water concepts to a key group of educators for the purpose of preparing a water resources workbook for Alabama primary and secondary school students. He served as principle investigator for the Lightwood Knot Creek National Monitoring Program Project and presented his findings to ADEM, EPA, NRCS and others. He developed, constructed and field tested the Portable Bedload Monitoring Device designed to accurately measure bedload sedimentation rates in sand bed streams. He served as principle investigator for the Gantt/

**Kathy Horne, ARWA with Marlon Cook, Cook Hydrogeology, John A. Garrett Outstanding Service Award**

Point A reservoir Sedimentation Assessment Project. In addition he conducted a comprehensive hydrogeological evaluation of the deep Tuscaloosa Group Aquifer to assess the potential of the aquifer as a future public water supply source for southeast and south central Alabama.

Marlon provided information to Alabama and Florida officials concerning current and future shared interstate water issues and interests between South Alabama and Northwest Florida. He conducted an isotopic and geochemical assessment of water from the aquifers of Cretaceous age. He assessed aquifer recharge, ground water production impacts and future ground water development in Southeast Alabama.

Marlon developed the only comprehensive Watershed Management Plan in Alabama. He was appointed to the Technical Committee of the Southeast Alabama Alternate Water Source Partnership and is on the steering committee and the technical subcommittee for the Conecuh Sepulga Clean Water Partnership. He serves on the Alabama Stream Restoration Committee, the Auburn University Environmental Institute Project Review Committee. He serves on the Alabama Water Resources Council and he also serves on behalf of the Geological Survey of Alabama on the Alabama Water Agencies Working Group (AWAWG).

Congratulations and thank you Marlon Cook for your many contributions that have helped lay the ground work so that Alabama's water resources can be protected and managed for future generations!

## 4 WHEELER GIVEAWAY

The Awards Ceremony ended with the very popular 4 WHEELER GIVEAWAY... To be eligible for the 4 wheeler, attendees were preregistered with a paid full registration received by March 4, 2016. The lucky winner was Tim McKinney with The Water Works Board of the Town of Ragland.

