

We live and work in a little piece of paradise, and DWU is intent on doing our part to keep it that way.



# CONNECTIONS



WINTER 2020



## A MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER

*Imagine what would life be like if you turned on the tap and no water flowed.*

What would happen if you could not drink the water that came out of the tap? What would you do if the waste did not go down the drain when you flushed the toilet? These are real problems that many people face daily around the world and in communities across the United States. Fortunately for us, we do not have these problems and we do not anticipate that these issues will arise at any time in our long-term planning horizon. One of the reasons as to why we have such confidence is the fact that we have multiple people and entities overseeing and managing our resources.

While local utility companies deliver water resources on a local level, it is a policy of the Florida Legislature that the state's water resources be managed at a state and regional level. The Department of Environmental Protection, responsible for the administration of the water resources at the state level,

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## Message from the GM continued

exercises general supervisory authority over the state's five water management districts, which are responsible for the administration of the water resources at the regional level. Destin is under the regional jurisdiction of the Northwest Florida Water Management District. The four core mission areas of the water management districts are: water supply, water quality, flood protection and floodplain management, and natural systems.

As part of their work with the Water Management Districts of the State, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection is the state's lead agency for environmental management and stewardship, protecting our air, water and land. DEP is divided into three primary areas.

Land and Recreation programs acquire and protect lands for preservation and recreation. DEP oversees 175 state parks and trails and more than 12 million acres of public lands and 4 million acres of coastal uplands and submerged lands.

Regulatory programs safeguard natural resources by overseeing permitting and compliance activities that protect air and water quality and manage waste cleanups.

Ecosystem Restoration programs protect and improve water quality and aquatic resources including America's

Everglades, Florida's iconic springs and Florida's world-renowned coastal resources. DEP works with communities, local governments and other agencies to protect and restore water quality and supply and to provide funding assistance for water restoration and infrastructure projects, as well as coordinates the protection of Florida's submerged lands and coastal areas.

At the local level, we have a well-educated and dedicated workforce committed to serving you our members. If you were to look around the DWU facilities at the numerous awards earned by the employees, you will see the words: "In recognition of dedicated professionalism" and it is that dedicated professionalism that sets the employees of DWU apart from the rest of the crowd. We also see this same dedication in the professional development of our employees. Many of our employees carry professional licenses to perform their jobs. Others have obtained certifications to perform specific tasks. Most all carry memberships in professional organizations, and we have provided funds through the operations budget to train employees to improve their performance and better serve our members.

Overseeing the operation at the local level is the Destin Water Users Board of Directors. They have dedicated

their time to serve on the Board and to take the responsibility to oversee the management of operations and the finances of the corporation.

Finally, we have the educated and engaged membership of DWU. We regularly receive calls from members reporting issues they observe or asking questions about our operations and the resources we supply. As a member owned utility cooperative, it is important to have an engaged membership who cares about the resource and the services they receive.

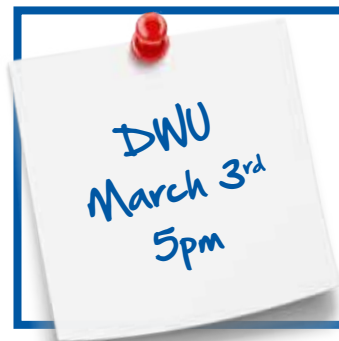
The mission statement of DWU is: We live and work in a little piece of paradise, and DWU is intent on doing our part to keep it that way. I think it is appropriate to modify our mission statement to say: We live and work in a little piece of paradise, and WE ALL are intent on doing our part to keep it that way. I say this, because I think we all are pulling in the same direction to ensure that we never have to imagine a day without water and that future generations won't have to worry either. Working together we can make that happen.

**LOCKWOOD WERNET**  
General Manager

### Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of Destin Waters Users, Inc. will be held on Tuesday, March 3rd, 2020, starting at 5 P.M. in the Board Room at the DWU Main office located at 218 Main Street. Reports concerning the status of the Corporation will be presented by the President, Treasurer and General Manager. Results from the recent election will be announced and the DWU Employee of the Year will be recognized.

All members are welcome and encouraged to attend.



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## EMPLOYEES OF THE MONTH



**SEPTEMBER 2019**  
Derrick Weeks



**OCTOBER 2019**  
Terra Pruett



**NOVEMBER 2019**  
Paul Reese



**TOM WEIDENHAMER, PRESIDENT**

## Message from the **PRESIDENT**

One of the rituals of fall here at Destin Water Users is the preparation and adoption of the annual budget for the coming year. In August of each year, the General Manager (GM) directs the various budget managers to begin preparing their departmental budgets. Those budgets are submitted to the GM in late September. The GM compiles and evaluates the requests and submits a draft budget to the Board of Directors for their review and consideration in October. The Board of Directors and the General Manager then review the budget in a workshop session before a final draft is presented to the Board of Directors for adoption in November of each year.

Another part of the budget process is the Board of Directors reviews the revenue forecast and reconciles it with the proposed budget to determine whether there needs to be a rate adjustment for the coming year. We are proud to announce that the 2020 Budget was adopted with no rate increase. This was a significant achievement since our last rate study had suggested we needed a rate increase for 2020 to help build up reserves and pay for system improvements.

How were we able to avoid a rate increase when we had projected one for 2020 in last rate study? Growth and good budget managers are the simple answer. During our last rate study, we projected a certain growth rate based upon the development we knew was in the planning horizon and the historical growth we had experienced. Our actual growth rate was slightly higher than what we had expected. Our budget managers did what they were supposed to do, manage their budgets. We are proud of the work they do to review costs and work programs and adjust where necessary to control cost. Over the past five years, we have held the average annual operating budget increase to 1.72 percent while the year over year inflation rate has been running 1.9 percent on average during this same period.

What is included in the operating budget? The operating budget includes payroll and personnel related expenses such as insurance, taxes and benefits; maintenance and repair expenses to cover the cost to maintain the plant, distribution system, collection system and equipment; and operating expenses to cover the cost of operating the system. The operating budget is what pays for the day to day operations of the utility.

In addition to the operating budget, we have a debt service budget, a repair and replacement (R&R) budget and a capital improvement (CIP) budget. The debt service budget covers the cost of

principal and interest on outstanding loans. The R&R budget covers the cost of repair and replacement of existing facilities and equipment that are capitalized items. The CIP budget covers the cost of new equipment and facilities that expand our capacity to serve our members and that are capitalized.

In our budget process, we are striving to be good stewards of the resources we manage. These resources include the natural resources that we provide to you our members and the financial resources that you give back to DWU in rates and fees. We tried to defer maintenance during the Great Recession of 2008 to control cost and we found that this quickly led to problems. Therefore, it is our policy to address maintenance issues as they come up. Additionally, we are looking ahead to address future maintenance, operations and demand issues while we are still in a growth mode understanding that this strategy will help control cost in the future. Ultimately, we are trying to live out our mission statement: We live and work in a little piece of paradise, and DWU is intent on doing our part to keep it that way and we hope that you see it the same way as we do.

*Tom Weidenhamer*



**DESTIN WATER USERS, INC.**

P.O. Box 308  
Destin, FL 32540-0308

**OFFICE HOURS**

The DWU office is open Monday through Friday  
7:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

**PHONE NUMBERS**

Administrative Office – Bill Payment Questions and Concerns  
(850) 837-6146

Emergencies, Nights, Sundays and Holidays  
(850) 837-6551

**PAYMENT OPTIONS**

Running late? Pay your DWU bill over the phone! We accept American Express, MasterCard, Visa and Discover. Contact a Customer Service Representative for more information. You can also pay your bill online at [www.dwuinc.com](http://www.dwuinc.com) or dial 1-833-394-8398

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Paying your DWU bill is easier than ever! Simply go online to [dwuinc.com](http://dwuinc.com) and click “Payment Options” at the top of the page. It will take you to the correct location and provide instructions on getting set up for this convenient payment method.

**AWARDS & RECOGNITION**

Destin Water Users (DWU) recently sent several employees down to the Florida Section American Water Works Association (FSAWWA) Fall Conference in Orlando, Florida where they were recognized with numerous awards.



The big winner was Operations Manager Monica Aurtrey who was recognized as Volunteer of the Year for Region IX, The Chairman’s Award of Excellence for Distinguished Service on the Water Utility Council and the Allen B. Roberts, Jr. Award For Outstanding Service to



The Field Crew Department was presented with the FSAWWA Water Distribution System Award for outstanding performance during the preceding year for utilities with 6,000 to 12,999 connections. Two employees were recognized for their operational skills.

Field Crew Leader Brad Monk won second place in the Backhoe Rodeo and Field Crew Leader Chris Schaefer won third place in Meter Madness.

Florida Section AWWA for having contributed most to the Section, by providing valuable support of Section programs through outstanding leadership, creativity and service in the water-related fields; particularly to the resolution of problems and the implementation of activities within the Section and Association.

**DESTIN WATER USERS BOARD OF DIRECTORS**



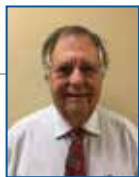
Tom WEIDENHAMER  
President



Jim FOREMAN



Ames HUDSON



Jimmy NEILSON  
Vice-President



Jack SCELSI



Sandy TRAMMELL



Jim WOOD  
Secretary/Treasurer