

From the President's Desk

### **Paul Hignutt, WWOA President**

Most of us didn't get into wastewater because it was glamorous. We got into it because it was solid work, honest work, and work that mattered. And if you've been doing this long enough, you already know — when we're doing our job right, nobody notices. When we're not, everybody notices.

That's something I think about a lot, especially early in the morning when most of the world is still asleep and we're already moving.

### **The Reality of the Job**

Wastewater isn't a 9–5 job. It's early mornings, late nights, weekends, holidays, alarms going off when you're already exhausted, and problems that don't care what day it is. You don't get into this field unless you're willing to show up when it counts.

That's why I respect the people in this association so much. Every operator, mechanic, lab tech, supervisor, and superintendent in WWOA understands that responsibility. You don't need to be told why this work matters — you live it every day.

### **Why Training and Mentorship Matter**

One thing I've learned over the years is this: nobody succeeds in this field alone. Every operator who makes it long-term had someone show them the ropes, answer questions, and keep them moving forward when things got tough.

That's why training and mentorship are such a big focus for me.

Between teaching at Del Tech, working with new operators in the field, and mentoring through Delaware Rural Water, I see firsthand how much difference the right guidance can make.

Sometimes it's technical knowledge. Sometimes it's just reassurance that you're not the only one who's struggled through a process or failed a test the first time.

If we want to keep people in this industry — and we do — we have to support them early and often.

### **Where WWOA Fits In**

This is where WWOA really earns its keep.

WWOA isn't just about CEUs or conferences. It's about connection. It's about giving operators a place to learn, ask questions, share real experiences, and grow without feeling like they're on an island.

Tri-Con continues to be a great example of that. Every year, I see operators sharing real-world knowledge — not textbook answers, but lessons learned from the field. Our section trainings do the same thing on a local level, and that hands-on, operator-driven approach is something we should all be proud of.

One thing I'm especially excited about right now is where our train-the-trainer program has landed. That program has already been completed, and we've successfully trained operators on how to train other operators. Now we're in the next phase — those trainees are actively developing their own classes, building lesson plans, and getting ready to deliver training themselves.

In the very near future, those operators will be out there conducting their own water and wastewater training. That's a big deal. That's how experience gets passed down, how consistency improves across systems, and how we make sure the next generation is learning from people who have actually done the work.

That's what WWOA is about — building knowledge, multiplying it, and keeping it within the profession.

### **Leadership Isn't a Title**

One thing I want to be clear about: leadership in this industry doesn't come from a job title or a board position. It comes from experience, consistency, and being willing to help the person next to you.

Some of the best leaders I've ever worked with never planned on being leaders. They just showed up, did the work, and helped others along the way. That's the kind of leadership WWOA values, and that's the culture I want to keep building.

### **Get Involved — For Real**

I know everyone's busy. I know time is tight. I live it too. But if you've ever thought about getting involved with WWOA — serving on a committee, helping with training, mentoring someone, or even just showing up to an event — I encourage you to do it.

This association is only as strong as the people who participate. And the more voices we have, the better we get.

### **Final Thoughts**

I'm proud to serve as your President, and I don't take that lightly. I've been on the floor, in the press room, in the classroom, and in leadership roles, and I know exactly how demanding this field can be.

What we do matters. Even when nobody's watching. Especially when nobody's watching.

Thank you for the work you do every day, for supporting each other, and for keeping this profession moving forward. I'm looking forward to what we build together this year.

— Paul Hignutt  
WWOA President