NYSAWWA Ad Hoc Sustainability Committee

Carrie Meek Gallagher, Chair

The Section's Ad Hoc Sustainability Committee held its first meeting at the 2011 Edwin C. Tifft Symposium over breakfast. Seven brave souls actually showed up in person — Paul Granger, Mike Marino, Kevin Castro, Bob Lancaster, Dale Walker, Chris Wheland and Phil Sachs, while two others — Katie Hoek and Amanda Bauner— volunteered later. Our mission is to ensure a sustainable water future for New York State and promote a culture of sustainability at water utilities throughout the state.

The committee's first action was to adopt AWWA's definition of sustainability:

"Sustainability means providing an adequate and reliable water supply of desired quality – now and for future generations – in a manner that integrates economic growth, environmental protection and social development".

Members then identified an ambitious agenda for our committee that should keep us pretty busy for the foreseeable future:

Goals:

- Source Water Protection – watershed management and aquifer protection to ensure high quality source water into the future
- Water Conservation – WaterSense, rate structures, meeting peak demand
- Water Quality Improvement – water treatment master planning and health effects research to anticipate potential process changes to meet future water quality needs
- Energy Efficiency – energy audits, lighting and HVAC retrofits, VFD & HE motor pumps
- Greening the Fleet – CNG, biodiesel, hybrid, electric, other AFVs
- Renewable Energy – solar, wind, hydro, biomass, geothermal
- Waste Reduction/Recycling
- Green Procurement – least toxic products, recycled content

Activities:

- Identify sustainability best practices at the local, state, national and international level that are applicable in NYS
- Share best practices through NYSAWWA magazine, communiqués, conferences, website, public outreach
- Develop a Sustainability Track/ Session at NYSAWWA Water Event and Tifft Symposium
- Coordinate with the Water Utility Council on legislative and regulatory activities that impact sustainability and take action when necessary
- Explore water footprint assessments as a useful tool for sustainable water management
- Partner with NYS Ag & Markets and local farmers to encourage agricultural environmental management
- Become a pilot community for the International Water Stewardship Standard
- Partner with AWWA Sustainability Ad-Hoc Committee
- Partner with NYSAWWA Education Committee to train operators on sustainable practices
- Leverage grants and other funding sources to implement sustainability projects at NYS water utilities
- Develop a program similar to the Partnership for Safe Water for sustainability initiatives in the water industry

The committee has one activity already underway – a sustainability session is scheduled for the NYSAWWA Water Event next spring. Presenters are being assembled. We'll also be adding a segment to NYSAWWA's website dedicated to sustainability and the activities of the new ad hoc committee before the spring event.