

HISTORIC MOMENT FOR NYRWA AND JOHN D. O'CONNELL, III

By Jamie Herman

On Thursday, September 29, 2022, in National Harbor, Maryland, at the National Rural Water Association (NRWA) WaterPro Conference, our very own John O'Connell will be sworn in as the President of the NRWA. At this ceremony, current President, Mr. David Baird from Delaware, will pass the gavel to John, effectively beginning his two-year term as President. This moment will be the culmination of 34 years in the industry and a 24-year journey for John with both the NYRWA and NRWA.

John began his career in the water & wastewater industry with the Village of Weedsport in 1988. It was evident almost immediately that John's passion was wastewater, a passion that would change his career path forever. In Weedsport, John quickly learned his role and rose through the ranks and was appointed Superintendent of Public Works in 1989. The passion, talent, and enthusiasm John showed in our industry did not go unnoticed, and in 2001, John was recruited by the largest representative company in New York State, Koester Associates, Inc. After discussion with his wife Jackie, John accepted the offer and joined the company as their Parts/Service and Retro Fit Manager. John remains a representative for the company to this day. In 2003, John also accepted a request from the Town of Throop to serve as their Operator in Responsible Charge for their drinking water system, a role he still fulfills to this day. In 2014, John was recruited once again by the City of Cortland to manage their wastewater treatment plant while it went through a substantial upgrade. John accepted the task and completed this mutually beneficial assignment in a 3-year period.

John began his time with the NYRWA in 1998 when he was appointed to fill a Board Director vacancy. In that same year, the NYRWA Board of Directors appointed John as their National Director, a role which afforded John the opportunity to serve as a Director on the Board for the National Rural Water Association. During his time as a Board Director for NYRWA, John has served as Secretary/Treasurer, Vice-President, President, and National Director. His time, sacrifice, and commitment has benefited the staff and membership of this association. Over the years John's passion and dedication shined through, and he began to rise through the ranks on the NRWA Board of Directors. He served on many committees over the years, testified before Congress and multiple congressional committees, and eventually was elected to the NRWA Executive Board. In his time as a Director for NRWA, John has served as Treasurer, Vice-President, Senior Vice-President, and as mentioned, will be elected as the President of NRWA in September 2022. Congratulations John! Thank you for your service, commitment, and dedication to the water & wastewater industry and to Rural Water!

While John is passionate about the water and wastewater industry, he also has a second passion, farming. In 1976, John started working on the family farm with his father and brother. Together, they worked and managed a 50-acre farm in Weedsport, NY. Today, he and his brother operate and manage a 1,000-acre farm in Weedsport made up

primarily of corn and soybean. They also lease several hundred more acres in the immediate area and farm those lands as well. If John is not talking up water & wastewater, he is most likely working the family farm where he resides with his wife Jackie.

Last, but certainly not least, is John's third passion in life, his family. John and his wife Jackie live on the family farm in Weedsport and enjoy some water recreation on Cayuga Lake. If John is not working water or wastewater, or on the farm, he is most likely at the lake with his wife and two daughters, Erin & Danielle, son-in-law Paul, and grandchildren Ava & Darby.

If you know John you know these things are true, John is a family man, a farmer, and a water and wastewater professional. His entire career has been in support of community and those people we serve. His transition to President of the National Rural Water Association is the culmination of a 34-year career in this industry that exemplifies... Quality On Tap! 💧💧💧



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