

Chapter 8 - Where will the future go?

We study the past to foretell the future. Taking inspiration from the 100th anniversary of NEWWA, the noted prognosticator Don Burford, a.k.a. “The Water Wizard” left us a time capsule in the form of some tongue in cheek predictions at the 1982 Centennial conference, including the following:



1982 Predictions (paraphrased a bit for brevity)	2006 Accuracy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dual systems will not catch on. 	<i>True.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By 1987, every well-run water system will have a computer and every home above the poverty line will have a computer. 	<i>True, albeit a bit later than 1987.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By 1990, deferred maintenance will be the exception because our systems will be failing catastrophically with consumers accepting doubling and tripling rates. 	<i>Maybe not quite as dire but true as far as rates.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By 1990 widespread use of aeration, GAC and resin adsorption will meet the challenge of contaminated groundwater. 	<i>True.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By 1992, “point of use” treatment will increase dramatically. 	<i>Not true yet.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By 1992, MDC will finally complete the Northfield diversion. 	<i>Not true.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By 1993, it will at last be understood that New England is short of cheap water but rich in water needing a little treatment and a little movement. 	<i>Still not the popular view.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By 1995, internal corrosion will be licked. 	<i>Methods known but a slow path to solution.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By 1997, most utilities will use self propelled “torpedoes” to conduct surveillance of their distribution systems. 	<i>Not true yet some devices come close.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By 1997 waldos (gloves that transmit movement to mechanical hands) will compete with robots for work in hazardous areas. 	<i>Not true yet.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 1998 survey will show that water works personnel are at last being well paid 	<i>Arguably not true.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By 1999, a “new wave” of “responsibility taking” will sweep the nation. 	<i>Not yet.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By 2000, Metro New York will have 22 million people and New England will grow by 1.5 million people. 	<i>Not true.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2000, SDWA will be looked upon as being far sighted for its famous section regulating anything that “may have an adverse effect on health”. 	<i>More true than not.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2002, gold will no longer be a monetary standard but money will be based on control of energy, land and water. 	<i>Not true but water is a more political issue</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By 2015, plans will be complete for the Long Island Sound Fresh Water Reservoir but the project will be delayed and dropped. 	<i>Pretty unlikely.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By 2020, inexpensive solar energy will fuel the return of industry to the “Sun Belt” due to plentiful water from desalination. Brine disposal will remain a problem. 	<i>Has an element of truth as membranes improve.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By 2030, there will be expanded development of modular communities using package energy and water plants. 	<i>Remains to be seen.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2032, at the 150th Anniversary of NEWWA, it will be noted that large waterborne outbreaks will be eliminated throughout the world. However, cross-connections will continue to be a problem 	<i>Remains to be seen.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2050, treatment for radioactive material will be the biggest water 	<i>Remains to be seen.</i>