

# MAINE



# WATER

# NEWS

January 2009

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Number 143

## **Batten down the hatches.....**

*Gordie Johnson, President*

Much of Maine's history has been connected to the waters of the State for trade, and transportation. A rich vocabulary was developed to graphically describe the conditions encountered and responses necessary to successfully navigate them. Whether it was drawing hard on a paddle to avoid strainers, haystacks and other river obstacles in a bateaux or reefing sails when headed Down East with a gale at your back, the words were there to paint a vivid picture of determination in the face of adversity.

As we enter 2009, many of these expressions again come to mind to describe some of the rough economic weather ahead and hard sailing necessary to move forward. We are again reminded that we work in a profession that utilizes infrastructure that will likely outlive those installing it and our industry is often more newsworthy when occasional failures occur than when public health and safety is supported successfully for decades.

An ad hoc Sustainable Infrastructure task force, including members of the State's water and wastewater associations and the two State agencies that administer the State Revolving Loan funds (the DWP and DEP), has met several times to identify ways to ensure long-term funding support for infrastructure renewal. There have been good conversations around topics such as: how do you define the "need" for infrastructure funding, how to raise the awareness of the need to ensure public support of necessary rate increases and funding sources (State Revolving Fund matches), and what are the best ways to expand the pool of funding options and make sure they are available for the long-term.

Several factors related to the current economic situation have changed the focus of the discussions. The incoming Presidential administration has identified

infrastructure construction as one of the key components of its plan to improve the economy. As an industry with a previously identified backlog of necessary projects, many of which have already been designed, we may again be well positioned to help the communities we serve by sparking local infrastructure investment. Having witnessed recent government bailout efforts and as an industry with a long history of government regulation and financial involvement, we need to take an active role in shaping the infrastructure "stimulus" package so that short and long-term goals are met.

What are those goals? The stated goal is to stimulate the economy through job creation on projects which improve our infrastructure (with the primary focus on water, wastewater and transportation infrastructure). To meet the short-term goal of job creation, the work targeted for this effort is to be under construction during the summer of 2009. The long-term goal of improved infrastructure will depend on which projects are actually undertaken.

In order to meet the short-term goal, a variety of streamlining options should be identified and implemented. For projects which are not already underway to be in construction this summer, project development and design needs to be compressed to a large degree. Alternative delivery methods such as variations of Design/Build should be utilized; staffing bottlenecks need to be addressed and project approval should run as parallel processes wherever possible.

To meet the long-term goal, the industry needs to minimize the unintended consequences of the stimulus effort. Ideally, the projects should be part of an overall capital improvement plan to continuously improve service. Incentives to utilize the stimulus money such as zero interest loans and potential grant awards would then accelerate previously identified work while maximizing the job creation benefits. The funds should not be used to cover normal operational expenses, however, any additional oversight and documentation required should be

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Material of interest to the water supply profession will be considered for publication. Copy deadline is the 15<sup>th</sup> day of month preceding publication.

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supported to assure good basis for future asset management efforts.

One particular area of concern is the potential for the transportation portion of the stimulus package. Proposals for large increases in road and bridge projects should reflect an understanding of their impact on spending by utilities, i.e. water line relocations and valve box raising. By including the effort and costs necessary to cover required utility work as part of the transportation project and paid for by the originating agency (i.e. MDOT or municipalities), the stimulus goal of the work could be met while minimizing the impact to utility operating and capital spending plans.

Governmental agencies and utilities are often looked to as early adopters of desired policy changes such as smoking policies and fuel-efficiency. There is an opportunity to provide sufficient incentives to make some of the sustainable energy projects under discussion (particularly wind and solar) financially viable for utilities. This would have the added benefit of supporting the development of a trained workforce for these technologies.

The financial implications of any stimulus package need to be kept in mind. While there may not be consensus on whether borrowing money for infrastructure improvements is good national policy, we need to ensure that any required rate increases don't negate the stimulus goal. Most utilities will require rate increases (substantial in some cases) to address long-term infrastructure needs. The more steady and predictable those increases are, the easier it will be to gain the necessary ratepayer support.

What are your thoughts? Make your voice heard. Let the Association, state and local governmental representatives, and your national and state legislative representation know what you think it would take to make the effort successful.

May the news from the scuttlebutt be about able water professionals who know the ropes and are able to keep an even keel while the economy is three sheets to the wind! Remember you are not alone on the ocean, use the education, networking and advocacy resources of your Association to help weather the storm and reach that safe harbor.

Looking forward to seeing you at the February show with a focus on Energy and Infrastructure!

**124<sup>th</sup> Off and Running**

On Friday, January 5<sup>th</sup> Shirley Churchill put out the first report of the 124<sup>th</sup> Maine Legislature. Of the 63 bills reviewed, 6 were identified as being of interest to the Association.

LD 1, An Act to Stimulate Capital Investment for Innovative Businesses in Maine, would allow the Maine Public Employees Retirement System to become a capital venture lender. Net profits would go to the General Fund; however, the Maine Public Employees Retirement System may be given some of the profits as an inducement to becoming a lender. No more than \$20 million could be placed in a single capital venture and no more than \$10 million in a single venture.

LD 10, An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue for Wastewater Treatment Facilities and Drinking Water Programs, would

(Continued from page 1)

provide the necessary matching funds for the SRF capitalization grants for three years for each program.

LD 27, An Act to Amend the Definition of Employment for Purposes of Unemployment Compensation, would require an individual to work no less than 16 hours before the application of the ABC test relative to employment status and unemployment insurance coverage.

LD 40 and LD 41 are the first two of several bills which are expected to prohibit certain uses of cellular telephones and handheld electronic devices while operating a motor vehicle. There are exceptions for emergency vehicles, physicians, holders of commercial driver's licenses, municipal public works personnel, etc. but not for utility personnel.

LD 55, An Act to Prohibit the Commercial Sale of Water by a Water District, would prohibit a water district, regardless of its charter, from selling water for profit outside of its territory or for commercial purposes.

If these bills are any indication of what the session holds in store it will be a busy winter and spring. Anyone desiring information on any legislation during the session should not hesitate to contact the MWUA for additional details.

## Cross Connection Rules Revision Underway

The Maine Drinking Water Program is working toward revising the Cross Connection Rules which were last revised in 2001.

In early 2008 a cross connection rules workgroup was assembled to discuss suggested rule changes. The group is comprised of volunteers with a variety of backgrounds related to drinking water. The first meeting (including about 20 participants) took place in March of 2008. With input from that meeting, additional modifications have been made to the suggested changes.

Given that cross connections throughout a water system are covered by two sets of State rules (the DWP Cross Connection Rules and the Maine State Internal Plumbing Code), there are bound to be issues that come up regarding the alignment of those two rules. The major focus of the suggested changes is to distinguish clearly between hazard "containment", regulated by the Maine DWP, and "fixture isolation", regulated by the Plumbers Examining Board under the Plumbing Code.

Other improvements to the rules are being suggested as well. The second meeting of the workgroup is scheduled for January 20<sup>th</sup>.

Anyone desiring to review the suggested rule changes and provide input to the workgroup should contact Nate Saunders at 287-5685 or [nathan.saunders@maine.gov](mailto:nathan.saunders@maine.gov).

## MWUA Celebrates 500<sup>th</sup> Meeting

What does it take to reach a 500<sup>th</sup> milestone? It takes a dedicated common effort on the part of committees, Directors and others, not to mention a focus on advocacy and overall membership involvement.

All that work came together as the association held its 500<sup>th</sup> membership meeting on December 4<sup>th</sup> in Alfred. It was a time to celebrate and also help out the local fishermen, so the decision was made to go with a catered lunch which included some of the largest lobster rolls that have been seen in recent history.

The technical session featured an excellent presentation on customer service and media relations by Michelle Clements of Portland Water District and PUC Consumer Assistance staffers Shawn Brooks and Brad King led an informative discussion of how they interact with utilities and their customers.

Shirley Churchill and George Peters were recognized for their diligence and dedication to the association and were elected to the grade of Honorary Member.

A special thanks to the meeting coordinators and especially host Alfred Water District.

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## February Meeting & Trade Show Registration

We listened to what you had to say! New this year is the opportunity to register online for our annual February Meeting and Trade Show. To access the online secured registration service, visit the MWUA.ORG website and follow the hyperlink to online registration. Paying by credit card is now a breeze thanks to Pay Pal.

Don't forget to select the sessions you plan to attend (*the sessions are listed at the very bottom of the page and carry over to the second page*):

- Distribution System Operations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century
- Preventative Maintenance Centrifugal Pump Operations
- Preparing for & Complying with DWS Sanitary Surveys
- Innovations in Analytical Instruments
- Waterworks Math
- Geothermal Well & Earth-Coupling in Maine
- Solar & Wind Alternatives for Maine's Water Utilities
- Controlling Energy Costs: Managing Heat/Electrical/Fleet
- Migration of Data Records: From Paper to Electronic
- Review & Demonstration of CUPSS: EPA's Asset Management Software
- Prioritizing Capitol Improvements

Alternatives to registering online include faxing a registration form to (207) 832-2265 or simply mailing a form via snail mail to MWUA, PO Box P, Waldoboro, ME. 04572.

The conference brochure is available online as for additional details. Register by January 23<sup>rd</sup> to take advantage of the discounted prices.

## Drinking Water Source Protection PowerPoint Presentations Now Available

The PowerPoint presentations from the Drinking Water Source Protection Seminar, held September 30<sup>th</sup> at the St. Paul Center in Augusta, are now available. The one-day seminar explored some of the tools available to water utilities and municipalities to protect the quality and quantity of local water resources. Highlighted were examples of drinking water resource protection, both in and out of developed areas.

If you would like a copy of the presentations provided on a CD, please contact the MWUA office at (207) 832-2263 or via email: [jmcnelly@mwua.org](mailto:jmcnelly@mwua.org).

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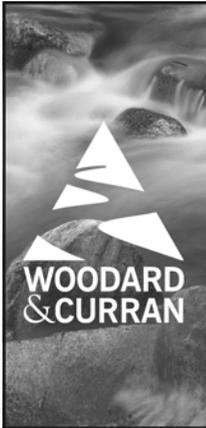
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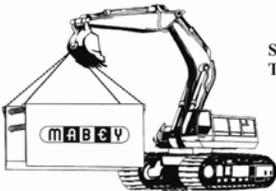
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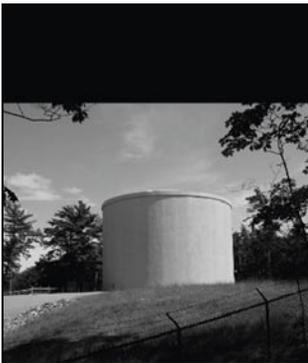
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## ENERGY CONCLAVE

Wednesday, February 11<sup>th</sup> (12:00-5:00)  
Holiday Inn By the Bay



**Thomas Hill Standpipe Recognized as Civil Engineering Landmark**

The November 27, 2008 edition of the Bangor Daily News contained an article noting that the Maine Section of the American Society of Civil Engineers had presented the Bangor Water District with a plaque recognizing the Thomas Hill Standpipe as a significant state historic civil engineering landmark.

The riveted steel tank, built in 1897, is 75 feet in diameter, 50 feet tall, and stores 1.75 million gallons of water. The tank is similar in construction to other structures built during that time period; however the tank is completely enclosed in a wooden structure that is 85 feet in diameter and 110 feet tall.

A stone block foundation, 9 feet high and about 3 ½ feet thick, supports the wooden enclosure. The sill is made up of pine planks bolted together to a thickness of 14 inches and bent to the circle. Twenty four 12 x 12 pine columns, all 48 feet long, provide the backbone for the structure. An inside stairway leads to the promenade deck and a second stairway accesses the roof of the structure. The promenade deck and the roof provide a panoramic view of the city of Bangor and the surrounding region.

The standpipe was designed by Ashley B. Tower of Tower and Wallace of Holyoke, Massachusetts. It was constructed by Major James M. Davis.

The wooden structure contains 42,000 board feet of pine; 220,000 cedar shingles comprise the exterior siding.

At 111 years of age, the standpipe continues to be a significant component of the downtown portion of the district’s water system.

The Thomas Hill Standpipe is now one of 17 Historic Civil Engineering Landmarks in Maine.

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