A Year of Accomplishments & TIME TO RENEW!

2017 saw YOWA reinvigorated, advancing the onsite wastewater industry and supporting our members. Thank you to our members who helped us achieve this first phase in the new YOWA. Help us continue our progress by renewing your membership for 2018 by end of the year.

Members can take pride in YOWA’s 2017 efforts to raise the visibility of the onsite wastewater profession throughout New England through participation at leading conferences and trade shows, development of newsletters to provide industry updates to members, and engagement with regulatory officials. We are participating as a member of MassDEP’s Title 5 Advisory Group and keeping you informed of any developments through the newsletter. We partnered with USEPA to support SepticSmart Week by providing a mailing to every health official in Massachusetts. We are monitoring proposed legislation in the
MA legislature impacting licensure. In addition, we kicked off our renewed training program with a sold out session on troubleshooting system malfunctions this past October and are offering a basics workshop in western MA this winter.

As a charter member of our national organization, NOWRA, we are also making available exclusive online training classes with approved CEU's for MA Soil Evaluators and System Inspectors. Every YOWA membership includes a NOWRA membership with additional business and professional development benefits.

Internally, we have updated our website, www.yankieonsite.org and added a pay by credit card capacity. It’s been a busy year but we’re just getting started.

For 2018, expect to see continued representation of members’ interests at the MassDEP, Legislature, USEPA and our national organization, NOWRA. We’ll keep members informed and make sure our needs are known to regulators and policymakers. We hope to offer more in-person trainings for your professional development as well as continue to work with NOWRA to bring online trainings. We expect to provide a YOWA newsletter three times a year.

Keep your industry at the table, stay informed and advance yourself and your profession by renewing your 2018 YOWA membership today. Renew your membership online or watch your mail for your renewal form. With your support we can begin to expand staffing and serving you better. Join us on this exciting journey for the New England onsite wastewater industry.

Please feel free to give me a call if I can answer any questions. I look forward to seeing you in YOWA!

Sincerely,

Thomas Groves, YOWA President
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YOWA'S Revived Training Program Kickoff - A Big Success

The kickoff training for the newly invigorated YOWA, was held this past October in Acton, MA and was considered by all to be a rounding success.

The sold-out workshop, entitled "Troubleshooting Septic Systems" attracted over 40 industry participants including septic system designers anc engineers, septic installers, boards of health representatives and technology providers.

YOWA held a Troubleshooting Septic Systems training in October
Dr. Sara Heger, a nationally known researcher and instructor from the University of Minnesota Water Resources Program, instructed this one-day training course. Dr. Heger has been providing education and technical assistance to homeowners, small communities, onsite professionals and local units of government regarding onsite wastewater treatment since 1999. Sara coordinates the research program at the UMN and is currently, serving as the principal investigator on grants to create online owner’s guides and evaluate rest stops served by septic systems. Sara is Education Chair of the Minnesota Onsite Wastewater Association (MOWA) and the National Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association (NOWRA), serves on the NSF International Committee on Wastewater Treatment Systems, and is also the chair of the Minnesota State Advisory Committee on Decentralized Systems. Sara has a BS in Biosystems & Agricultural Engineering and a PhD in Water Resource Science. YOWA is fortunate to have had Sara present at our workshop.

The workshop focused on septic system malfunction and challenging social and site conditions. Global environmental considerations were also discussed including disposal of non-traditional products to the waste stream such as medications, household cleaners and chemicals which not only disrupt the on-site system operation but potentially contaminate the environment. Examples included premature on-site system failures from Assisted Living Facilities.

Dr. Heger’s comprehensive presentation included a discussion on proper tank siting and operation; checking scum and sludge levels; use of proper measurement tools; siting and access; signs of potential failure; importance of effluent screens; the need for continuing homeowner education; potential failure criteria for on-site soil absorption systems such as homeowner overuse and mis-use; siting problems; hydraulic overloading; soil limiting conditions - limiting elevations due to bedrock and groundwater; redox due to fluctuating groundwater; soil textural evaluation misinterpretations; installation and workmanship issues; remediation techniques; and the need for permitting. A similar review of potential problems was provided for pumps, pump chambers and secondary treatment units.

The full presentation is available at the YOWA website at: https://www.yankeeonsite.org/calendar/

**Septic Smart**

Each year the USEPA holds "SepticSmart Week” with outreach activities to encourage homeowners and communities to care for and maintain their septic system. Here in New England, YOWA sent information promoting the SepticSmart program to all Massachusetts Boards of Health, updated the YOWA web site with links to the EPA website, and distributed SepticSmart materials at the MHOA conference.

**EPA Releases Materials to Remind People to be Septic Smart this Holiday Season**

EPA has created a shareable post card to remind people of simple tips to keep their septic system working through the holiday season. Please
consider sharing this with homeowners and communities: https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2017-05/documents/epa_septicsmart_holiday_postcards_112016_508.pdf

**Next year’s SepticSmart Week has already been set by the EPA as Sept 17 - 21, 2018.** YOWA hopes to make more impact next year with the possibility of getting New England governors to sign proclamations of recognition for the program and by offering training events during the week to raise awareness.

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**Don't Have Time to Attend a YOWA Training Program?**

YOWA is excited to be partnering with NOWRA to offer online training through NOWRA's Online Learning Academy!

NOWRA's popular "Onsite A to Z" program has now been converted to an online format to allow participants the opportunity to take the course at their own pace. Led by Sara Heger, Ph.D., the course consists of 8-hours of videos, presentations, and quizzes. It's also available in smaller increments of 1-hour (Operation and Maintenance), 3-hours (Intro to Onsite & Westwater), and 4-hours (Soil Evaluation, Treatment, and Dispersal) training. The course has been approved for Massachusetts Title 5 SE/ST credit with New Hampshire and Maine approvals pending. **YOWA members will receive discount registrations for these NOWRA online courses!**

Future courses are already in the works to increase the offerings. Work has begun on a Pretreatment course as well as a Designer and possibly a Realtor course. Watch for more information on these online courses through our YOWA newsletter.

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**NOWRA's Mega-Conference Was Well Attended**

The National Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association (NOWRA) held its Annual Technical Conference in Dover, Delaware on October 22-25th. Named the "Mega-Conference", NOWRA shared sponsorship with several other national organizations, including NAWT (National Association of Wastewater Technicians) and SORA (the State Onsite Regulators Alliance), as well as state affiliates DOWRA, (Delaware Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association), MOWPA (Maryland Onsite Wastewater Professionals Association, and POWRA (Pennsylvania Onsite Wastewater Professionals Association). The conference drew 542 registered attendees representing 39 states, Washington DC, and 5 Canadian provinces. It featured an exhibit hall with booths housing 47 exhibitors. All members of YOWA who were able to attend uniformly considered it
to be a great success! (Note that YOWA members as NOWRA members also receive all the benefits and discounts of NOWRA membership.)

The exhibit hall served not only to introduce attendees to the exhibitors, but virtually all meals were served in the space, which provided exceptional opportunities for interaction to all who visited the room. NOWRA’s famous “Backhoe Roe-D-Hoe” competition also took place in the center of the exhibit hall. This popular event runs throughout the course of the convention every year, and tests the capabilities of backhoe operators from all over the country. Entertaining as well as challenging, this year’s competition included 25 operators. More than 50 technical sessions were held on design, installation, management, regulations, and research. There was even a full-day training session! Many of those who attended these technical sessions earned CEUs from their representative states. In addition, three field trips were offered on the final day, including a lobbying bus trip to Washington DC to meet with congressional representatives.

All of the NOWRA state affiliates met as a group at the conference. This meeting provided an opportunity for the state associations to share experiences while learning from their counterparts. YOWA President Tom Groves praised this meeting, and reports that NOWRA’s new online learning academy was the primary focus of this meeting.

Next year’s Annual Conference was announced for October 21-25, 2018 in Bloomington, Minnesota. Consider making the trip! And stay tuned for more on NOWRA’s training opportunities.

NOWRA Honors YOWA’s Tom Groves with Dick Otis Award

Only when appropriate does NOWRA proffers the Dick Otis Award for Outstanding Service in the Onsite Industry. This award was created by the NOWRA Board to honor Dr. Dick Otis, P.E., Ph.D., widely-respected onsite system researcher and educator. The Board of NOWRA decided that this year required recognition of our own Tom Groves, the current President of YOWA, with this great award. Yet President of YOWA is but one of many roles that Tom plays in our industry.

Tom joined the New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission (NEIWPC) in 1990 as an environmental engineer. Since then he has risen steadily, becoming Director of the wastewater and onsite programs in 2000. In that capacity, he oversees work related to wastewater management, regional environmental training, professional certification and decentralized wastewater. Tom also provides oversight
to the Commission's work with NYSDEC and the New York Governor's Office of Storm Recovery for Hurricane Sandy Recovery permitting activities. In 2013, Tom and a colleague received an Environmental Merit Award from EPA's New England branch for many years of work on wastewater management schools.

Tom has served as the chair of the Small Community Outreach Committee and council director of the Executive Committee for the New England Water Environment Association (NEWEA), and serves on the Small Communities Committee and Professional Development Committee of the Water Environment Federation (WEF).

From 2008 to 2010, Tom was President of NOWRA. These were difficult times for the organization. The economic recession hit the onsite industry hard, with many companies and organizations ceasing operations - some of which have still not recovered. NOWRA lost over half of its state affiliates during this time and two-thirds of its corporate sponsors. Many NOWRA board members resigned as a result of having been let go by their organizations and needing to seek employment in other industries. NOWRA's executive management firm resigned from running the organization and there was the very real possibility during this time that NOWRA would dissolve. Without Tom's steady leadership, most believe that this would have in fact happened.

Tom orchestrated management of NOWRA by the executive director of one of our state affiliates. Then, when that state declined to continue, he found another. After the second state affiliate lost their executive director and could no longer shepherd NOWRA, Tom managed the organization himself for over a year as a completely volunteer-run group. He negotiated for NOWRA to have a home in the WEF offices - free of charge. All the while, he calmly kept his eye on both survival and rebuilding.

Tom was the catalyst behind the hiring of NOWRA's first full-time executive director. Some people thought it was a bad idea and that the group couldn't afford it. But in Tom's comforting manner, he maintained his conviction that it was necessary to have a full-time executive director for survival and growth and an executive director was in fact hired in 2010.

Many in attendance curing the ceremony honoring Tom shared the opinion that the 26th annual conference might not have ever happened if it weren't for his considerable efforts. We at YOWA are proud of our President and expect nothing less for YOWA's future than Tom accomplished at NOWRA.

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Innovative and Alternative Technologies Training Coming Soon
YOWA is proud to announce a "Title 5 I/A Basics" training. This training is an overview of the Massachusetts approved Title 5 Innovative and Alternative Technologies for those who have never designed, permitted, or installed an I/A system. Attendees will learn about the systems, the local regulatory review, approval process, design considerations and installation, and operation standards. Presenters will include: a local approving authority staff, professional engineer, and a technology maintainer.

The event is proposed to take place in Western Massachusetts during January-March. Stay tuned and help spread the word.

Suggestions for specific trainings are always welcome. Send ideas and requests to President Tom Groves at yanke onsite@gmail.com

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**Legislative Update**

YOWA aspires to keep you informed on what is happening in the state legislature with respect to initiatives which may impact our industry.

The Association has been watching the development of two bills in Massachusetts which were introduced in the House:

- **House Bill 140** would create a statewide licensing program for drain cleaners. The bill was introduced in January by Representatives Chan and Keenan, a hearing on the bill occurred in May, and in June the bill was forwarded to the House Ways and Means Committee. We have no further update at this point in time.

- **House Bill 146** proposes the establishment of a statewide septic system installer licensing program. This was introduced in January by Representative Dooley and a hearing was scheduled for October. We are aware of no further action to date with respect to this bill. Representatives from YOWA have contacted Representative Dooley's office and asked them to keep the Association apprised of any developments with this petition.

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**MassDEP Title 5 Advisory Group**
YOWA continues its involvement with the committee that MassDEP has convened to look into specific aspects of the Title 5 regulations which might need adjusting. The group has met several times earlier this year but has been dormant for the last few months. Technical material was provided by some committee members to MassDEP regarding composting toilets and groundwater offset distances. No meetings or updates have been provided in some time, which MassDEP reports is due to the staff cutbacks they are trying to manage. Stay tuned. We'll keep you informed of any developments.

YOWA's New Membership Booth is on the move!

Have you seen YOWA's new membership booth? We recently attended the Massachusetts Health Officers' Association (MHOA) Conference in November in Nantucket, MA.

The new membership booth has materials on the NOWRA's new Online Learning Academy, NOWRA homeowner folders, NOWRA Onsite Journals, YOWA membership applications, US EPA Septic Smart materials, and some YOWA giveaways.

YOWA plans to keep a presence at upcoming events in the future. Next stop - NEWEA's Annual Conference in Boston in January. Hope to see you then!

YOWA Assists with VT Technical Training

On October 4th, the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources in association with YOWA and NOWRA held a successful seminar on Wastewater Strength and Treatment at the Technical College in Randolph, VT.

Wastewater system designers and state agency staff attendees were treated to an intensive day of training by Dr. Sara Heger, University of Minnesota on the science and engineering of wastewater characteristics, anaerobic treatment in septic tanks, and aerobic treatment in soil and pre-treatment units. The
second presenter was Dr. Graham Bradley, VT DEC who gave an update on soil-based systems and innovative and alternative solutions in relation to the Vermont Rules. Jared Willey wrapped up the day with practical feedback for designers on his 20 years of experience working in the wastewater industry and servicing I/A systems.

The course received very positive feedback with several designers indicating it was the best training they had attended.