



## A NEW VOICE FOR STORMWATER

*By Craig Beatty, John Moll and David Mongeau*

The three of us spend most of our waking moments trying to outmaneuver each other in business. We compete on the same turf – the stormwater sector – and we compete hard.

While we may not agree on much, we do agree on one fundamental point that's important to our business: The stormwater sector needs to band together for a common cause. We need to support the regulatory and engineering communities, as well as the individual cities and states now grappling with how to implement Clean Water Act and other stormwater regulations.

That was the impetus for joining together with competing manufacturers to found the Storm Water Equipment Manufacturer's Association. This group of manufacturers formed in mid-2008, and we're hitting the ground running with initiatives for 2009.



Here's the issue: Cities and towns around the country are working to develop definitive stormwater regulations, yet they have few resources to turn to for questions or guidance. Often, municipalities find they are working in a vacuum, striving to find the best solution to control and treat stormwater in their community. While each area might have unique characteristics such as rainfall and snow volumes, topography and population density, they all face similar challenges:

- What are the best management practices for our environment?
- How to validate that the stormwater treatment system will work as planned?
- What are the appropriate methods to ensure the system continues to operate as intended?
- What maintenance issues should be considered when making an investment in stormwater treatment?

The way federal stormwater regulations are written, they're up to the states -- or even individual communities -- to implement. So, there's a great deal of variability in agencies' perspectives on how to best develop and implement sound stormwater regulations. In small communities these decisions may fall to the Planning Commission, Board of Health, Department of Public Works, or Conservation Commission, who oftentimes don't have the research staff or resources to expend researching such issues.

Developers face similar issues. They need to cull through a range of vastly different stormwater treatment systems to find which ones will allow them to use particular sites in the manner they intended. They have a range of considerations beyond cost and upkeep of the system. They need assurances that the drainage system offers a level of flexibility so the property can be used the way it was intended. Developers also have aesthetic concerns, since unsightliness of some systems could detract from the value of the property.



The members of the Storm Water Equipment Manufacturers Association are coming together to advocate for effective and sustainable practices that improve water quality and help the overall environment. We will reach out to stakeholders about ways to validate performance of stormwater treatment systems, whether they be natural systems like swales or raingardens or manufactured devices such as separators or filters. We'll discuss issues such as maintenance, which is often underappreciated in the stormwater treatment process; the role of lab-based testing and need for pilot projects for emerging technologies; and the need for consistent standards to ensure appropriate sizing of all stormwater practices. Association committee members plan to reach out to all members of the stormwater community, from regulatory agencies to engineers, acting as a sounding board for new ideas and treatment concepts.

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To that end, the Storm Water Equipment Manufacturers Association first goal is education. In recent years, most of the association's members have been actively involved with the regulatory community. When one state set out to rewrite its stormwater regulations and identify testing requirements, several stormwater treatment manufacturers came forward to offer input on draft regulations and share insights that the state regulators might not have considered. A growing list of regulatory agencies have asked manufacturers to comment on proposed regulatory changes. Through these actions we came to the realization that there was considerable commonality in viewpoints that could benefit the community at large.

This is particularly important when it comes to validating the performance of systems. Evaluating stormwater treatment systems generally starts in the lab, but then transitions over to the field. The industry needs consistent standard guidelines for how systems should be evaluated, so communities have confidence that once systems are installed in the field they will work as intended. This might seem simple, but there are many issues that need to be taken into consideration in determining what verification practices to employ. How many devices need to be monitored? What role does size play in predicting system performance? How does a system perform when it is new versus after months of use? All of these have an impact.

The stormwater industry is as competitive as any. Manufacturers all have their own R&D departments and their own sales forces. Day in and day out, we're chasing the same opportunities. But at some point in time, you need to take a step back and look at what's best for your industry. The manufacturers that serve the industry need a strong voice that reflects our collective experience and points of view. Regulators, design professionals, developers and other stakeholders could use our help to understand how products work and what products work best for specific needs.

The Storm Water Equipment Manufacturers Association provides that voice. We're here to help, and we intend to be heard.