WATER INDUSTRY RECOGNIZES ALASKA’S TOP WATER AND WASTEWATER PROFESSIONALS

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA (APRIL 20, 2016) – One of Alaska Water Wastewater Management Association’s (AWWMA) ongoing efforts is to recognize the importance of the many different facets of professionals responsible for the delivery of quality water and wastewater utility services. These people include not only the operators who are directly in charge of hands-on day to day utility operations, but also their managers, supervisors, laboratory technicians, maintenance support, engineers, scientists, regulators, and educators who all contribute to this effort. To provide this recognition, the Association hosted its awards program during the 56th Annual Statewide Conference at the Hotel Captain Cook April 19-21, where individuals and/or facilities deserving recognition received the following:

Edward Sorenson, PE, George Warren Fuller Award: AWWMA’s most prestigious award, the George Warren Fuller Awards are presented annually by the American Water Works Association (AWWA) to selected members for distinguished service to the water supply field “in commemoration of the sound engineering skill . . . the brilliant diplomatic talent . . . and the constructive leadership” which characterized the life of the late George Warren Fuller. As a member in good standing of AWWA, the Water Environment Federation (WEF), and AWWMA, Edward Sorenson provides distinguished service to the water supply field. In a relatively short period of time as an AWWA and WEF member, Ed has contributed time, energy, and expertise to not only the water industry in Alaska, also to the customers of the largest water and wastewater utility in Alaska, to the state’s combined AWWA Section, and WEF Member Association. Ed continually and conscientiously strives to improve the water industry by mentoring young professionals, providing technical assistance to operators within the Anchorage Water and Wastewater Utility (AWWWU) and throughout the state. If you look for ‘southern gentleman’ in the dictionary of water and wastewater professionals, you will find a photo of Edward A. Sorenson. Ed serves the industry, the public, and his peers with dedication and civility, and gentle persistence.

Andrew Johnson, Laboratory Analyst of the Year - for performance of a lab analyst supporting large water and/or wastewater systems, Andrew was recognized for his exemplified attitude, professionalism, and work ethic. His peers can always count on Andrew to assist wherever needed, perform analytical work consistently and with the utmost attention to ensuring data he produces for compliance is of the utmost accuracy and quality. Many times Andrew has sacrificed his family time to be available at nights and on weekends for critical lab or fieldwork. The excellent reputation Andrew has earned while on staff with AWWU has reflected well on himself, the Water Quality Section and AWWU as a whole.

Scott Bradford, Small Wastewater System Operator of the Year - for performance as a wastewater system operator working in a small wastewater system, Scott has run the Haines Borough Water Treatment & Wastewater Treatment Plants for the last 10-15 years, and has done an excellent job. In addition to his attention to detail and hard work, he is also Haines Volunteer Fire Chief! Scott is a great asset to the to the Haines Public Works Department and to the community.

Galena Water Treatment Plant, Small Water System of the Year: For recognition of the performance of a water system serving less than 2,500 individuals or producing an average of less than 250,000 gallons per day (gpd) of water treated. AWWMA recognizes system operators Mr. Howard Beasley and Mr. Charles Richard Miller for their work to provide safe drinking water that required extensive cooperation and an effort far beyond their normal work. Howard and Charles were recognized and nominated by the Tanana Chiefs Conference Office of Environmental Health and Remote Maintenance Workers (RMWs), and staff from the State of Alaska Rural Utility Business Advisor (RUBA) Program for their cooperation and exceptional effort to provide safe drinking water to all of Galena and surrounding communities after a catastrophic fire in one of two water treatment plants.

Dennis Moeglein, Small Water System Operator of the Year: For performance of a water system operator working in a small water system, “Moegy” is a highly experienced water operator with over 35 years of drinking water and plumbing experience. In his role as the lead water operator over the Kenai Peninsula Borough’s 12 public water systems (10 of which are schools), he is centrally involved in design, operation, maintenance, monitoring, optimization, training and support of fellow operators. Moegy handles each of his duties with a humbling amount of knowledge, professionalism, and system ownership.

Girdwood (AWWU) Water and Wastewater Treatment Work Unit, Large Wastewater System of the Year: For recognition of the performance of a wastewater system serving 2,500 or more individuals or processing an average of 250,000 gpd or more of wastewater, this group ensures that Girdwood functions every day - from the Water supply and Distribution system, to the Wastewater Treatment Facility. These professionals perform standard treatment operations and maintain high-level ADEC licenses in three disciplines. The broad range of knowledge is invaluable to the people of the community. Recently, operators were asked to operate and maintain the Girdwood Water system, as well as the Distribution system, and the 35+-year-old Wastewater Treatment Facility. The “can do attitude” that they bring each day allows them to overcome many obstacles as they work to provide the community with quality water and wastewater services in a responsible, efficient and sustainable manner.
Rob Rose, Wastewater System Maintenance/Operations Person of the Year: For a single member of operations and maintenance personnel that has exhibited excellent performance maintaining a large wastewater system, Rob has worked tirelessly on maintaining the manholes in the AWUW collection system. He ensures efficient, proper repairs to the manholes, ensures protection from infiltration and oversees reconstruction. He is a natural leader and respected by all work units in the water and wastewater industry. His quiet demeanor and can do attitude speaks volumes about his subject matter knowledge.

JBER/FL. Richardson Army Water Plant, Large Water System of the Year: For recognition of performance of a water system serving 2,500 individuals or more or producing an average of 250,000 gpd or more of water, Doyon Utilities has had its share of replacing pumps, valves, bearings, and motors. During the installation of a new pump controller it was discovered that the buildings electrical service was out of compliance with NEC codes, and the entire system had to be replaced. Innovation and perseverance has been a staple in keeping this system operational.

Earl Stewman, Large Water System Maintenance/Operations Person of the Year: For a single member of operations and maintenance personnel that has exhibited excellent performance maintaining a large water system – Earl is a reserved gentlemen, respected by his crew and customers at AWUW alike. He takes his responsibilities and those of his crew very seriously. He is consistent and steady to ensure that the personal attention to detail is maintained and the hydraulic services are reliable. Earl has worked with distribution operations to maintain water quality through flushing programs. With engineering on construction of new hydrants, and customer service on providing hydrants of sufficient size to accommodate contractors for street cleaning, landscaping, and contract maintenance. All of these duties he does with water quality and fire protection in mind to better serve the community.

Gloria Patsy, System Manager Award: For excellence in service to a manager of a water and/or wastewater system, Gloria was nominated by the Tanana Chiefs Conference Office of Environmental Health and Remote Maintenance Workers (RMWs), along with staff from the Alaska Rural Utility Business Advisor (RUBA) Program. Gloria was the treasurer for the City of Nulato from 2010 until recently – a city that manages piped water and sewer, two washeterias, electric (AVEC), landfill, health clinic, fuel, gravel, and liquor sales, roads, maintenance shop, equipment rental, city office, community hall, activity center, and adult recreation center. One of the older washeterias required Gloria to proactively keep supplies available for troubleshooting, as parts are frequently needed. Gloria worked to find grants or other funding to finance much-needed upgrades on aging city utilities. Gloria recently resigned from her position to become a business owner in Nulato, and hopes she has left it in a stronger position financially than when she started.

Jana Littlewood, Multiple System Manager of the Year: For excellence in service to a manager of multiple water and/or wastewater systems. Jana, like many people entering the water systems field, began as a volunteer in the subdivision where she lived, serving on the board and helped other directors and the president administer their water system. She continues in that role every year. Nominated by her peers at Anchorage Well and Pump Service (AWPS), she is recognized for her talents in functioning as an intermediary to the various homeowner's associations and the Alaska DEC with daily operations. Her role and the water systems that she administers have grown significantly. She works with water systems operators, service techs, and others within the organization to provide a level of expertise that is attained by few.

Robert W. (Bill) Kranich, AWWA’s John Lechner Awards of Excellence: To recognize an individual Service Provider Member (SVP) who has demonstrated exemplary service to the drinking water community and to AWWA’s mission and goals. Bill has served Southcentral Alaska as a professional engineer specializing in water systems and well construction for 45 years, Founding Northern Utility Services that now serves 57 separate water systems with a combined total population of over 12,000. Throughout his career, Bill has been known for his passionate dedication to maintaining regulatory compliance and provide excellent water service, often custom fabricating or repairing system components to keep the water flowing. Finally, Bill has tirelessly advocated for practical regulation that protects public health without adding unnecessary cost.

Nathan Engebretson, Marty Lang Award: Initiated by the officers of the Association in honor of Marty Lang, a past officer of the Water Pollution Control Federation, the predecessor of the WEF, from New York, who recognized the efforts of operations personnel, especially those with limited resources at their disposal. The Marty Lang Award is established to honor those individuals working in the water and wastewater field that “do the most with the least.” While facing unique hardships imposed by the job, and/or by external forces or events, Nathan’s skill sets, along with the team work of other operators joining together to tackle their share of replacing pumps, valves, bearings, and motors to keep JBER/FL. Richardson’s aging facilities running has been exemplary.

Richard Suvlu, Operator Meritorious Service Award: A Barrow Utilidor System Operator that has demonstrated over the last eighteen years of service with Barrow Utilities & Electric Coop., Inc., Richard has a complete and thorough knowledge within the water and wastewater field! His passion, willingness, responsibility and effortless hours of duty demonstrating his operational skills in a positive professional manner are performed with pride, and a smile on a daily basis. He has the knowledge, skills and ability to respond with quick and accurate decisions during normal routine operations, and in emergency situations.

Larry Phillips, Continuous Flow Award: Created to honor and exemplify an industry professional who has supported and advanced not only the industry but the association; has retired or left the industry or the state; and then returned to roll up their sleeves and dive right back in. Larry spent his career with AWUW, retiring after 30 years then resurfacing at Doyon Utilities to assist in the daily operations of the JBER/FL. Richardson Water System. In addition to his career and dedication to these utilities, he has been an avid supporter of AWWMA at both the local and at the national level - as committee member, chair, director, and president. No matter what the role, he has performed his tasks with enthusiasm, his unique sense of humor, and great pride. AWWMA is proud to have Larry back and active, and we look forward to working with him for years to come!