

“5S - Select Society of Sanitary Sludge Shovelers” Information

Many people are not aware of the significance or the origin of the 5S Award. This is a brief history and an overview of the 5S “Select Society of Sanitary Sludge Shovelers”.

The 5S Society is a WEF (Water Environment Federation) member specific Award to honour those who have made a particular contribution to the water & wastewater industry in their Member Association. The ACWWA was invited to create a 5S Society Charter in 2011.

Peter Nichol (OWEA) and Bill Borlase (WCWEA), both members of the 5S Society, attended our Annual ACWWA Conference in 2011 and presented the first 5S Shovel to the ACWWA WEF Delegate, Gary Chew. Gary was then designated as the "Influent Integrator" who is also referred to as the neutral "pH7". The pH7's duties are to record and report nominated selections by existing 5S members, present official certificates, bestow 5S Shovels and preside over these 5S presentation ceremonies. Once Gary retired in 2019, the pH7 duties were passed on to me, whereas I am the currently the ACWWA WEF Delegate. Once my term is complete as the WEF Delegate, it will be passed on to the next WEF Delegate. I am still learning the ropes and plan to have a better understanding of the pH7 role in the near future.

The 5S Shovel Award, is meant to be a prestigious award, yet the presentation ceremony is also intended to be fun and not too serious at the same time. However, it is important that time be taken to educate our membership on the background knowledge of where the award came from, why certain people are presented with the 5S Shovel and how to go about nominating someone. My intent with this article is to shed some light and help everyone better understand the history and importance of the 5S Award.

Some history... Pennsylvania started the High-Hat Society in 1937 and used the words "Sludge Shovelers Society" in its initiation ceremony. Later, this became known as the Ted Moses Sludge Shovelers Society. The second Chapter of the 5S Society was formed in Arizona in October 1940, the idea being conceived by A.W. "Dusty" Miller and F. Carlyle Roberts, Jr. There are chapters in many of the United States and in Canada, as well as the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand. The 5S Society Chapters do not accept applications, but select their potential society's to be invited. Each inductee receives a gold tie bar in the shape of a round-nosed shovel. NOTE: The ACWWA is currently researching a 5S Award design that is not a specifically a Tie Bar but instead something that is gender neutral.

The 5S Shovel designs are very distinctive to each Member Association. When traveling to other water and wastewater conferences, especially WEFTEC, you will see a variety of gold 5S shovels being displayed on shirt and jacket collars/lapels.... such as a flower, fish, animal, tree, etc., that are significant symbols to their region. The ACWWA 5S Shovel has a red lobster on it, something significant to Atlantic Canada. They are the most talked about shovels at WEFTEC each year. It is an honour to wear and display the 5S Shovel at these events. Those understanding the significance of the 5S know that the person wearing the shovel has provided outstanding service to their WEF Member Association.

The ACWWA may choose to present one or more 5S Awards each year at the Annual Conference. However, some years there have not been any recipients. As a kind gesture, the ACWWA has presented the 5S Shovel at the Annual Conference to the visiting dignitaries from WEF and AWWA.

For a list of recipients with the ACWWA 5S Award since 2011, some of which are CWWA, WEF and AWWA Dignitaries please visit our website at www.acwwa.ca.

To improve the presentation of the 5S Award and to better align it with the ACWWA annual awards ceremony the ACWWA Board has decided the 5S Award will no longer be presented at Down East Feast but instead will be presented at the Awards Ceremony at the Annual Conference.