

# THE LITTLE DIGGER

## MINNESOTA ONSITE WASTEWATER ASSOCIATION

A Bi-Annual Publication

Spring 2025- Vol. 40, Issue 1

### MOWA Winter Convention Boosts Professional Networking



Lori Ende receiving the 2025 MOWA Service Award from President Jake Bell

Thank you to everyone who attended and sponsored the 2025 MOWA Winter Convention in St. Cloud. We had a great convention at a new venue and The Park Event Center was a great facility to have our show. There were over 300 people in attendance to the show. A huge thank you to our speakers for putting together great presentations for our members to hear.

During the opening session, we had special guests of State Senator Eric Lucero and Representative Danny Nadeau who were instrumental in getting the Springtime

a good time with the Roe-D-Hoe and look forward to offering this again next year.

The Silent Auction and Live Auction event was hugely successful for the scholarship fund. We raised over \$13,500 for the scholarship this year. We appreciate everyone who donated for the items and who purchased them! Thanks to Dave Gustafson for leading the live auction and driving up the bids!



Roe-D-Hoe Winners (left to right) Dean Flygare (2<sup>nd</sup> Place), Ryan Lashinski (1<sup>st</sup> Place), Brandon Berning (3<sup>rd</sup> Place)

Sewage Truck Weight Exemption bill passed in 2024. We appreciate them braving the weather to make the trip to St. Cloud.

Also, thank you to our vendors for the great showing in the exhibit hall. We had

The General Membership Meeting had many updates. The most notable one was the recognition of Lori Ende and her work on the Sewage Truck Weight Exemption bill. Lori worked tirelessly beginning back in 2016 to get the Permanent Springtime Sewage Truck Weight Exemption bill passed and it was finally successful on June 1, 2024. She spent every year in between getting the Executive Order through the Governor's Office to keep our businesses running in the springtime. Lori Ende was the recipient of the MOWA Service Award for 2025. Congratulations Lori!

We hope to see you all attend our convention in 2026. We'll be back in Duluth at the DECC on February 2-3, 2026.

**In this Little Digger**

- 2025 Convention Wrap-Up.....Pg. 1
- Message from MOWA President.....Pg. 3
- MOWA Mentors Needed.....Pg. 4
- Summer Soils Seminar Is Aug. 8th.....Pg. 5
- Webinars To Start March 25th.....Pg. 5
- MOWA Salutes Vendors and Sponsors...Pg. 7
- 2025 Member Networking.....Pg. 9
- 2025 Convention Highlights.....Pg.10
- MOWA Membership Application.....Pg. 11
- MOWA Committee Appeal.....Pg. 12
- MOWA Benefits of Membership.....Pg. 12

**Summer's Coming! Save the Soils Seminar Date! (page 5)**

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## A Message from the MOWA President

### 2025 Promises to be Another Productive MOWA Year!

by Rick Viita, President of the MOWA Board of Directors

#### MOWA MEMBERS,

As I am writing, road limits are fast approaching. Hopefully everyone has all their equipment (from excavators to augers) ready to roll for the upcoming 2025 season. So far talking with people from around the state, it is shaping up to be a busy season. This year maintainers will not have to worry about how they will serve their customers with emergencies during road limits thanks to all the efforts of MOWA members, it will really be needed with all the frozen septic systems.

I am honored to serve as the president of an association that is made up of so many experienced, dedicated, passionate members.



You know you're at a MOWA Convention, when "swag" is a high quality 5 gal pail! Check out the convention pics on page 7!

The Board will get together for our strategic planning meeting in March to plan our year goals. 2024 was a big undertaking for the association. With the focus and determination to get the job done, and a capable Executive Director, we accomplished a lot. I listen to the dreams of the people on this Board and the new members coming in. I cannot wait to see the actual GOALS!

I would like to welcome new board members, Lee Christopherson, Emily Burke, Lucas Caldwell, and Paul Ellis. I know they will all contribute to this association in a big way.

In closing I would like to challenge each member to become engaged. With collaboration, this association will achieve unimaginable progress to make this GREAT profession better!

Thank you for letting me serve this association.

**Rick Viita**  
President of MOWA

This is a bi-annual publication of the Minnesota Onsite Wastewater Association.  
Editor: Tammy Trantham, Email: [mowaexec@gmail.com](mailto:mowaexec@gmail.com)

The articles printed in the publication do not necessarily reflect the opinion of this organization. Readers are encouraged to respond to the articles with their own points-of-view. We welcome industry-related comments or articles. Information or inquires should be sent or made to any of the following:

MN Onsite Wastewater Association, 5865 Neal Ave N, PMB #341, Stillwater, MN 55082  
Ph: 612.361.9629 [www.mowa-mn.com](http://www.mowa-mn.com)

We have just wrapped up our 2025 Winter Convention, it was a huge success. The attendance was just above 300. That is amazing! Some of the highlights were: listening to the speakers that offer their knowledge from real world experiences; regulatory staff and private industry professionals in different environments discuss ways to better the industry; watching some masters of their craft in the Roe-D-Hoe competition; people being enticed by Dave to spend just a little more on items that will go to the scholarship fund; and networking with so many like-minded industry professionals.

Thank you to the convention committee for planning such a wonderful event. All the members that stepped up to help during the convention, Wes for the technical side, and finally Tammy Trantham for bringing it all together.

#### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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# MOWA Mentors Needed—Share Your Expertise!

## MOWA Recruiting Mentors for Mentorship Program

By Tammy Trantham, MOWA Executive Director

# MOWA MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

MOWA is set to launch our Mentorship Program at the end of March.

We need experience mentors to help this program succeed. Ideally, we could use 5-6 individuals across the state that are interested in helping train new installers.

It is well known that our industry is facing a workforce shortage.

Even more so, as our experienced professionals are retiring, we are losing years of knowledge in the workforce. Mentorship programs allow new professionals to gain skills and knowledge to better serve their customers, the industry and the public health of Minnesota.

As professionals, we must remember that training our new professionals raises our industry to better standards. By having highly trained and knowledgeable individuals, we help protect public health and the environment.

You can view the entire Mentorship Program outline on our website. Mentors can apply and we'll open up the applications for Apprentices in late March. We hope you consider helping to make our program a success.

Mentorship Program webpage: <https://mowa-mn.com/mowa-mentorship-program/>

***"According to U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data from April 2024, the number of job openings in the construction industry dipped nearly 7% over the past year. However, the number of people quitting their jobs jumped 28%. With that kind of employee-induced turnover, it's wise for employers to re-evaluate not only how they're going about recruiting workers, but also retaining them."***

*From Secrets for Recruiting and Retaining Top Talent at Every Level, By Association of Equipment Manufacturers, posted as an Online Exclusive July 25, 2024 in the Onsite Installer magazine, published by COLE Publishing Inc., www.onsiteinstaller.com. It is reprinted by permission.*

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We take numerous precautions to protect ourselves and our loved ones in everyday life—whether it's wearing seatbelts in the car, helmets while biking, life vests on boats, or leashes for our pets. Yet, often the most overlooked safety hazards are right in our own backyards. Without proper precautions, your outdoor space can become a hidden danger for adults, children, and pets. Each year, tragic accidents occur involving children falling into unsafe septic tanks, often due to exposed tanks or unsecured and eroded lids. Prioritizing safety in your backyard is just as crucial as in any other aspect of life. **Protect What Matters Most!**

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## 2025 Summer Soils Seminar set for August 8th!



### MOWA Summer Soils Seminar

**August 8, 2025**

**St. Louis County – Cook, MN**

Registration will open in early April.

**Limited to 50 participants.**

Anticipated 6 CEs for Soils.

Check for more information on the website here:

<https://mowa-mn.com/soils-seminar/>

## MOWA Member Benefit—Convenient “Ask Me Anything” Webinars...

MOWA is starting a new benefit for MOWA Members. We will be hosting a free webinar (No CEs) on special topics. These will take place from 12:00 PM – 12:40 PM on select days of each month. We are hoping to make this easy for you to log on and participate in a special topic.

**Topic: *Understanding the Site and Soils – How do we make this system fit?***

**Date/Time:** March 25 at 12:00 PM

Understanding the site and the soils for what can be installed when things don't fit. As properties are limited due to dimensions, development or other restrictions, how do you know what size and dimensions to design and install. There will be a short look at contour loading rate and design choices to apply to the site.

**Topic: *SSTS Insurance and Bonding Licensing Requirements***

**Date/Time:** April 24 at 12:00 PM

**Speaker:** Nate Overland, Overland Insurance Agency

A quick outline of the financial licensing requirements and what is covered with those financial products.

**Topic: *Ready for Anything: The Tools Every Wastewater Service Provider Needs***

**Date/Time:** May 8 at 12:00 PM

**Speaker:** Lucas Caldwell, Septic Check

Join us for an exclusive webinar with the Minnesota Onsite Wastewater Association where we'll dive into the essential tools that every service provider should have on their truck. From diagnostic equipment to maintenance tools, learn which items are must-haves to ensure you're always prepared on-site. Whether you're troubleshooting issues, performing routine maintenance, or handling emergency repairs, we'll show you the gear that makes the difference. Don't miss out on tips to maximize your service efficiency and effectiveness!

### ***How do I sign up?***

These webinars will be hosted through the NOWRA Learning Platform. You will need to register ahead of time for these webinars. There is a 2-step process: 1) Create a username on the NOWRA Learning Platform; 2) Email MOWA to make you a member on the platform. Once we activate your membership, you can sign up for the webinar. Please note, that you will not be able to view the webinar until you are listed as a “Member” on the NOWRA Learning Platform.

### ***We hope to see you on a webinar!***

Create a username on the NOWRA Learning Platform on this website: <https://www.pathlms.com/nowra> MOWA Member Benefits webpage: <https://mowa-mn.com/membership/>

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# 2025 Convention Shout-Outs to Industry Vendors!



## MOWA Salutes Trade Show Vendors and Suppliers!

- Advance Pump & Equipment
- Anua
- Aqualines
- Brown Wilbert
- Crane Pumps & Systems
- Crust Busters
- Dakota Supply Group
- First Supply
- Goulds Water Technology
- Infiltrator Water Technologies
- Innovative Thermo Solutions
- IUOE Local 49
- Kahn Tile Supply
- MPCA
- Northwest Lasers & Instruments
- Overland Insurance Agency
- Polylok
- Preferred Pump
- Prinsco
- Rep Rite Burk & Associates
- University of MN - OSTP
- Water Laboratories
- Wieser Concrete



Exhibitors at the 2025 Trade Show (clockwise from top - left to right)  
 (top left) Infiltrator Water Technologies Staff Travis Johnson and Johnathan Kaiser with Jim Healy of Orenco Systems.  
 (bottom right) Core & Main staff Derek Johnson and Dan Moore.  
 (bottom left) Advance Pump & Equipment Inc. staff Randy Tischendorf listens to a MOWA member.



**A Special Shout Out to the Following Event Sponsors:**

**Breakfast Sponsor** - CrustBusters and Overland Insurance Agency;

**Break Sponsor** - Advance Pump & Equipment;

**Roe-D-Hoe Sponsor** - First Supply; and

**Evening Reception Sponsors** - Preferred Pump, Core & Main, and Infiltrator Water Technologies



*Exhibitors at the 2025 Trade Show (clockwise from top - left to right)*  
 (top) Aqualines staff Brad Anderson mans the company booth.  
 (middle photo, far right) Crust Busters Pete Schmitz listens to customers.  
 (below left) Alysya Aanesrud and Andrew Bangsund of Jetline Sales & Service.

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# Convention Networking & Organization Building



## Building on Member Strengths—

MOWA is a member-driven organization that brings a mix of long-time professionals and newcomers into a shared effort to increase the professionalism in the industry. Service on the Board of Directors and MOWA's committees deepens the commitment to the onsite wastewater profession. MOWA welcomed new Board members Emily Burke, St. Louis County Planning & Zoning; Lucas Caldwell, Septic Check; and Lee Christopherson, Preferred Pump & Equipment, and Paul Ellis, Brown Wilbert Inc. at the Annual Meeting.




Some of the MOWA members who let us take photos were:

(top- far left) Jennifer Shinehouse, Belle Plaine Block & Tile, Inc ;

(middle - left to right) Pete Schmitz, Crust Busters/Schmitz Brothers LLC and Bruce Bucknell, Bucknell Construction Inc.;

(bottom - left to right) Dean Flygare, Flygare Excavating Inc. and Robert Billet, Mid MN Septic Services.

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# MOWA Convention Fun... and Fundraising!

## MOWA's Annual Roe-D-Hoe!

Every participant could truly say that the event wasn't their "first Roe-D-Hoe."

Winner Ryan Lashinski has the option of representing Minnesota in the NOWRA Backhoe Roe-D-Hoe competition at the WWETT (Water & Wastewater Equipment, Treatment & Transport) Show to be held February 17-19, 2026 in Indianapolis, IN.



## Tony Ruppert Scholarship Live and Silent Auction!

Once again MOWA members honored the memory of the late Tony Ruppert by raising \$13,500 for the scholarship fund he founded to promote education about the wastewater industry.

(Left to right)- MOWA Executive Director Tammy Trantham, Kurt Christopherson and Auctioneer Dave Gustafson hawked the donated merchandise! Thanks to all who contributed to this worthy cause.



**And Yes, There Really Was A Toilet Roll Toss!**





# 2025 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Membership:  Renewal  New Member

- Individual Member  
\$240 (1 person)
- Business Group /Government Unit  
\$340 (up to 5 people; \$100 /person after 5)
- Student  
\$140 (1 person)
- Life-time  
 Honorary

Note: Your MOWA Membership includes one NOWRA membership

Memberships are based on calendar year - After July 1st, new members pay \$140-individual / \$190-business or gov't groups for remainder of 2025

**Individual/Group Contact:** This person will be listed as the NOWRA member on the Septic Locator website. They will be listed first in all MOWA publications. Please print clearly.

1<sup>st</sup> Member \_\_\_\_\_ Company Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_ City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Title \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile/800# \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email \_\_\_\_\_ Website \_\_\_\_\_ County \_\_\_\_\_

Circle the counties you work in: Needed for Directory and website.

Statewide..... 88	Clay .....14	Hubbard .....29	Marshall .....44	Pipestone .....59	Steele .....74
Aitkin.....1	Cleanwater .....15	Isanti .....30	Martin .....45	Polk .....60	Stevens .....75
Anoka .....2	Cook .....16	Itasca .....31	McLeod .....46	Pope .....61	Swift .....76
Becker .....3	Cottonwood .....17	Jackson .....32	Meeker .....47	Ramsey .....62	Todd .....77
Beltrami .....4	Crow Wing .....18	Kanabec .....33	Mille Lacs .....48	Red Lake .....63	Traverse .....78
Benton .....5	Dakota .....19	Kandiyohi .....34	Morrison .....49	Redwood .....64	Wabasha .....79
Big Stone .....6	Dodge .....20	Kittson .....35	Mower .....50	Renville .....65	Wadena .....80
Blue Earth .....7	Douglas .....21	Koochiching .....36	Murray .....51	Rice .....66	Waseca .....81
Brown .....8	Faribault .....22	Lac qui Parle Lake .....37	Nicollet .....52	Rock .....67	Washington .....82
Carlton .....9	Fillmore .....23	Lake .....38	Nobles .....53	Roseau .....68	Watonwan .....83
Carver .....10	Freeborn .....24	Lake of the Woods .....39	Norman .....54	Scott .....69	Wilkin .....84
Cass .....11	Goodhue .....25	Le Sueur .....40	Olmsted .....55	Sherburne .....70	Winona .....85
Chippewa .....12	Grant .....26	Lincoln .....41	Otter Tail .....56	Sibley .....71	Wright .....86
Chisago .....13	Hennepin .....27	Lyon .....42	Pennington .....57	St. Louis .....72	Yellow Medicine .....87
	Houston .....28	Mahnomen .....43	Pine .....58	Stearns .....73	

**Information:** (Check all that apply)

- Installer
- Pumper
- Designer
- Inspector
- Gov't Regulator
- Educator
- Service Provider
- Student
- Soil Scientist
- Professional Engineer
- Manufacturer
- Operator/Maintenance
- Supplier
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### Additional Business/Government Members:

2<sup>nd</sup> Member \_\_\_\_\_ Title \_\_\_\_\_ County \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_ City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile/800# \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

3<sup>rd</sup> Member \_\_\_\_\_ Title \_\_\_\_\_ County \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_ City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile/800# \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

(Please list additional business/government group members on separate sheet with complete contact information.)

**Publications:** Would you prefer receiving 'Little Digger' newsletters via ...  Regular Mail  Electronically  
 We currently send one publication per address to business/government groups. Contact the MOWA office if you'd like additional copies.

**Additional NOWRA Memberships:** MOWA membership fees include one NOWRA membership per company/organization. List names of members who want additional NOWRA memberships here: Cost - \$40 per person.

2) \_\_\_\_\_ 3) \_\_\_\_\_ 4) \_\_\_\_\_ 5) \_\_\_\_\_

**Payment:** (Please print) MOWA Membership \$ \_\_\_\_\_ + Add'l NOWRA Memberships = **Amount: \$** \_\_\_\_\_

- Check enclosed (Payable to MOWA)
- VISA
- MasterCard

Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_ CVV: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Cardholder Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**MOWA, 5865 Neal Ave N, PMB #341, Stillwater, MN 55082 Phone: 612.361.9629**

NOTE: Dues payable to MOWA are not deductible as a charitable contribution but may be deductible as an ordinary and necessary business expense.

MOWA estimates that 10% of your MOWA dues are used for governmental affairs issues and therefore are not deductible.

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## Get Involved with MOWA!

As a professional organization, MOWA is always looking for members who want to contribute by joining a Committee. Here are some options as well as the person to contact if you want to join or need more information:

### Convention Committee

**Chairperson:** Open

### Membership Committee

**Co-Chairpersons:** Kurt Christopherson and Travis Johnson

### Scholarship Committee

**Chairperson:** Ryan Lashinski

### Legislative Committee

**Chairperson:** Lori Ende

### Mentorship Committee

**Chairperson:** Jake Bell

### Land Application Committee

**Chairperson:** Keith Valento



### ***Come grow with us ...***

***Our membership includes: Installers, Pumpers, Designers, Professionals, Inspectors Engineers, Soil Scientists, Operator/ Maintenance Providers, Government Regulators, Educators, Manufacturers, Suppliers, Students and any others interested in Minnesota's wastewater industry.***

### ***Benefits of Membership Include:***

- Legislative watchdog following local and national industry issues
- Ability to influence state and national rules & policy
- Substantial business insurance savings
- Ongoing education
- Free directory and web site listings
- Annual Winter Convention
- Summer Soils Seminar
- Access to Association logos to distinguish your company from non-member companies
- Opportunity to join and participate in Association committees
- Ongoing direct electronic communications regarding current local and national issues and events
- Social events and networking activities
- Discounted fees for MOWA events
- Competitive advantages through enhanced exposure to fellow industry professionals
- Receive the Little Digger newsletter,
- Reliable information about the industry
- Association office and staff resources