

ALABAMA ONSITE WASTEWATER ASSOCIATION

AOWA news

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Vol. 27 No. 4 Fall 2021

AOWA Trade Show March 17-18, 2022

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

2022 Class Schedule

AOWA News Magazine now Published
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This Quarterly News Magazine is a publication of the Alabama Onsite Wastewater Association (AOWA).

www.aowainfo.org

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On the cover: Orange Beach will be the location for the 2022 Trade Show March 17-18. Registration opens soon. More photos on page 21.

From the AOWA President



Greetings AOWA Members & Licensees!

I hope you all are doing well and staying safe as we enter the holiday season.

I'd like to start this message by announcing that the AOWA News Magazine will be moving from four to two issues per year in 2022. You can expect to receive your copy of the magazine in January and August. This decision comes in an effort to provide a magazine with a great amount of industry-related content and announcements that you will find useful as an industry professional. If you have not been receiving the magazine and are a member of the AOWA and/or licensee, please call us at the AOWA office at (334) 396-3434 to be placed on that distribution list. And of course, we would love to have you place your ad in one of our issues. What better way to promote your company and/or services than to advertise with us? You can purchase a single-issue ad or reserve your space for both issues of the magazine. Within this issue, you will find our 2022 Ad Media Kit, outlining pricing options for the year. This information can also be found on the AOWA website at www.aowainfo.org. If you have questions about placing your ad in one of our upcoming issues, please contact the AOWA office.

We hope you were able to attend one of our Continuing Education classes offered during the fall. For those who were unable to attend an in-person class, we hope you took advantage of the online option. The online courses are specifically designed for your license level and allow you the flexibility to take the course at your own pace and in a comfortable environment. We know your business comes first and you can't always step away from work to attend an all-day class. Whether you're in the office or the comfort of your home, all you need is a computer and some quiet time to complete this online course. Though the online option is available through January 2022, your license does expire December 31, 2021. Waiting until after that date will cost you a fine, so we encourage you to go ahead and get it done! In person and online Continuing Education classes for 2022 are currently in the works. Be on the lookout for the announcements of those dates and locations in our January issue.

The 2022 Licensing class schedule can be found within this issue. The cost is \$700 for AOWA

Alan Astin
AOWA President



members and \$750 for non-members. All Licensing classes will take place at the Home Builders Association office in Montgomery, followed by your test at the AOWB that

Friday. As a reminder - Basic Installer and Pumper must receive approval from the AOWB **BEFORE** you can take one of these classes. If you have questions about the process for getting into one of these classes, please contact Melissa Hines at the AOWB. All Advanced Installer, Level I & II classes do not require approval from the AOWB; however, there are a few prerequisites you must meet before you can take one of these classes. You can find more information on the approval process and prerequisites on our website or by contacting the AOWB.

Are you a current member of the AOWA? Has your membership lapsed? We hope you will consider joining or renewing your membership with us! Don't miss out on all the great member benefits. A membership form can be found on the AOWA website.

Are you receiving our e-news? This is a great way to stay up to date on important legislative announcements, advertising deadlines, and upcoming class schedules. If you aren't receiving our e-news, please call the AOWA office to be placed on the distribution list.

And lastly, we hope you will Save the Dates for our 2022 Trade Show and Convention to be held March 17-18 at the Orange Beach Convention Center in Orange Beach, AL.

The AOWA is here for YOU! Our goal is to provide the best resources and utmost support to our members and other industry professionals.

As always, thank you for your efforts in keeping the AOWA a successful, supportive association for its members and others in the Onsite Wastewater Industry.

Take Care,
Alan

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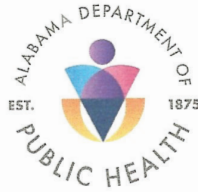


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Scott Harris, M.D., M.P.H.
STATE HEALTH OFFICER

Greetings AOWA Members!

The Bureau of Environmental Services has been actively working over the past few months with several projects and rule changes. You should have received a copy of the “draft proposed” new rules changes concerning the Onsite Treatment and Disposal Rules. My staff has been working diligently on the proposed rule changes for over the past year.

Earlier in November, the Bureau of Environmental Services Director, Sherry Bradley, myself, Director of Community Environmental Protection Director, and Steven Speaks, Engineer, met with representatives from the Fuji Clean USA, IAMPO and Lixil companies to further discuss the Black Belt Unincorporated Wastewater Program (BBUWP) and what part they could play in making the BBUWP project a success.

The BBUWP is a volunteer program for residents of Lowndes County and will address a minimum of 100 homes in the unincorporated areas of the county that do not have proper wastewater disposal. The BBUWP is a “model” for local officials in Lowndes County and other black belt counties to duplicate to help solve the problems encountered with onsite sewage systems located in soils that have high shrink/swell potential and very high percolation rates located in the Black Belt Region.

Lio Konda, the liaison between Fuji Clean USA and Nagoya, Japan Fuji Clean; Scott Samuelson, Managing Director, FujiClean USA; Mike Webster, Leader Project Management; 井戸田 貴則 Takanori Idota, representatives of Lixil Company (American Standard); Jed Scheuermann, VP Field Services, with IAPMO (International Association of Plumbing & Mechanical Officials) , the local Lowndes County community liaison, Ms. Perman Hardy, Sherry Bradley, Director, Bureau of Environmental Services and myself spent several days visiting local residents looking at possible solutions for onsite sewage system locations and indoor plumbing for over 14 homes so that proper sizing and ordering can take place.

Lixil has pledged at least \$100,000 in low water use fixtures to the BBUWP project and previous fixture installations associated with the BBUWP has resulted in lower water bills.

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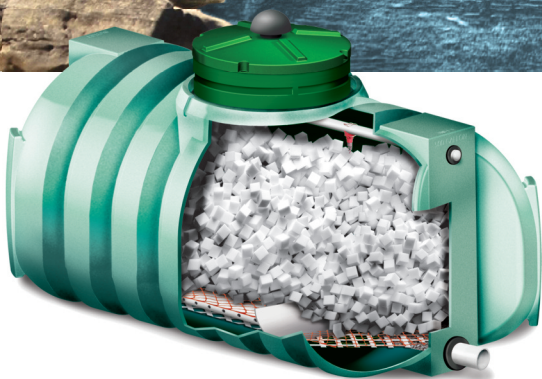
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5 Keys to Becoming an Industry Disrupter

By Jill J. Johnson, Pumper Magazine, November 2021

Shelley Armato (CEO at MySmartPlans), Contributor.

Change is hard, but the small business owners unafraid to try something new will weather tough times and emerge as leaders in the field.

Everyone has the potential to be an industry leader. These leaders are the ones who transform the world — who disrupt their industry and launch massive and positive change.

The challenge is that too many people are comfortable and complacent with where they are. They've settled into the pattern of reacting to disruptions rather than causing them. Think about your own industry and how it's changed over the years. Who initiated the biggest changes? Who were the disruptors? Were they the people who sat on the sidelines? Or the ones who took bold action?

Contrary to popular belief, having access to large amounts of money isn't what makes someone a disruptor. Money alone isn't what makes change happen. In reality, tenacity and courage are all you need. So stop blaming others or outside circumstances for limiting your ability to enact change. By using the internal resources you already have, you can take action today.

Here are the five keys that will help shift your mindset so you can be the disruptor others react to.

1. Get comfortable with change.

Disruption is all about change. Any company that survives long-term has changed over the years. Whether they added new products or services, catered to a different market or totally reinvented themselves, they had the courage to morph in some way. Unfortunately, many people get stuck in the vision of what their company was in the past, rather than what it could be in the future. This mindset forces them to always be reactive to the disruptions others make — they are never the disruptors themselves because they are too tied to the past. To transform your industry, you have to be future-oriented and ready to make a change at a moment's notice. If you're not nimble, you'll never be the leader. Remember that everything is different today than it was just a few years ago, and that has to include you and your company.

2. Look for the common challenges in your industry.

If you want to be an industry disruptor, you need to always be looking to solve challenges — at work as well as at home. In other words, problem solving must become a way of life, not just something you do when times are tough. Look around and ask yourself, "What can I do differently and better?" Realize that if you think something is challenging or in need of change, chances are that others think that too. Ask your customers and employees what changes they wish would transpire. Then really listen to their answers. Insight leads to change.

3. Research everything.

To find the problems and the solutions, you need to know what's going on in your industry at all times. Research solutions that others have tried to introduce. Sometimes disruption isn't about reinventing the wheel; it's about making the existing solutions better. Often, even a tenth of a degree of improvement can make massive progress. Additionally, do research for your emotional wellness, because when you're emotionally healthy, you can take on anything. Broaden your research to encompass all aspects of yourself, your business and your industry.

4. Be resilient in your ability to solve problems.

Being a disruptor means being resilient. To build your resilience, refrain from asking disempowering questions like "How am I going to do this?" A better question is "Why am I going to do this?" "Why" leads to "When," and then "When" becomes "How." With your "why" and "when" already mapped out, the "how" becomes much easier and you're more apt to take that first step. Along the way, you'll run into roadblocks and rejection. That's OK. Learn from setbacks and harness your resilience to bounce back and keep going.

continued...

Disaster Victim Assistance Program

Alabama Onsite Wastewater Association



After the recent tornados demolished parts of Alabama, the AOWA is gearing up their Disaster Victim Assistance Program once again. Individuals needing assistance with the repair or replacement of their septic system due to damage from a disaster can fill out a request application online at www.aowainfo.org, call the AOWA office at (334) 396-3434, or email aburns@asginfo.net.

Chairman of the DVAP program, Marc Geiger said, *"We need all Alabama licensed installers and members of our industry to support this program. Anyone can help with this effort through a financial contribution to the fund or offer of services. We need contractors to help coordinate the actual repair or replacement of systems. It is heart breaking to see the devastation and destruction our fellow citizens have suffered. We want to help ease the pain just a little."*

If you would like to make a contribution, please contact the AOWA office at (334) 396-3434.

Donations can also be sent to the AOWA office directly:

Alabama Onsite Wastewater Association
P.O. Box 10 Lanett, AL 36863

(5 Keys to Becoming an Industry Disrupter continued)

5. Find the eagles in your life.

People in your life can either lift you up or pull you down. We all have people in our life who love hearing our problems and then telling us all the things we shouldn't do. But if you let these people dictate your decisions, you'll never be a disruptor. Instead, you have to find the eagles. During storms, eagles soar higher because they know the crosswinds will help them gain altitude. In other words, during challenges they rise.

Those are the kind of people you want in your inner circle. Realize that the eagles in your life don't have to be your friends. They can be coaches or mentors you hire or only see in a professional capacity. Ultimately, their goal is to help you soar higher, not

encourage you to cower when things get tough. When you rely on your eagles for support and advice, you can see problems in a new light and come up with solutions that will transform your world.

GET READY FOR CHANGE

Regardless of your past successes or failures, you can initiate massive industry change. So why settle for always reacting to the disruptions that others enact? Have the courage to take action. Be the disruptor that leads your industry to new heights ... and your company to even greater success.

AOWA 2022 Class Schedule

Take advantage of these opportunities available from AOWA!

~IN-PERSON CLASSES~ *(All testing is done at the AOWB office in Montgomery)*

BASIC INSTALLER- Montgomery

January 10-13 Test Date -1/14/22

April 11-14 Test Date - 4/15/22

July 25-28 Test Date -7/29/22

September 12-15 Test Date - 9/16/22



PUMPER/PORTABLE RESTROOM - Montgomery

February 9-10 Test Date - 2/11/22

May 11-12 Test Date - 5/13/22

August 17-18 Test Date - 8/19/22

October 19-20 Test Date - 10/21/22

ADVANCED LEVEL 1 - Montgomery

March 21-24 Test Date - 3/25/22

August 8-11 Test Date - 8/19/22

ADVANCED LEVEL 2 - Montgomery

January 24-27 Test Date -1/28/22

June 13 - 16 Test Date - 6/17/22

2022 Continuing Education class schedule:

September 15, 2022

Montgomery County Health Dept.
3060 Mobile Highway
Montgomery, AL 36108

October 6, 2022

The Event Center At Roto-Rooter
1435 Paramount Drive
Huntsville, AL 35806

November 16, 2022

Anniston City Meeting Center
1615 Noble St
Anniston, AL 36201

Online classes are also available through January 2022.

REMEMBER... All licenses will expire December 31, so get your CEU's before the end of the year!

~ON-LINE CLASSES~ *Available through January 2022*

Hectic schedule? Not quite ready to attend an in-person class? AOWA has the solution for you! Register for one of our online classes, where you can work at your own pace and earn continuing education credits from your home or office. **Learn more and register for one of our ON-LINE classes at:**

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Legislative Update

By Stephanie Norrell, McMillan & Associates

Legislators have been busy this fall as they were twice called into special session by Governor Ivey. The first session addressed prison construction, and the second session addressed the need for redistricting as a result of the 2020 census.

Prison Plan

After years of discussions about the need for new prisons and the threat of takeover by the federal courts, The First Special Session to address the issue of overcrowded and outdated prisons began September 27 and lasted only five days. The Alabama Legislature approved a comprehensive plan to build two new men's facilities, build a new woman's facility, and to renovate or close a number of existing prisons.

Beginning in early 2022, two new 4,000 bed prisons for men will be built on state-owned land in Elmore and Escambia counties, where prisons are already located. The plan also includes the purchase of a private prison in Perry County, which is currently vacant, that will be used for things like short-term stays for parole violators and could provide mental health, rehabilitation and job training services to help parolees avoid returning to prison. A second phase of the plan includes renovation of three prisons and the replacement of Julia Tutwiler Prison for women.

One sentencing reform bill also passed during the First Special Session. A law in 2015 required inmates convicted after that law passed to serve time on supervised parole at the end of their sentence in order to help them adjust to life outside of prison. The bill that passed this fall extends that requirement to those who were convicted before 2015.

Redistricting

The Second Special Session began on October 28 and ended November 4. The Governor's proclamation, outlining issues to be addressed during the Second Special Session, included

drawing new district lines for U. S. Congress, the Alabama State Senate, the Alabama State House of Representatives, and the Alabama State Board of Education. Also included in the proclamation was the appropriation of \$80 million in COVID relief funds for hospitals and nursing homes. All five of those bills passed and were signed into law by the Governor.

Any bill not included in the Governor's proclamation requires a 2/3 vote to pass during a special session. That was the case for two bills the Legislature determined to address while they were convened, both of which relate to COVID-19 vaccinations. A summary of those two bills follows.

- SB 15 by Sen. Orr requires parental consent for a minor (age 18 and younger) to get a COVID-19 vaccination. This was addressed because current Alabama law allows children 14 and older to consent to medical care. The bill also prohibits institutions of education from inquiring into the vaccination status of a minor without parental consent.
- SB 9 by Sen. Elliott requires employers to allow employees to claim an exemption from a vaccine mandate for religious or medical reasons. Possible exemptions are spelled out in a form created by the legislation, such as previous severe allergic reaction to a vaccine, monoclonal antibodies treatment in past 90 days, bleeding disorder or blood thinner, being diagnosed with COVID-19 in the past 12 months, or sincerely held religious beliefs. If an exemption is denied by the employer, an employee would be able to appeal to an administrative law judge at the Department of Labor.

Governor Ivey signed both of the bills into law and they take effect immediately.

continued...



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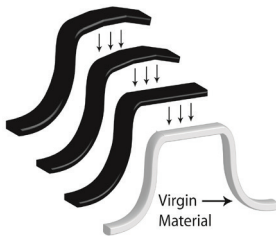
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Sen. Elliott's bill drew opposition from the business community for forcing businesses into a no-win situation between conflicting federal rules/regulations and a new state law. Alabama has joined several other states in a lawsuit seeking to challenge the federal COVID-19 vaccine mandate for federal contractors.

At this time, no other special sessions are expected this year. Barring any unforeseen circumstances, the Legislature will not be back until members reconvene for the 2022 Regular Session on January 11, 2022.

Federal Money

The Legislative Services Agency recently estimated that about \$46.8 billion has flowed to Alabama in COVID funds. That includes money sent to individuals, businesses and government agencies, such as \$6.3 billion in the paycheck protection program and \$12.6 billion in individual stimulus checks.

Most of the money has already been sent directly to taxpayers or appropriated by the Legislature; however, there is still about \$1.8 billion of the American Rescue Plan Act funds that the Legislature will need to allocate during the 2022 Regular Session. LSA Fiscal Division Director Kirk Fulford recently told lawmakers that potential uses for that money included hazard pay for select workers, shoring up the state's unemployment compensation fund, broadband, water & sewer, hospitals, nursing homes, rental assistance or money for targeted populations.

All of that federal money has positively impacted state revenues in the form of increased sales and income taxes. LSA has warned budget committees that the explosive growth cannot be sustained and that they need to plan for a drop off in revenue growth once the federal funds start to run out.



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Preach Tank Security in the Wake of Another Child's Death

By Jim Kneiszel, Pumper Magazine, November 2021

Ask customers to periodically inspect their septic access points and never leave a job site with the tank inappropriately secured.

It's more fun to report good news, but sometimes journalists — even trade publication editors — unfortunately have to dwell on bad news. In this instance, I hope that discussing the tragic death of children will somehow help bring a stop to a distressing pattern of unsecured septic tank lids in the United States.

The first time I wrote in *Pumper* about a young child falling into a septic tank and drowning was in April 2007. I will never forget about Loic J.M. Rogers, a 3-year-old Montana boy who died after he stepped on a plastic lid, flipping it, and fell to his death at his babysitter's house. When the little boy disappeared, police searched far and wide, only to find him in the nearby tank. As it turned out, the homeowner knew the lid was damaged, but was unaware it posed a danger and failed to report it.

Several times since that precious little boy's senseless death, new cases have prompted me to repeat a message about the importance of tank security for our pumper community in hopes that we could spread the message as an industry. Sadly, I'm still waiting for that message to take hold. And I'm still haunted by the memory of Rogers, who would be turning 18 this year.

The latest sad story comes out of Cape May, N.J., where another 3-year-old, this time a little girl named Emma, fell 10 feet into an unsecured septic tank at a campground and died. Like the Montana youngster, she stepped onto a lid that wasn't secured properly and it flipped. This is according to a report in the Cape May Herald newspaper. A state Department of Environmental Protection report found multiple violations at the campground citing unsecured lids that were either cracked or had missing bolts or screws, news accounts stated.

LOOKING BACK

Pumper Wade Dooley and I have formed a cordial relationship over the years periodically discussing tank security. I first talked to the owner of Little Stinkers Septic Service and Portable Toilet Rentals in Bozeman, Montana, when he wrote a series of letters to the editors of area newspapers after Rogers died. It was his mission to bring light to this critical safety issue, never wanting to see another child die in such a way.

Back in 2007, Dooley shared this message with me, and I passed it along to *Pumper* readers to share with their customers:

"The loss of life should be a wakeup call for all of us. When it comes to septic tanks, we all must do our part in making sure that they are cleaned and operating correctly, not only for the protection of our groundwater and health. We must think safety. If you are unsure of the condition of your septic tank or lid, contact a licensed septic service to inspect your system. Meet with them and have them explain any potential problems. ... Please add this to your family's to-do list. It might save a life."

The advice remains just as important today. I went back in my files and saw that I repeated concerns about tank safety again in 2014 and 2018 as tragic incidents of child deaths in septic tanks continued. Each time I gave Dooley a call and we discussed ways to change this narrative. In the most recent case of the New Jersey girl, the story is the same.

"It's a shame because these are 100% preventable deaths," Dooley said when I caught up with him recently. He clearly remembers Loic Rogers the same way I do and we're both fed up to keep reading about children losing their lives in a septic tank. "I think these homeowners and commercial property owners should be held accountable. They're lucky it's not criminal manslaughter, as [it] should be. It never ceases to amaze me what we see."

TAKE ACTION

I'm sure Dooley would join me in asking you to look for opportunities to educate your customers and the general public about septic tank security. Ask septic system owners to inspect their access points regularly and keep vehicle traffic away from risers and lids that could be damaged and create a safety hazard.

And for the pumpers, include tank security and work site safety as topics in your daily discussions with crew members. Preach about watching out for others when a tank is opened during a service call, and never leaving a job site without making sure lids are secured appropriately and secondary barriers are in place whenever possible.

continued...

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Putting this important safety issue into perspective, I will repeat another point Dooley made the first time I talked to him. It's clear we need to keep talking about the issue until everyone conforms to commonsense safety standards.

"We have a hot tub outside and we lock the lid. When you have a swimming pool, you put a fence around it," Dooley said. "Yet they put 1,000 gallons of septage out there and they treat it like it's not a hazard."

Thank you for representing the wastewater industry in the face of misinformation

A few months ago I told you about a video on YouTube posted by an Idaho real estate agent, George Tallabas, entitled *Don't Pump Those Septic Tanks*. In it, Tallabas spread misinformation about septic system maintenance that would lead viewers to ignore their septic systems and result in costly repair or replacement scenarios. In what I called his "fake news" diatribe, Tallabas assured homeowners maintenance is completely unnecessary over the life of a septic system. He said he has lived in home with a septic system for more than 50 years and has never had one pumped or inspected.

After my column, the pumping community mobilized into action to counteract Tallabas' reckless statements. A few of you responded to me, while dozens of others went to the YouTube video and posted comments to inform viewers of the truth. Since I interviewed Tallabas and mentioned the video, thousands of people have checked it out on YouTube, and no small amount of pressure was put on Tallabas to rethink his stance ... unfortunately to no avail.

Pumper reader Paul Studholme, a certified master septic inspector, wrote to me: "I have been inspecting septic systems for over 17 years and teach all my clients what I call Septic 101; how to look at their tank every couple of years to see if it's leaking, backing up and how to test if the tank needs to be pumped. I would see if there was someone in George Tallabas' area that would inspect his septic system so that it could be proven to him that a system needs to be pumped."

Pumper Scott Youker said he hears folks repeat similar claims to Tallabas' and he quickly sets them straight.

"Some of my customers tell me that and I reply to them that the septic tank is really just a big filter and, like the oil filter on their vehicles, it needs to be cleaned periodically. You don't *have* to change/clean your oil filter, but catastrophic results will happen if you don't."

So many commonsense statements like these were added to the Tallabas video and you can search his name and read them yourself. The pumping professionals explained – over and over – how Tallabas was misinformed. And over and over, Tallabas said he was telling the truth and asked folks who disagreed with him to simply go away.

"You are doing a huge disservice to anyone with a septic tank by providing this completely false advice," wrote Fred Luhn. Tallabas said bacteria in the tank break down all waste indefinitely, to which Luhn replied, "It's this sludge that needs to be pumped out. The unicorns and fairies don't take it away. The first law of physics – matter cannot be created nor destroyed. What do you think happens to the solids you flush?"

Pumper David Neu wrote: "It's really quite simple. You can't turn something into nothing, solids don't just magically disappear because, 'bacteria.' The solids will continue to collect and despite what you think, you can't keep all the harmful stuff out of your septic system, ... inorganics like dirt, silt, sand, etc., hair rags, food scraps, grease and oil; most of this cannot or will not be broken down by the bacteria in your septic system. If you really want to know, ride along with your septic guy for a day or two. Your mind will most definitely be changed."

J.J. Tiemann added: "He refuses to be educated by people who are current experts in the wastewater industry who work with septic systems on a daily basis. In the interest of homeowners and the groundwater of our planet, this guy should really consider providing current septic system information ... or better yet, leave the septic 'education' to the current experts in the industry."

OPEN YOUR EARS

Unfortunately, there are many people who – like Tallabas – feel free to broadcast their ignorant rantings regardless of the negative impact it might have on others. Folks like Tallabas will never stop to consider they're wrong no matter how many pumpers or wastewater industry professionals try to set them straight. This is nothing new.

Perhaps Mike Stephens left the most interesting comment for Tallabas and those who have viewed his video when invoked a Biblical passage from Proverbs, "I would test the opinion of one person against the multitude of opposing opinions. 'There is wisdom in a multitude of counselors.'"

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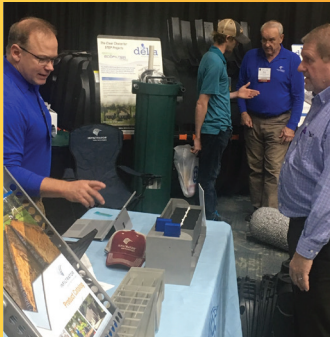
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