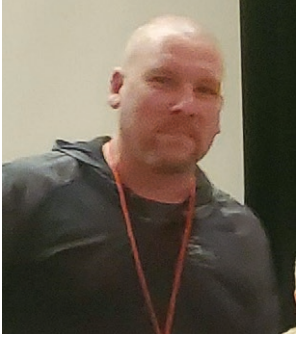


From the President



Rick Throop
MSTA President

With the temperature dropping and fall weather setting in I find myself looking to winter where work becomes a little more difficult. We fight freezing valves, frozen ground and all the ice and snow that comes with it but I also look forward to a little bit of downtime. Outside work slows down this time of year so it gives us time to catch up on bookwork and all the things to get set aside during the summer. I hope this summer has been profitable for all of you. I know finding

employees has been a constant struggle this year for myself and it seems everybody else I talk to.

Msta had our phone meeting at Canadian Lakes this year. It was well attended with quality speakers and great chili provided by members. I would like to thank Randy Smith and his wife for hosting the meeting it was a beautiful location with lots of room for everybody. I would also like to thank Mick Natzel providing breakfast and gift baskets for the chili cook off and door prizes. Another important thank you is to all the attendees at the meeting. There were many that participated in our group discussion and were able to provide important suggestions for all of us to improve our business.

As many of you know Michigan State University has specific requirements for being on campus and in buildings in regards to Covid which ultimately means our annual waste water conference at the Kellogg Center in January is going to be completely virtual and handled by Michigan State University directly. Msta will still be doing our annual gun raffle with some of our board members traveling to MSU and drawing the winning tickets in the parking lot as we did last year. This will be something that can be watched on zoom that evening. The MSTA board has been working toward our own conference which will be held February 8th and 9th of 2022. This conference will be held at Soaring Eagle Casino and should provide attendees with approximately 10 credits. I want to thank Jason and Karlyn for putting so much work into getting this done as quickly as he has. It sounds like this should be a good direction for our association to head to so we can better provide educational classes for our members that touch more on our business. Please keep an eye on the website for updates on MSTA's exciting new conference.

It seems crazy to be saying this and wondering where the year went, but, I would like to personally wish everyone a Happy Thanksgiving, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. I hope the remainder of the year goes well for all and I look forward to hopefully seeing many of you in February.

Thank You,
Rick Throop
MSTA President



The 2021 Fall Meeting was a success!

We were grateful to be able to host the 2021 Fall Meeting “in person” this year and it was very well received with over 60 people in attendance. The meeting was held at the Highland Haus at Canadian Lakes in Stanwood. A very special thank you goes out to Randy Smith from Randy’s Plumbing and Portables for hosting the meeting.

A great discussion incurred during a presentation that was done with many of our board members who talked about “Positioning your business and price setting your services during tough economic times”. It is very important to MSTA that all of our members succeed in their businesses and this topic was very timely during these crazy times.

Dan Wickham, from Sludgehammer, attending the meeting to discuss “How to recognize problems with lake front property systems”. This was a topic never discussed before at any of our meetings and we thank Dan for bringing this to our attention and making us think about this very important subject.

The final presentation was from Dee Thomas from Michigan Truck Safety. She talked about “Driver qualifications and distracted driving” which is something that we all deal with every day in the business but with having to hire more and more new employees these days, it is a topic that was very timely and very important.

Let’s talk about food.....we once again had the Chili Cookoff Contest and tasted some awesome chili. But with any contest, someone has to win. Congratulations to Dwayne Gee for having the best chili this year! Thanks to everyone who brought snacks and bread for the meal. A special thank you goes out to Mick Natzel from General Agency who brought the donuts, muffins and cider to feed everyone in the morning and for the gift baskets for the chili winner and drawing.

Because we value our members and are so grateful that you support the meetings that we have for you, we wanted to do some extra prize drawings to show our appreciation. Congratulations to John Skop, Dennis Parker, Jason Eldred

and Melissa Schoo for winning \$30 Lowe’s gift cards and Dave Snyder and Norman Bauman for winning the gift baskets donated by General Agency!

Thanks again for those of you who attended and as a reminder, we will be having a two-day conference on February 8-9 at the Soaring Eagle Resort. More about this conference is in this edition of the newsletter.



Karlyn Wickham
MSTA Executive Officer



DWAYNE GEE, CHILI COOKOFF WINNER WITH HIS GIFT BASKET



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DAVE SNYDER, GIFT BASKET WINNER



MSTA MEETING



NORMAN BAUMAN, GIFT BASKET WINNER

2022 MSTA Conference (In person)

Soaring Eagle Resort, Mt. Pleasant

FEBRUARY 8-9, 2022

An email will soon be coming out to tell you about the status of the 2022 Michigan Onsite Wastewater Conference. This conference is held at the Kellogg Center each January and it was canceled last year due to COVID and this year will only be offered “virtually” because of COVID restrictions at MSU. Look for the email from the MI Onsite WW Conference for more information.

Because of the cancelation of the in-person conference in January, MSTA has decided to have its own 2-day conference at the Soaring Eagle Resort in Mt. Pleasant. This conference will be on Tuesday, February 8 - Wednesday, February 9th. It will be IN PERSON and will have 2 days of education with at least 10 credit hours. We will have the Annual Board Meeting, the Annual Banquet and Vendors as well.

We are very excited to host our own event with our members and to see and network with each other again. Our conference program will be different than what is offered at the Virtual MI Onsite WW Conference so if you want to attend both, you are more than welcome to do so. We really hope that you decide

to join us for the 2022 MSTA Conference on February 8-9. Registration information and agenda will be emailed soon. If you would like this information mailed to your address, please contact Karlyn Wickham at 989-808-8648.



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Tickets On Sale Now

Tickets are still available for purchase for the Annual Raffle which will be held on Wednesday, January 12 at 8pm. Even though the MI Onsite WW Conference is virtual only this year, the State of Michigan tells us we must do the raffle at the same location and date/time that is printed on the tickets. So, a few of our Board Members will be bundling up and doing this in person, outside of the Kellogg Center and you will be able to view it through ZOOM. Look for the email to sign up to watch the “virtual” raffle.

Tickets are 3 for \$25 and would make a good present for the deer hunters on your Christmas list or just for yourself! Contact one of the Board Members or Karlyn Wickham, Executive Officer, if you would like to purchase tickets. Their contact information is on the MSTA website at www.msta.biz.

Thank you to Golden Circle Advisors for sponsoring the raffle tickets!

Below is a list of prizes you could win:

- 1st:** Savage Haymaker 450 Bushmaster or \$750 Cash
- 2nd:** Springfield Hellcat (Blk Synthetic) 9mm or \$450 Cash
- 3rd:** Weatherby Element Semi Auto (Syn.) 12 gauge or \$400 Cash
- 4th:** TriStar Setter O/U 12 gauge or \$350 Cash
- 5th:** Thompson Center Compass 6.5 Creedmore or \$300 Cash

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[2022 Raffle](#)
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10/22 Wood/Blue 22 LR or \$200 Cash

7th: Stevens 301 Single Shot Camo Turkey 20 gauge or \$175 Cash

8th: Ruger Wrangler Revolver (Burnt Bronze) 22 LR or \$150 Cash

Sincerely,
MSTA Raffle Committee

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2022 Michigan Onsite Wastewater Conference Update

The 2022 Michigan Onsite Wastewater Conference which normally takes place in January each year at the Kellogg Center in East Lansing, has been changed to a virtual conference. The reason for this is because of the COVID limitations and requirements inside MSU owned facilities. The conference will be a 2-day conference on either January 11-12 or January 12-13 and would offer 9 credit hours of continuing education.

The conference committee has been working hard to create a program to fit the needs of all participants which includes MSTA members, MOWRA members and Local Health Department personnel. A team of people from MSU will be handling all the virtual presentations as well as the online registration for this conference. Once the program is set, an email will be sent to all MSTA members letting you know when and how to register for the conference online.

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The Change of MSTA, As Seen Through A Board Members Eye

Well, it appears things are changing for MSTA and the wastewater conference as we have known it for the last several years. With the current covid problems I was unable to attend the last meeting in October, but it is great to see the MSTA Board step up and decide to hold its own conference.

The very 1st meeting/conference I attended was in Mt. Pleasant. I believe there were about 4 or 5 people that attended the meeting that weren't on the board and the board itself was not a full board and they asked if anyone in the audience would serve on the board. I volunteered and Mark Scott may have volunteered at that time also. This was sometime in the early 90's I believe.

As I look back so many things have changed. Who would have thought MSTA would have an Executive Secretary or a Lobbyists or an insurance program that invest money back into the association? The good thing is the board has had the funds to be able to advance in these areas and still have a positive balance in the checkbook. I can't name all the people that have been involved with the advancement.

There were many that took time away from their businesses and made trips to Lansing in the early 2000's before the last big changes came in 2004 to testify before the House of Representatives and the Senate. It was certainly a learning experience for me and I'm sure many others.

I believe when Judy Augenstein got on board as our Lobbyists it was a great fit for the association, she knew we were a very small group with not much impact on anything that was happening in Lansing. I believe that has changed over the years with her guidance.

On a sad note, many people that help pave the way are no longer involved and several more have passed away. On a positive note, I believe with the new leadership MSTA will continue to grow as an association and continue to move forward. Coming from an old board member I believe the upcoming conference is a sign of good things to come.

Raymond Daniels
MSTA Board Member

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➤ **Pumper PROFILE**

The **SEASONED** Professionals

The longtime owners of West Michigan Septic have learned many things about running a pumping business, including how to look sharp, educate customers and ensure a profit

By Betty Dageforde



When 19-year-old Terry Kiel was presented with two job offers on the same day in 1976 — a foundry and a concrete plant — he never imagined his decision would lead to a career in the septic service industry. His brother encouraged him to learn a trade so he took the concrete job thinking he'd become a mason or block layer, but when he got there he discovered the job would be building, delivering and pumping septic tanks. It was a good company to work for so he stayed, but with no room for advancement he struck out on his own in 1987. "I built a septic truck and said, 'Here I come, world.'"

A year later he added sewer and drain cleaning work and the company became West Michigan Septic Sewer & Drain Service. That's when his friend Dave Snyder joined, first as a silent partner to help with financing, but soon as a full partner, stepping away from his vending machine job.

And in an amazing stroke of luck, when Kiel went to the unemployment office to hire a laborer to help with the sewer and drain work, he found someone from that industry who could teach him the trade and advise him on equipment. In the early 1990s he bought a backhoe and a dump truck and added repairs and installations.

Kiel and Snyder learned many lessons over the years. A couple of them were real game changers: 1. Being busy is not the same as being profitable. And 2. Despite concrete being the world Kiel grew up in and loved, he ultimately determined plastic tanks were better for his company.

Today, three names appear on the company's building, vehicles and printed material. They made a couple acquisitions over the years — City Sewer & Drain Service and Heckman's Contracting — and kept the names for legal and name recognition purposes. The combined company operates out of a 5,000-square-foot building on two acres of land in Muskegon, Michigan, a town of 37,000 on the eastern shore of Lake Michigan.

Snyder runs the office, doing scheduling, dispatching, invoicing and talking to customers, while Kiel is usually found on an excavation project along with Ron Williams and Travis Barrett. Kiel's son Jacob and stepson T.J. Stariha do sewer and drain work, and 27-year company veteran Jon Stephens handles pumping. Joe Magnier and Ryan George fill in where needed.

Kiel says it's tough finding people, but they pay well and provide medical insurance, an IRA plan, paid vacations, short-term disability insurance, uniforms with weekly laundering and work shoes.

LOOKING GOOD

Kiel learned the importance of presenting a good image from his former employer. He built his first septic truck using a semi-tractor with a stretched frame not only because it could carry a 3,000-gallon tank (Presvac) and he thought it would last a long time, but because of its appearance. "It was a 'pretty' septic truck, if that makes sense," he says. "I learned that from my employer — you've got to know what you're doing and all that, but if you can look good, you're in."

➤ Pumper PROFILE

➤ Technician Joe Magner cleans out a pit at an automobile dealership garage in Muskegon, Michigan.

♥️ Magner, left, and Terry Kiel inspect a repair of their 1985 Mack tri-axle rig at a commercial truck center. The truck was built out by Marsh Industrial with a National Vacuum Equipment pump.



When a banker advised him to write a business plan, he hired an expert to make sure it looked perfect. The banker was impressed and Kiel got his loan. He also chose to use an answering service rather than an answering machine, believing it appeared more professional and would prevent prospective customers from hanging up and calling someone else.

For marketing, he created a flyer with a lot of graphics, "So, no matter how you threw it away, the logo or the truck or my picture was going to show." When the company started expanding the service territory, they obtained local phone numbers to make it easy for people to contact them. They maintain seven numbers.

The company carries 300 feet of hose on the vacuum truck so it can be parked on the road rather than on a customer's property, avoiding the possibility of cracking a driveway or causing damage. It also gives them visibility, Kiel says, and is a subtle message to neighbors (potential customers) that you won't destroy their yard.

All printed material has the company motto, "Honesty is still our policy," because Kiel wants people to know it's always been their policy. Sometimes it hurts to be honest, he says, but you've got to do it. Looking good also refers to professional conduct.

"You pull in with clean equipment and uniforms and you try your best to leave everything like you found it," he says. "We have a soil conditioner on our skid-steer that grinds up the topsoil. We skim that off, pile it in a corner, put the septic system in, then put that topsoil back on. People are happy. It levels their yard off and it looks better than when we got there."



“YOU JUST GROW TO LOVE IT. YOU’RE ON YOUR OWN. YOU’RE MAKING SOMETHING OUT OF NOTHING. IT’S THE AMERICAN DREAM — TO OWN YOUR OWN COMPANY.”

TERRY KIEL

BREAKING AWAY FROM CONCRETE

Until a few years ago, Kiel purchased concrete tanks from his former employer. It took a lot of persuasion to convince him to switch to plastic, but a salesman finally talked him into trying an Infiltrator Water Technologies unit with an EZflow drainfield.

"He gave me a free one and we gave it to a customer, just charging for the labor," he says. "I gave a 12-year warranty and the manufacturer said he'd stand behind it." Kiel was quickly sold.

"The technology has come so far that it's now a better product," he admits. "The tank is watertight, the drainfield is cleaner. You learn that stone is not drainage, it's storage until the water can drain into the soil. The EZFlow is clean and neat. And it's made of recycled products."

Another advantage was the light weight of the tanks, enabling the company to sell their large excavation equipment. "We got rid of all that big heavy iron," Kiel says. "We can set these tanks with a mini excavator." Current equipment includes a Takeuchi TB235 compact excavator, Case 590 and John Deere 310 backhoes, Takeuchi skid-steer and a 12-yard 2005 Mack dump truck.

(continued)

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➤ Pumper PROFILE



◀ The truck Jon Stephens is working with is a 1994 Kenworth built out by Marsh Industrial and carrying a National Vacuum Equipment pump.

✔ Technician Stephens pumps a residential septic tank in Spring Lake, Michigan.



Kiel says stone and pipe is cheaper but takes more time and labor to install so cost-wise it's about the same. The company provides a 12-year warranty on new units with the stipulation it's the one to maintain it.

The company now uses Infiltrator and EZflow on all new installations. But concrete tanks still make up the bulk of their pumping and repair work. For risers on those tanks they use 18-inch culverts and cut them to length. And Kiel has his former employer make adapter rings for the older tanks with square covers. The company prefers to bury risers three inches below the surface for safety reasons. Waste is hauled to the Muskegon municipal plant, which Kiel says is one of the best in the world.

"People come from all over to check it out," he says. "They've got hundreds of acres and made a system that is huge. And they take anything — grease, septic waste, light chemicals. Not many municipalities have that."

REPAIR OR REPLACE

For sewer and drain cleaning work the company uses six Ford half-ton and three-quarter-ton Econolines, General Pipe Cleaners (a division of General Wire Spring) jetters in sizes up to six inches including a trailer-mounted unit, and pipe bursting equipment from HammerHead Trenchless Equipment. They have RIDGID cameras and locators and a Mighty Probe from T&T Tools.

On the pumpingside, they have two vacuum trucks built by Marsh Industrial — a 1994 Kenworth tandem with a 2,500-gallon steel tank and a 1985 Mack tri-axle with a 3,300-gallon steel tank, both with National Vacuum Equipment pumps. They're old, Kiel admits, but well maintained. Engines, transmissions and tanks are changed out on pumping and excavation equipment as needed.

"We've done everything to them," Kiel says. "They make better stuff now, I'm not denying that. And they might get a little better mileage. But they're more expensive to repair because it's all high-technology stuff. So it costs you more to buy, more to repair, and it doesn't make you any more money. You either have repair bills or you have truck payments. Which do you want?"

BUT ARE YOU MAKING MONEY

As he was flipping through *Pumper* one day in the early 1990s, Kiel saw something that really struck him.

"I read this article by Frank Blau," he says. "What caught my eye was his question, 'Are you a businessman or a business technician? You're really good at your job, you just don't know if you made any money or not.'" He contacted Blau who ran him through some numbers.

"He asked me how much I charged to clean a tank, and I told him. Then he asked me how much it cost me to clean a tank, and I said I don't really know. 'Then how do you know if you're making any money?' he asked. He told me everything I didn't want to hear, but needed to hear."



When the boss is laid up

In the winter of 2019, Terry Kiel slipped on the ice on the job. "I caught myself," he says, "but I hit my elbow and jammed my shoulder and tore the rotator cuff." He's only a few years from retirement but knew it was serious enough he couldn't wait. "I hated to take off work to do it, but I had to get it fixed or it wasn't going to get better."

Kiel was out of commission for a number of weeks before getting the go-ahead to operate heavy equipment again. But it didn't take him long to head out to a job site. "I wanted to see what they were doing," he says. "I pointed my finger at things and told them what I thought." He was on the phone with the team fairly often. And with cellphones the guys were able to send him photos if they needed him to look at something.

Fortunately the accident happened during the winter, a slower time for the company, but nevertheless work continued and the team at West Michigan Septic Sewer & Drain Service really stepped up and figured out how to do things on their own.

"The guys could handle it," Kiel says. "And that's good because they got a chance to do some of that stuff."



Travis Barrette operates a John Deere backhoe and lowers an IM Series tank from Infiltrator Water Technologies into the ground during a septic system installation.

The crew installs an EZflow by Infiltrator system to replace a failed system at a residential property. Terry Kiel and



Thus began his business education. And even though Kiel and Snyder were living paycheck to paycheck at the time, they splurged and bought \$350 worth of videotapes to learn everything they could about the business end of running a company.

Instead of basing their rates on what everybody else was charging, they learned to set prices so all expenses were covered, including nonproductive overhead, which is everything needed to run a business that doesn't directly produce income. Blau also taught them to realize their value to society. "He said doctors, lawyers and dentists are prestigious jobs and everybody looks up to them, but when your septic tank doesn't work you're as important as they are."

LOOSE ENDS

Kiel and Snyder are both 63 and starting to think about retirement. But before they step away there are a few things they need to take care of. First and foremost is getting the company onto better technology for managing projects, employees, customers, vehicles and equipment. Their current homegrown system is outdated and inadequate. Kiel says they may have a custom system built.

Looking back, Kiel says the partnership with Snyder has been great despite, or maybe because, they have a different outlook on things. But next on the agenda is succession planning. Kiel's sons are interested in taking over the business but no definitive plans have been made. "We're not there yet," he says. "We still have some time. You get so busy doing stuff, but that's our next job."

Kiel's accidental drift into septic work turned out to be a good thing, he says. "You just grow to love it. You're on your own. You're making something out of nothing. It's the American dream — to own your own company." **P**



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July 7, 2021

To: Bridge Michigan Magazine

On June 9th, 2021, Bridge Michigan published an article, **"Michigan's climate-ready future: wetland parks, less cement, roomy shores"** written by Kelly House, Keith Schneider and the Circle of Blue with suggestions as to what southeast Michigan could look like in the year 2050 if the people of Michigan properly prepared for the inevitable change that is coming as a result of climate change and the expected influx of climate refugees. This letter is a response to a problematic portion of that article with the sub-heading: **"FEWER SEPTIC SYSTEMS, MORE SEPARATE SEWERS"**. In that portion of the article, the authors quote Charlotte Jameson of the Michigan Environmental Council: "And long-term, Jameson said, it will be cheaper and more effective to get more people off septic systems and onto public water treatment systems. No septic system," Jameson said, "is going to be better from a water quality perspective than a water treatment system." We assume she is referring to public sewage collection and treatment systems. We would like to suggest an alternate vision with an emphasis on water resource management.

I am writing on behalf of the National Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association (NOWRA). [NOWRA](http://www.NOWRA.org) is the largest organization within the USA dedicated to educating and representing members within the onsite and decentralized wastewater treatment industry. Our members include educators, regulators, engineers, contractors, manufacturers, suppliers, service providers, and other parties dedicated to protecting water resources and the environment through proper siting, design, and operation of onsite wastewater treatment systems ('septic' systems) that utilize the soil as a final receiving environment for treated wastewater. As a national organization, we have 24 state affiliates, including the Michigan Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association (MOWRA). In the last 30 to 40 years our onsite/decentralized industry has made great strides in the development of both onsite treatment technologies and management programs that, when implemented, have proven to produce reliable onsite treatment systems that protect public health and the environment. Nationally at least 25% of our population rely upon onsite treatment systems and that percentage is increasing. The percentage of the population served by onsite systems in Michigan is growing (more than 40% of new single-family housing in Michigan uses an onsite system).

The most common onsite system is the 'septic system' referred to in the article. A properly designed, installed, and maintained septic system reduces organic and biological contaminants to essentially non-detectable levels after filtration through a few feet of appropriate soil (EPA, 2002). Modern onsite systems can be outfitted with additional treatment components to provide greater contaminant reduction even before entering the soil, when needed for more sensitive receiving environments or for reuse using similar technology as municipal wastewater treatment plants (WWTP), at a smaller scale. We believe that onsite treatment systems offer numerous advantages over public collection and treatment systems if soil conditions are suitable and the systems are properly managed. The U.S. E.P.A. agreed in their **Response to Congress on the Use of Decentralized Wastewater Treatment Systems in 1997** when they stated that: ***"Properly managed decentralized wastewater treatment systems can provide the treatment necessary to protect the public health and meet water quality standards, just as well as centralized systems."*** EPA continues to support the

National Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association, P.O. Box 982, Westford, MA 01886
Phone: 978-496-1800 Web: www.NOWRA.org

(continued on page 16)

(continued from page 16)

use of onsite treatment systems and has produced numerous articles on their benefits, including the recent development of four position papers on onsite/decentralized systems for state, local, and tribal government officials and interested stakeholders. These [papers](#) include information on the uses and benefits of decentralized wastewater treatment and examples of its effective use. The key ingredient is good management; therefore we DO support the establishment of better management programs for decentralized systems, including the development of a uniform statewide onsite wastewater treatment code in Michigan. Onsite wastewater treatment systems at the point of use can be designed to match the need of a home, business, or institution without having to pipe sewage long distances for treatment.

In comparison, consider the sustainability of continuing to expand our legacy of centralized sewage collection and treatment systems. Every foot of buried pipe in our network of public sewers has a limited lifetime and limited capacity. It will all need replacement at some point in the future. Currently, much of it is now buried beneath various forms of surface infrastructure, making the repair/replacement process very expensive. Miles and miles of these pipes are over 10 feet in diameter, and some buried over 50 feet below grade, carrying millions of gallons of sewage every day. As an example, a recent report by the GLWA* serving the City of Detroit lists 55% of their 184 miles of sanitary interceptor sewers as over 90 years old. And 23% of these major Detroit sewers are still made of “brick”, an obsolete form of sewer construction. These sewers allow stormwater to enter these sewers which results in additional cost to treat the stormwater, back up into the basements of homes, or overflow with little or no treatment to our surface waters. Public sewer systems in communities across Michigan still report an average of over 20 BILLION gallons of sewer overflows per year to our streams and lakes. In some communities a rainfall of less than 0.5 inch will trigger an overflow event.

Add to this the tremendous amount of energy that is required every day to move millions and millions of gallons of wastewater through miles of pipes and multiple pumping stations to WWTPs. Most WWTP discharge into rivers, sending the effluent out of the watershed which contributes to groundwater depletion. Many urban communities are considering a more sustainable approach that captures the wastewater at the point-of-use, treat it there using decentralized wastewater treatment solutions, and re-use it for any number of non-potable uses. In that way, one can reduce the amount of potable water needed, and save both the infrastructure capacity and the energy needed to move the wastewater away for treatment. Onsite and point-of-use wastewater treatment systems can be a valuable tool to help create a sustainable water infrastructure for the future of Michigan and elsewhere.

Citing a research publication by Michigan State University the article by Bridge suggested that septic systems were the likely source of fecal bacteria contamination in the surface waters of Michigan (Verhougstraete et al, 2015). Public sewer systems upstream of the sampling sites were discounted as a source for this contamination. However, numerous municipalities on the banks of those streams, discharge wastewater from their public treatment systems DIRECTLY INTO those rivers and streams, as well as occasional sewer overflows. “Septic systems” are scattered over the entire watershed, normally away from the banks of streams and rivers. These systems, discharging into the native soils for final treatment, were named by Bridge as the probable source. Residential onsite systems in Michigan have never been permitted to discharge directly to surface waters. We believe that the conclusions drawn from this study are erroneous and NOWRA and member researchers issued statements to that effect at the time.

This begs the question: **“Why do decision-makers still promote connections to our leaky, aging, unsustainable centralized infrastructure as preferable to properly managed onsite/dispersed wastewater treatment systems?”**

(continued on page 19)

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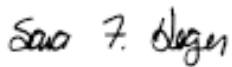
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(continued from page 17)

As cities and states look to the future for managing water resources, we need to be visionary. Increasing pressures on water resources has led to greater water scarcity and a growing demand for enough high-quality water. We need to evaluate our water resources under a “One Water” approach that will require both centralized and decentralized approaches to wastewater treatment and reuse. An integrated *One Water* approach can meet demand by limiting discharges from wastewater treatment, identifying alternative water sources, recovering resources (e.g., water), developing methods to enhance the availability and quality of recycled water for appropriate end uses, and creating tools to evaluate trade-offs and aid decision making for fit-for-purpose water reuse. These concepts are already being implemented in many places across the US and the world (National Academy of Sciences, 2016).

Sincerely,



Dr. Sara Heger
NOWRA President

Dr. Sara Heger is the current president of NOWRA and a researcher and instructor at the University of Minnesota in the Onsite Sewage Treatment Program in the Water Resources Center and is an Adjunct Assistant Professor in the Bioproducts and Biosystems Engineering Department. For nearly 25 years, she has been conducting research and providing education and technical assistance to students, homeowners, small communities, onsite professionals, and local units of government regarding decentralized onsite wastewater treatment. Sara serves on the NSF International Committee on Wastewater Treatment Systems and chairs Minnesota’s SSTS Advisory Committee. She has BS in Biosystems & Agricultural Engineering and a MS and a PhD in Water Resources Science.

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We want to remind everyone that we can only make our political efforts possible through the help of our membership donations to the MSTA PAC fund. With your help we hope to continue having a prominent voice in the capital by representing our member's ability to effectively conduct business in the State of Michigan.

This year, contributions were made to the following PACS / Committees:

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We would like to encourage engagement from our general members and provide transparency to the use of our PAC dollars. If any members have specific pain points they feel should be communicated, we are happy to review them at the PAC committee so we can properly plan how to address them with legislators. Additionally, any contributions are appreciated and begin to add up when considering the potential scale of our association. For example, if we have 150 of our members donate \$100, we have \$15,000 of fire power to move forward our initiatives and make sure our voice is heard in Lansing.

Please note that all PAC donations must come from personal checks and we can't accept checks written from business accounts.

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MSTA PAC Committee

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As you already know, we have a new website and database system to track your membership and CSE credits. The old website contained all your CSE Credits prior to August of 2017. If you don’t have records of your credits prior to August 2017, you will not be able to get them by logging onto the website. Instead you will have to send an email to the address below to request a report of those.

The new website contains your CSE Credits from August 2017 through now. To get a record of the credits you received from the Fall 2017 meeting or the 2018 Michigan Onsite WW Conference, follow the steps below:

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6. A copy of your transcript will appear showing the credits you earned by going to the meeting
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Please save these instructions for future use. Please also save your username and password somewhere safe as well so that you can log onto the MSTA website again. By the way, your username and password can be changed to something you remember more easily by clicking on “Member Information / change username and password” (right next to the “other information” tab).

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Legislative Report

August 1, 2021 Report

The Legislature continues to work on next year's budget slated to take effect October 1. Governor Whitmer signed a bill into law that would require the Legislature to send a budget to the Governor by July 1. Last year the deadline was extended due to the corona virus pandemic. This year, the legislature will obviously not meet the July 1 deadline. The Legislature is at odds as to how to spend the remaining federal Covid relief funding. The House passed legislation that would eliminate the federal \$300 a week supplemental unemployment benefit, with proponents of the bill arguing it is disincentivizing people receiving unemployment benefits from returning to work.

The teaching of critical race theory would be off limits for students in K-12 schools under legislation sponsored by Rep. Andrew Beeler, R-Port Huron in the House and by Senator Lana Theis, R-Brighton in the Senate. The bills would outlaw the subject in the K-12 curriculum.

Opponents say the subject is not being taught now, so they are concerned the bills would have unintended consequences like discouraging teachers from addressing issues of race in the classroom. Proponents contend the bills would outlaw the teaching of CRT describing the practice as an invention of the extremist political left that has manipulated academia for decades and is now targeting private businesses, public institutions and our K-12 classrooms.

Senator Theis commented that "Its 'woke' proponents reject our country's true history and our founding principles in favor of an identity based cultural Marxist ideology that seeks nothing more than victimization, envy, division, discrimination and ultimately the destruction of our country and way of life. The radical world view has no place in public education and my bill will make sure it never will."

Rep. Beeler's bill does not specifically mention CRT, instead prohibits race or gender stereotyping from the K-12 curriculum. Beeler commented that "Students

go to school to learn, and our curriculum should not be teaching students to stereotype each other based on race or gender or to view themselves or their country poorly as a result. My plan will promote respect among Michigan students and patriotism for the United States and the opportunity it provides to all, regardless of one's background." Beeler's bill would prohibit the State Board of Education and local boards from including statements or ideas related to race and gender stereotyping."

Democrats oppose the bills as Republicans support the bills. If the bills are passed by the Senate and the House; it will be interesting to see what Governor Whitmer does with them once they reach her desk for approval or a veto.

Rep. Daire Rendon, R-Lake City continues to state that she has evidence of systematic election fraud in Michigan in the 2020 election. Rendon responded to a recent report by the Senate Oversight Committee's report concluding that there was no finding of fraud in that election. Rep. Rendon contends she has a "forensic audit" of voting machines by those who have extensive credentials in government work and cybersecurity. Senator Ed McBroom, Chair, Senate Oversight Committee and the Secretary of State disagree with Rep. Rendon. Senator McBroom told Rep. Rendon to "show me the report". The Secretary of State spokesperson commented "This is nothing more than the latest debunked conspiracy theory being spread to justify the push for nefarious fraud and voter suppression legislation". Another interesting issue to watch!

September 2021 Report

A recent Small Business Association of Michigan survey showed sharp disapproval of President Joe Biden's coronavirus vaccine mandate on all businesses of more than 100 employees.

The same survey also showed majorities of small business owners having experienced negative effects from the pandemic, higher operating costs and difficulties in addressing staff shortages.

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In a survey of 680 small business owners across the state September 10-17, 58 percent opposed the president's vaccine mandate, 29 percent were in favor and 13 percent were without an opinion.

"It's not surprising that most business owners oppose the vaccine mandate, especially given the worker shortage," SBAM President Brian Calley said in a statement following the release of the survey. "This federal overreach threatens to make a difficult staffing situation worse."

Mr. Biden's mandate is expected to affect tens of millions of workers nationally and is already drawing fierce Republican opposition and a split opinion among labor unions. It is also expected to draw lawsuits. Legal scholars have told multiple national media outlets the president is likely on strong legal grounds for issuing the mandate.

The impacts of the pandemic were widespread among those surveyed, with 79 percent of businesses reporting cost increases being larger than pre-pandemic and 77 percent saying the pandemic has had a negative impact on their business. A total of 67 percent of businesses reported the pandemic is still affecting their business.

Sixty-four percent of those surveyed said staff shortages are a major problem, with 62 percent saying they have increased wages to attract more staff. Wage increases of more than 10 percent were reported by 24 percent of those surveyed.

A total of 55 percent of those surveyed said they experienced revenue reductions during 2020 from the previous year, with 29 percent of those businesses saying their revenue decline was more than 25 percent.

There was a sense of optimism among those surveyed, with 83 percent expecting revenue levels to level off or begin to rise again in 2021. Sixteen percent were pessimistic about their business being able to remain open. About 47 percent expected to increase staff numbers over the next year, while 19 percent increased staffing since early 2020.

"The pandemic has been difficult for small businesses, but it's clear that entrepreneurs are adapting and taking action to position their businesses for success," Mr. Calley said.

Attorney General Dana Nessel said telecommunications companies nationally have blocked billions of spam, spoofed or illegal calls since September 2019 when she signed on to participate in enacting a set of anti-robocall principles.

Ms. Nessel in a Monday release updating her offices' work on preventing robocalls said companies that have signed on to implementing anti-robocall principles have blocked more than 32.5 billion spam, spoofed or illegal calls since September 2019. This is from efforts to identify about 52 billion such calls and identify the caller identification numbers of hundreds of billions of calls.

So far this year, more than 391,000 complaints have been filed with the Federal Trade Commission, Ms. Nessel added, with about \$356 million in reported losses stemming from the calls.

She said the fight against robocalls and preventing fraud has been a goal since she took office.

"While we're making progress, I recognize there is much more work to be done by this office and my colleagues across the country to shut down these operations," Ms. Nessel said. "We will continue to protect Michigan consumers and pursue illegal robocalls to the furthest extent of the law."

She pointed to a settlement with a California-based voice-over internet protocol service provider to have it end its operations, something she said was a first for an attorney general to accomplish. She also pointed to the case involving two Virginia men using robocalls to allegedly intimidate voters in Michigan and other states prior to the November 2020 elections as evidence of pushing back on the practice.

Companies agreeing to the anti-robocall principles must comply with several requirements including offering

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customers call labeling and blocking tools for free, putting in place call blocking on the network level, confirming the identity of commercial customers, conducting efforts to analyze and monitor high-volume network traffic that appears to be robocalls, investigating suspicious calls and calling patterns on their networks, and cooperating in investigations to track back calls and aid law enforcement.

Ms. Nessel said the push by her office and those of other attorneys general has produced results, saying that the Industry Traceback Group has conducted 4,769 tracebacks since implementing the principles in September 2019 – about triple the number prior to that time.

The group has identified 319 domestic and foreign providers as being the source of a majority of all robocalls.

To date, 162 requests for investigation and subpoenas have been sent to the Industry Traceback Group via law enforcement and government agencies including state attorneys general.



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