



Imagine a Day Without Water

October 23, 2019

OUR GUYS HAVE.

During a recent relief trip to the Bahamas to help aid after Hurricane Dorian, our MPW team learned the everlasting significance of being able to have clean, safe, drinking water.

IMAGINE YOURSELF WITHOUT IT.

“The hardest thing for us was the realization that people's past, present, and future had been destroyed and that their lives were now completely reduced to the basics of fuel, water, and food,” explained Rob Atkinson.



WATER IS LIFE.

WE TAKE IT FOR GRANTED EVERY DAY.



HERE IS THEIR STORY.



MOUNT PLEASANT WATERWORKS MACGYVERS

On Saturday, September 7, 2019, only days after the eye of Hurricane Dorian passed within 20 miles of Charleston, SC, Mount Pleasant Waterworks (MPW) was busy ensuring uninterrupted service to our customers. There were still several areas within Mount Pleasant without power and approximately 30 pump stations were running on generators. Meanwhile, MPW received a call from Water Missions International asking for assistance with the Bahamas Relief Effort. General Manager Clay Duffie responded, “We have to do something; time to rally our Clean Water team.”

The response team was quickly selected based on their unique skill set and willingness to serve. Knowing that they were likely to encounter total devastation and destroyed infrastructure on the island, it was important to assemble a crew that not only had industry skills and experience, but were true “MacGyvers” at heart.

These jacks of all trades volunteered in a skinny minute: Rob Atkinson – Electrician; John Grant – Pump Mechanic; Graham MacDonald – Water / Wastewater Operator; and Quinn Tolbert – Pump Mechanic.

The team quickly assembled and left for Nassau on Thursday, September 12. The plan was to land in Nassau and deploy north to the hardest hit areas of Marsh Harbour and Treasure Cay located on the Abaco Islands. Establishing a reliable and safe drinking water source for the relief workers and residents was the primary mission along with evaluating Treasure Cay’s wastewater collection system.

Once on site, the magnitude of the destruction really sank in. Transportation, housing, food, and fuel was scarce at best and had to be secured through innovative design. The team’s modes of transportation resembled a Wes Anderson film, with necessity and practicality ranking of upmost importance. From a cooler, to a shopping cart, to a major upgrade: an abandoned golf cart, thinking outside the box was required. Clean drinking water was secured using “borrowed” pool filters artfully transformed into grit traps to make sure the suction filters would not clog with sand. Shelter was sought in one of the island’s few remaining houses while inventive resourcefulness in bartering became a way of life. The crew also built a shower in exchange for the hot



commodity of fuel, a four-letter word that almost became a dirty word to those ferociously seeking the resource.

With a focus on providing a safe and reliable water source for the island, a reverse osmosis (RO) unit, supplied by Water Mission International, was initially set up beside the harbor and functioned as a desalination unit treating seawater. Production was low and the consumption of fuel high. Luckily, after speaking with residents, the team was informed of multiple abandoned groundwater wells on the island. The RO unit was moved to a new location and things began to come together with production increasing to 110 gallons per hour. In conjunction with other aid groups, Heart to Heart (medical relief) & World Central Kitchen (food supply), the crew established a prime location for basic needs to be met and had the foresight to create signage to draw in the local community. The MPW crew also located, tested, and developed a guiding document of all the critical infrastructure points in Treasure Cay for the Bahamas Water & Sewer Corporation.

Upon returning home, the MPW Clean Water team had many stories to tell. Each of them felt the magnitude of the impact that Hurricane Dorian had on the Abaco Islands. "The hardest thing for us was the realization that peoples' past, present, and future had been destroyed and that their lives were now completely reduced to the basics of fuel, water, and food," explained Rob Atkinson during the debrief held at Mount Pleasant Waterworks.

Another moving moment took place when their unit was low on fuel and unable to make more clean water. "A local man saw our need and gave us two days' worth of gasoline from his own personal supply to keep the unit running. This man did not seem to have much of anything left, but he knew how important to the community it was to have clean water," recounted Quinn Tolbert.

"Our RO location literally became the local watering hole where most people in the town would finish their day to fill up water jugs and share touching stories with each other and listen to one another's needs. I think most people enjoyed the company and were able to relax for a moment when they were collecting water from us, knowing that people from all over the world are here to support them is huge," shared John Grant.

Graham Macdonald also had this to say, "It was very moving to see the gratitude in their faces and receive their praise. Using our skills and knowledge to ease their suffering and provide life-giving clean water gave us a feeling of pride that will stay with us forever."

The guys in the blue “Clean Water” t-shirts quickly became known as the primary go-to resource around the island. They were asked to fix, repair, and engineer everyday objects and transform them into functional engines and industry equipment. It became apparent that the skills of our industry are extremely valuable. Often we take for granted how important our jobs are, and how much we truly know. We work daily to keep our water system running. We understand the importance of this to our community, but when faced with no availability to drinking water it’s reassuring to know that we truly have what it takes to deliver Clean Water.



RO 5 Treasure Cay

500 gal/day unit made by Parker
Designed for sea water use for yachts

Current production 25 gal/hr.....



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MPW MACGYVERS



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