

The 2017 recipients for Individual Service and Contribution Awards include those honored with the Water Heroes Award. The purpose of the Water Heroes program is to recognize individuals or municipalities who performed duties above and beyond the usual call of duty during an emergency situation to continue to protect the public and the environment. These duties shall elevate the status of the wastewater industry.

– **City of Dallas - Water Utilities (DWU) - Central Wastewater Treatment Plant.** In May 2015, spring rains brought widespread flooding to northern Texas, including the Dallas area. On May 8, City of Dallas employees at the Dallas Water Utilities Central Wastewater Treatment Plant observed an increase in inflow into their facility, attributed to the early spring rains, and began taking the necessary steps to manage the increase in flow. As subsequent rainfall events followed, the staff could only watch as the Trinity River began to swell its banks. By May 22, non-essential staff were evacuated as the area flooding began to block the plant's ingress/egress. For the next three days, the remaining employees operated the Central Wastewater Treatment Plant around the clock, taking on responsibilities outside their regular job requirements to keep the plant compliant with its Texas Commission of Environmental Quality (TCEQ) limits despite a 34-percent increase in flow above the rated peak capacity of the plant. Because of their heroic efforts, DWU Central plant did not violate the TCEQ discharge permit limits or discharge any untreated flow. In addition to the challenges faced at their own facility, the Central Plant staff also assisted the Trinity River Water Shed Management Division, DWU's Southside Wastewater Treatment Plant staff and DWU's Collection Department in their efforts to combat the problems created by the area flooding and assisted in the rescue of some stranded kayakers on the Trinity River.

– **Renewable Water Resources, Greenville, SC.** In October 2016, Hurricane Matthew made landfall on the coast of South Carolina. Renewable Water Resources (ReWa), an upstate utility, responded to the South Carolina Water and Wastewater Agency Response Network's call for assistance. ReWa supplied 18 employees, four generators, four pumps, one hose trailer, two fuel trucks, one fleet maintenance truck and seven maintenance trucks to assist several of the low country's utilities (including Beaufort Jasper Water & Sewer Authority, Fripp Island, Hilton Head and South Island Public Service Districts) recover from the devastating effects of Matthew. These 18 volunteers worked long hours, facing adverse conditions assisting these utilities, to restore both the water and wastewater services to their customers for a week before returning home to their families and ReWa responsibilities. Within a month of Hurricane Matthew, the Pinnacle Mountain fire broke out in neighboring Pickens County. Five ReWa employees responded to the request from Greenville County's Office of Emergency Management to assist with the firefighting activities. For five days (including the Thanksgiving holiday), these employees manned two of ReWa's large sewer cleaning trucks, carrying 1,500 gallons of creek water at a time, to the fire lines to keep the forestry crawlers and small brush trucks filled so they could continue working without leaving the area to restock with water.

– **Steven Stire and Doug Nielsen, Suncor Firebag Facility, Alberta Canada.** In May 2016, a wildfire started southwest of Fort McMurray, Alberta, Canada. As this fire roared through the community, it destroyed 2,400 homes and buildings and forced the largest wildfire evacuation in Albertan history. More than 90,000 people were impacted by the wildfire, which is expected to be Canada's costliest natural disaster. The Suncor Firebag facility, approximately 75 miles northeast of where the fire

started, opened its doors to fire refugees. Before having to shut down itself, the facility is estimated to have temporarily housed over 16,000 evacuees. As the fire bore down on the Suncor facility, it was eventually evacuated of refugees and staff with the exception of two CH2M staff members who remained behind to operate the water and wastewater utilities at the facility. Operators Steve Stire and Doug Nielsen remained on site, devised a plan to keep the plant operating and compliant while in shutdown mode, maintaining critical process functions while other operations ceased. These two operators managed the site 24 hours per day for 20 days during this life-threatening situation.

The 2017 recipients for Public Education include:

- **WEF Canham Graduate Studies Scholarship: Sneha Shanbhag, Carnegie Mellon University.** This scholarship, honoring the former WEF Executive Director, Robert Canham, provides \$25,000 for a post-baccalaureate student in the water environment field. Sneha Shanbhag's PhD research topic is "energy-efficient and ion-selective desalination of brackish water using electrochemical deionization technologies."
- **Fair Distinguished Engineering Educator Medal: Dr. Spyros Pavlostathis, Georgia Institute of Technology.** The Fair Medal recognizes accomplishments in the education and development of future engineers. This award honors Gordon Maskew Fair, a professor of sanitary engineering at Harvard University.
- **Media and Public Education Medal: Elizabeth Brackett.** This award recognizes accomplishments of the media, journalists and others whose profession is outside of the water environment profession field. This medal is in memory of Harry E. Schlenz, who served as WEF President in 1961-1962 and was a distinguished leader in promoting public understanding of the need for effective water quality. For Elizabeth Brackett, it has been a lifetime of work that sets her apart as a committed, persistent and thoughtful journalist driven to promote public education on the water environment.
- **Public Communication and Outreach Program Awards-Individual Category, Robert Bates.** Robert Bates has had a lifelong commitment bringing attention to the water sector. This includes a long history of presenting water environment concepts and science to a broad range of audiences.
- **Public Communication and Outreach Program Awards - Member Association Category: Water Environment Association of Texas.** The Water Environment Association of Texas is forward-looking, multifaceted and comprehensive, with multiple promotional and participatory events and projects.
- **Public Communication and Outreach Program Awards - Other Category: Water Replenishment District of Southern California.** The Water Replenishment District of Southern California's education program features interactive student activities that focus on the importance of groundwater, the process of water treatment and the need for conservation.

The 2017 recipients for Published Papers are:

- **Eddy Wastewater Principles/Processes Medal.** "Investigations into Improving Dewaterability at a Bio-P/Anaerobic Digestion Plant," Rebecca Alm, Adam W. Sealock, Yabing Nollet and George Sprouce, *Water Environment Research*, November 2016, v. 88, no. 11, pp. 2082-2093.
- **Gascoigne Wastewater Treatment Plant Operational Improvement Medal.** "Activated Sludge Sleuthing", Tom Fitzwilliams, Matthew Castillo and Trevor Ghylin, *Water Environment & Technology*, July 2016, v. 28, no. 7, p. 37.

- **McKee Groundwater Protection, Restoration or Sustainable Use Award.** “Biodegradability of Nonionic Surfactant Used in the Remediation of Groundwaters Polluted with PCE,” Luz Bref on-Deval, Elvira Rios-Leal, Hector M. Poggi-Varaldo and Teresa Ponce-Noyola, *Water Environment Research*, 2016, v. 88, no. 11, pp. 2159-2168
- **Rudolfs Industrial Waste Management Medal.** “Forward Osmosis Desalination in Upstream Oil and Gas: Impacts of Produced Water Exposure on Membrane Physiochemical Properties and Contaminant Transport,” Bryan Coday, Julia Regener, Elizabeth Bell, Taylor Poynor, Ruby Maltos, Shalom Fox and Tzahi Cath, *Proceedings of WEFTEC 2016*.

The awards will be presented during WEFTEC® 2017, the Federation’s 90th Annual Technical Exhibition and Conference, September 30 to October 4 in Chicago. For more information about the WEF Awards, visit the [website](#).