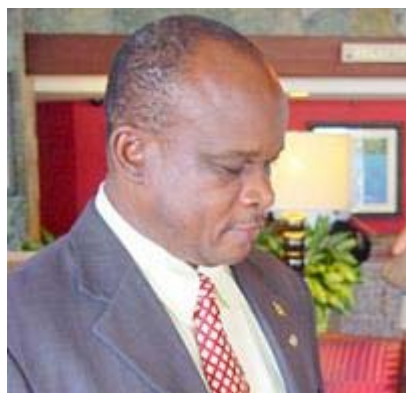


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Conference Aims to Prioritize Water Issues at CARICOM



[1] The Caribbean Water and Wastewater Conference and Exhibition opened Sunday at Marriott's Frenchman's Reef and Resort with high level sessions for the Caribbean public utilities officials, yielding an agreement to push water issues to the top of the agenda at the next Caribbean Community (CARICOM) meeting.

Attendees at the 18th annual meeting also sought to create a consortium of water experts as a technological advisory body for CARICOM, according to Hugo Hodge Jr, executive director of the V.I. Water and Power Authority and one of the hosts for the CWWA conference.

Hodge drew attention to the limited amount of stimulus funds that the U.S. government has given to water-related spending – a scant \$2 billion in a \$900 billion package.

Emphasizing water's vital role in the Caribbean region, Hodge said the communiqué coming out of the conference raises the level of awareness of water-related topics.

"The most important aspect [of the conference] is being able to put the resolution together to ensure that water is put as a major item on the agenda for CARICOM," said Joseph Gilbert, Grenada's minister for works and public utilities and physical development. "We believe that an integrated water policy is a critical consideration for sustainable development of small island [nations]."

The CWWA is a regional, non-profit organization, whose membership includes professionals from the water and the wastewater sector. In addition to hosting sessions for decision-makers from various Caribbean nations, the event is also an opportunity for vendors to exhibit technologies and services to the single largest assembly of water and waste resources professionals and executives in the Caribbean.

This year's co-hosts are WAPA and the V.I. Waste Management Authority in conjunction with the Governor's Office, the Department of Tourism and the University of the Virgin Islands.

Sunday and Monday conference sessions also featured training opportunities for water, wastewater and solid waste operators, in sessions sponsored by the Inter-America

Development Bank. Technical Sessions commenced Tuesday and continue through noon Thursday. The conference runs through Friday.

In addition to regional conference attendees, the booths at the conference held some 50 vendors of water, wastewater energy saving and recycling products and services for residential, commercial, government and other organizations.

Shawnee, Kan.-based Bio-Microbics Inc. brought its wastewater treatment systems to the conference to demonstrate the ability to clean water in residential and large-scale septic system without using chemicals.

The system sits right into a current septic system and using natural biologic treatment systems that creates bacterium, cleaning the contents, according to Loretta Andersen, Bio-Microbics' director of sales and inquiries.

Another booth holder, Franklin Electric of Bluffton, Ind., has developed a submersible motor, especially useful for underwater pumps, which are used frequently in cistern applications.

The company offers clean and wastewater pumps for residential and commercial applications, although the lion's share of the business in the Caribbean goes to larger, non-residential customers, according to Kyle Lester, field service engineer for Franklin Electric. The company sells pumps to Trinidad's Water and Sewage Authority and locally is working with WAPA.

In addition to commercial booths, several local entities showed off their products, services and other offerings.

WMA showed how it is recycling all sorts of paper. For example, after a newspaper is read, it is no longer destined for the waste bin; it is headed for a useful career in the litter box at the humane society, according to Charmin Springer, who is heading up the authority's recycling program.

The nation of Grenada has agreed to hold the next CWWA conference, Oct. 3-8, 2010, according to Terrence Smith, chairman of the board of Grenada's National Water and Sewerage Authority.

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