

A Watershed Moment



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AT THE RISK of using a cliché one too many times, this upcoming year is a watershed moment for me. For many years I have worked with AWRA on a national, state and regional level, first as a student and then professionally. I have seen several sides of the organization, formed multiple valuable relationships and received countless benefits through my different roles. It is now that I realize how much both AWRA and I have evolved during our relationship. When I initiated my AWRA membership almost 15 years ago, I did not realize the importance AWRA would play in my professional and personal development. The benefits and opportunities that have come from my association with AWRA are numerous. In May 2014, I wrote then-president Mark Dunning my letter to accept the position as president-elect. At that time I felt much anticipation and excitement over the opportunity to serve in this role. As I sit today and write my first President's Message, I feel this same excitement for what lies ahead in the coming year.

Since I am the new president of AWRA, I think you should know a bit about my background. I happened into the field of water resources after graduating from Lehigh University with a BS in biology. I wasn't quite sure who or what I wanted to be when I grew up. Through the kindness of the city of Wilmington, Delaware's public works director, who was willing to hire a recent graduate with little or no knowledge of water resources, I quickly learned the value, necessity, and complexity. I realized it was a field I wanted to pursue.

I then pursued my MPA degree from the University of Delaware where I specialized in watershed management. My academic advisor at the time—an instrumental mentor and my current director and a dedicated AWRA member—was the first to make me aware of this great organization and the benefits and opportunities that result from membership. Throughout my career, my AWRA membership has served as a solid resource and community as I pursued positions with federal, nonprofit and private organizations in Maryland, Florida and Delaware. In my current position, policy scientist at the University of Delaware Water Resources Center, I am responsible for providing regional

watershed technical, policy and research support to state and local governments, University staff and faculty, and nonprofit organizations in the mid-Atlantic region. Through it all AWRA has continued to be my mainstay.

During my tenure I hope to build on the momentum of past presidents and strengthen AWRA. Overall, I feel it is important to address the most pressing water resource issues and to continue AWRA's strong reputation as a multi-disciplinary water resources association that is well-respected and inclusive of students and professionals. More specifically, I believe it is critical for AWRA to be an organization that is attractive to all levels of professionals in the water resources field, cutting across generations as well as disciplines. It is important for AWRA to continue the practices that have been successful while also being flexible in the way we provide information, present our science, and network with each other. In order to continue to be the preeminent association for young and established water resource professionals, it is critical to establish new and innovative ways to reach our existing and potential members. Finally, it is one of my biggest goals to bring greater recognition to and form a stronger connection with the 23 state and local sections. The individuals that make up these groups are experts in the field, connected in their communities, and valuable assets to our association. I would like to see this relationship strengthened.

Before signing off, I would be remiss if I did not thank the immediate past presidents John Tracy and Mark Dunning for their leadership over the past two years. John and Mark have used their experience and dedication to AWRA to implement numerous initiatives that have enhanced AWRA and its role in the water resources community. I would also like to thank those presidents I have had the pleasure to serve with over my tenure on the Board of Directors. So many of you have had a positive and direct impact on shaping AWRA and making it the amazing organization that it is. I feel honored that I can call so many of you not only colleagues but friends and I thank you for the example you have set and the actions you have taken to make this organization great! It is my goal to advance your efforts and make my own valuable contributions to AWRA. ■