

Kevin McCray



Compiled by Rebecca Wilhelm

Staying Well Grounded: A Groundwater Update

The National Ground Water Association (NGWA) is convening for its 60th annual meeting in Las Vegas, Dec. 2 to 5. Rebecca Wilhelm, associate editor of Water Quality Products, recently spoke with Kevin McCray, the association's executive director, to learn more about the association, the 2008 Ground Water Expo and recent groundwater-related developments.

Rebecca Wilhelm: What is the theme of this year's conference?

Kevin McCray: The NGWA is celebrating its first 60 years of working to further the skills and competencies among all of the groundwater professions. Our theme this year is the same as it has been since our first annual meeting in Peoria, Ill., in 1948—making people even better so that they are equipped to always be the best at providing, protecting, remediating and managing groundwater—the drinking water source of nearly half of the U.S. population.

Wilhelm: What key events do you recommend attending?

McCray: With more than 70 hours of continuing education, there truly is something for everyone at the Ground Water Expo.

The groundwater professions are very much linked to technology and hardware, and this year we are featuring several field demonstrations of various drilling, monitoring and sampling methods and the associated equipment.

Being in business today is a greater challenge than ever before. We are offering a wide assortment of business management workshops—a first for NGWA is a special forum for the business managers of groundwater consulting businesses.

Wilhelm: What are some current "hot topics" within the world of groundwater?

McCray: The strong linkage of water and energy has become all the more apparent this year and NGWA is at the forefront. A working group of members are preparing detailed comments on the proposed rules for geologic sequestration of carbon dioxide. Our members are involved on several fronts related to groundwater use for ethanol production, and for more than 30 years,

NGWA has advocated for the use of groundwater and ground-source heat pumps to help reduce our nation's fossil fuel dependence.

With Congress' recent approval of tax credits to those who adopt this technology—something NGWA actively lobbied Congress for over several years—the drilling segment of our industry is poised to further diversify, as well as help contribute to wise energy use.

Wilhelm: How has recent severe flooding, as well as drought, in various areas of the U.S. affected groundwater supplies?

McCray: Surface water floods can be both positive and negative for groundwater. Significant precipitation events can help groundwater recharge, but they can also contaminate water well systems with dirty surface water flows. NGWA worked with the Federal Emergency Management Agency several years ago to help develop a protocol for returning well systems safely back to service following a flood. We shared that same information with the victims of hurricanes and the Pacific Rim tsunamis, as well.

Drought, of course, has impacts on groundwater as well. Drought tends to draw greater attention to the value of groundwater and the importance of using it wisely in conjunction with available surface water. Well construction was certainly stronger than normal in areas of the southeastern U.S. over the past 12 to 18 months.

Wilhelm: Have there been any recent developments regarding new or emerging contaminants?

McCray: As laboratory instrumentation continues to improve, we seem to find more substances that some contend we should concern ourselves with from a public health and ecological health perspective. Pharmaceutical residues were widely in the popular

press this year, although for NGWA this was old news, as we have been convening scientific conferences on the topic for a half a dozen years.

Wilhelm: What is the NGWA doing to promote sustainability?

McCray: A large part of the sustainability issue is addressed in the need for more data. Additionally, we are drawing more NGWA member attention to water conservation topics through initiatives such as our participation in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) WaterSense program, as well as our development of a household water audit tool we make available at our consumer information website, www.wellowner.org.

Wilhelm: Does the NGWA work with any other agencies or government organizations to further its goals?

McCray: It is probably safe to say if a group has interests in groundwater, then NGWA has either reached out to them or they have reached out to us. We have members from the U.S. Geological Survey, EPA, Department of Agriculture, branches of the military, federal research labs and dozens of state and local agencies of all types. Many of these groups partner with us each year for National Ground Water Awareness Week.

Additionally, we have memorandums of understanding with a number of groups. We represent more than 50 state associations and have agreements with our counterpart associations in 13 nations.

Wilhelm: Can you tell me about any current promising groundwater research?

McCray: Our charitable group, the National Ground Water Research and Educational Foundation, has awarded a number of small grants for a wide range of projects. I'm particularly intrigued by research on the use

CALENDAR

November

5 – 8 **AWT Annual Convention & Expo**
Austin, TX
tel: 301.740.1421
www.awt.org

12 – 14 **Eastern WQA Fall Conference**
Lancaster, PA
tel: 888.450.2409
www.ewqa.org

16 – 20 **2008 Water Quality Technology Conference & Expo**
Cincinnati, OH
tel: 800.926.7337
www.awwa.org

December

2 – 5 **2008 National Ground Water Assn. Expo & Annual Meeting**
Las Vegas, NV
tel: 800.551.7379
www.ngwa.org

March

17 – 20 **WQA Aquatech USA**
Rosemont, IL
tel: 630.505.0160
www.wqa.org

For a complete list of industry events, go to www.wqpmag.com.

of nanotechnology to advance water quality that can make a difference in the lives of so many people throughout the world. *wqp*

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