



May 2026 Chair's Report AGM

The Changing of the Guard



It is hard to believe that it has been nine years since Robert Haller agreed to let me speak at the CWWA Conference in the Maritimes to recruit volunteers and raise funds to send them to assist DOWASCO in Dominica following hurricanes Irma and Maria. Jason Mank, Marcel Misuraca and Glen Ketchum were the first volunteers to make the leap of faith that provided the kernel that morphed into Operators Without Borders.

Jason is now an OWB Board member and Marcel heads the SOP Committee. Both continue to volunteer post-disaster environments and were recently in the British Virgin Islands (BVI) repairing systems damaged during the 2017 hurricane season.

This will be my last report as Chair. I will continue to work on Partnership Development and Deployment and remain fully committed to the growth and success of OWB, as we enter our 10th year, it is time for me to pass on the Chair's position I am delighted that Carl Yates, who is recognized throughout Canada, for his excellence in utility management, has agreed to stand for the position as Chair. I know that the organization could not be in better hands as we move forward. Kevin Carter, who has worked tirelessly on the Board and Communications Committee will take on the role of Vice-Chair, so we have a great succession plan to take us into the next decade.

Sadly, the terms for Founding Board members Robert Haller and Madeleine Butschler are ending.



They are owed a huge vote of gratitude for the enormous amount of work and support given over the last nine years to OWB. Both remain committed to our mandate and leave an indelible mark on our organization.

As I reflect on what has been achieved through our dedicated volunteers, members and donors, the scale of growth is clear. We have grown from three volunteers to just under 200 volunteers. We have expanded from a couple of projects in the Caribbean to working across Africa, South America, Ukraine, Sri Lanka and Nepal.

We started by raising \$2500 to send Jason, Marcel and Glenn to Dominica and now support multiple projects world-wide with major players such as UNICEF and Water Mission. The work we do impacts tens of thousands of people as we strive to repair water and wastewater utilities post disaster or provide a wide array of capacity building initiatives.

Our Board has also grown in both numbers and geographic location. In addition to Carl Yates from Halifax, Jason Mank and Kevin Carter who recently retired from Broward County utility in Florida and is an active member of the Caribbean water and wastewater sector, the following serve:

- John Joseph, our Treasurer, was a GM of the St Lucia water and wastewater utility,
- Greg Archibald recently retired utility GM from Manitoba
- Dr Halla Sahely a water specialist from St Kitts and Nevis
- Ben Kele, who owns an on-site wastewater company in Australia, is the Chair of our US Fiscal Sponsor, Wastewater Education and leads the formation of OWB Australia

Nominated to replace outgoing Board members we are delighted to welcome Carl Bodimeade, Nancy Koudousek and Rhonda Harris. They will be formally introduced later in the meeting.



As I reflect on what has been achieved through our dedicated volunteers, members and donors, the scale of growth is clear. We have grown from three volunteers to just under 200 volunteers. We have expanded from a couple of projects in the Caribbean to working across Africa, South America, Ukraine, Sri Lanka and Nepal.

Valerie Jenkinson, Chair

Highlights in 2025/26



British Virgin Islands Project



Gap Assessment of Training needs for Ghana water



BWA Specialized training programme

1. British Virgin Islands Project

The Water Utility in the BVI continues to implement the short-term recommendations. OWB made following an operational assessment in 2025 conducted by Rhonda Harris, Mike Hewitt and Marcel Misuraca.

Marcel Misuraca returned to the BVI and started to work on the water SOPs but as their systems are changing, he switched and provided wastewater SOPs he then stayed to supervise the initial team coming to lay distribution pipe.

Nine volunteers were recruited to assist with laying 6000 feet of new pipe Jason Mank has done great work coordinating the volunteers and managing the assignment. Marcel stayed for two more weeks to be Team Lead. We had five volunteers on the ground to start for two weeks, followed by other volunteer teams. OWB is grateful to Todd Saums, Tom McGrain, Gavin Waterfield, Jake Maker, Brian Earl and Chris Kerman In all, during the time we were there, the teams laid approximately 2800 feet of pipe as well as training the local teams. The local teams following the training they received completed laying a total of 6000 linear feet of pipe.

KWL Engineering (BC) has started their Hydraulic Assessment. They were aided by the OWB teams in the field who helped secure data and took pressure readings. They are working remotely to produce models and will likely travel to BVI in the New Year to test the models then we can start fixing leaks.

A team headed to BVI in March. Jason and Marcel led the team and did a preliminary data collection to ensure all is in order before the rest of the team deploys. New team member John Ranns joined team as a PRV specialist. 23 of the 25 PRVs on the Island were not working. The team replaced six PRVs and delivered both classroom and field training to build local capacity. The goal is to complete 2-3 replacements per week.

Once this is done OWB volunteers will travel to BVI to help and train on leak detection. Gavin Waterfield will lead the leak detection and repair initiative. We will be training BVI utility workers to build capacity. We will also collect the final data needed for KWL to complete their hydraulic assessment. This project demonstrates the range of skills our volunteers bring to each assignment. Our goal is for all residents of the BVI to have access to portable water and substantially reduce NRW which will make the utility financially viable.



Highlights in 2025/26

(Continue)

2. BWA Specialized training programme

OWB has been contracted by the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (5Cs) to deliver a gap assessment on training needs for the Barbados Water Authority, develop and deliver 4 training workshops on SCADA, Wastewater Treatment Level 1-2 Exam Prep, Laboratory and Industrial Wastewater



3. Belize Water Services

Janine De Boer conducted two weeks of Lab and Water Distribution training for BWS in February and 1st week of March. This follows the successful safety training delivered by Ron Enns in 2025. Both instructors provided participants with much knowledge and experience for which BWS was very grateful.



4. Nepal

Dates have been set for the last week of May and 1st week of June to go to Nepal to conduct operational assessments in up to 5 municipalities with the goal of both making improvement recommendations and a training plan. Mike Hewitt, Rhonda Harris and myself will be the assessors. Possibly also deliver a management training programme time permitting. We have letters of support from local utilities with a list of required capacity building requests. They will pay accommodation and meals. Dr Datta from the NGO with which we will be working states they have support from all three levels of government. They are already working with Engineers Without Borders.

5. CAWASA

Speakers for CAWASA weekly webinars have been booked to June. This is an ongoing effort to provide capacity building on all types of topics related to water and wastewater operatives

6. Ghana Water

OWB conducted a Gap Assessment of Training needs for Ghana water. Our one European volunteer Henk den Brenk was on site for two weeks. Henk is a NRW expert and Ghana has around 55% NRW. He also was able to conduct the water gap assessment. Ghana Water does not have responsibility for wastewater; Asmahan Abdirabo, a water quality and lab specialist was the second assessor. Mike Hewitt compiled the Operational Assessment report and Madeleine Butschler is liaising with GWL on the Gender component. The Gap assessment is the start to a 2-year training programme collaboration. And OWB is signing an MOU with GWI.



7. Incident Command System Training

New Instructor, Bruce Kinnell delivered a virtual, ICS Level 100 workshop for NEMA and the water utilities in St Kitts and Nevis followed by two Level 200 in person workshops at the end of February. new certified instructors. We have also had requests from Belize, and Ecuador and AIDIS to deliver ICS workshops. As these courses are so popular we need more certified instructors. As such, Greg Solecki will be delivering a Train the Trainer workshop for several OWB volunteers who have their Level 300 and 400 Certificates.



8. UNICEF Standby Partnership

CARRIED FORWARD as no progress. Madeleine and I continue the everlasting journey to gain UNICEF Standby Partnership. After huge effort over three years all documentation has been submitted on the UN Portal by Madeleine and is awaiting review. Once this is approved, we submit paperwork for Standby budget approval. This was submitted previously but then the forms changed and had to be rewritten.

9. Technical training

OWB is in discussions with water utilities to water and wastewater utilities around the globe including:

- St. Kitts and Nevis
- Barbados,
- CAWASA
- AIDIS South America

10. Disaster Relief

Since our last meeting Hurricane Mellisa hit the Caribbean with much devastation in Jamaica and Cuba. As part of the CWUIC Thematic Group. Kevin, Valerie and Ian took part in almost daily meetings with the WaSH and CWUIC groups. The National Water Commission determined their staff could handle the crisis internally and did not require help. However, we had a request from Rural Water Services to help and our volunteers spent time assisting with mapping and damage assessments. We are still awaiting confirmation of training requests to help them build capacity and resilience. OWB is grateful for those who made donations to support our efforts in Jamaica

11. Ukraine

We continue to attend bi-weekly Ukraine WaSH and Technical meetings. Recently we have been asked to assist groups charged with providing technical training in Ukraine. One entity is CAMINO and we are teaming with them to put together a comprehensive training package. Working in partnership with CAMINO that has an established office and personnel in Ukraine allows OWB to support capacity strengthening without placing volunteers into danger. We have also held talks with two Canadian Universities who are active in Ukrainian assistance.

12. Sri Lanka

Following on from wastewater workshops that were delivered virtually in Sri Lanka in partnership with the Trade school at the University in Candi a team will travel to Sri Lanka in September to conduct assessments of the wastewater utility in Candi and possibly other utilities.



Leading with Kindness and Courage