

Birmingham BUSINESS JOURNAL



STEVEN MCKINNEY

Date of birth: Aug. 17, 1974

Title: Assistant director

Organization: Storm Water Management Authority Inc.

Type of organization: Government – regional environmental regulatory agency

Education: Bachelor of science in environmental geographic information systems, 1997, and master of science in environmental management, 1999, both Samford University; now working on doctorate in environmental health engineering, University of Alabama at Birmingham

City of residence: Argo

Family: Lee Ann (wife); Alex (son)

CAREER PATH

First job: When I was 12 years old, my father helped me get a job working at a local produce and farm-supply store. My responsibilities included loading trucks with feed, working in the fields (planting, weeding, tending and harvesting) and preparing produce for sale (shucking corn and shelling peas). Since I worked 12- to 15-hour days on weekends, it became apparent very quickly that I should do everything in my power to find a professional career.

Reason for choosing profession: I always have enjoyed outdoor activities and had a propensity for technology. These two factors matured into an interest in computer modeling and environmental science, leading me to an education within Geographic Information Sciences (GIS). My GIS education ultimately enabled me to develop a career focused on the administration of environmental regula-



agency has provided me with the opportunity to meet and work with an incredibly broad spectrum of people including public officials, high-level business executives and scientists, and citizens from a wide variety of backgrounds.

Tools/factors that helped you achieve early success: I often have felt that idealism is a folly of youth. This can be true, but it also can be a source of potential greatness. To me, idealism is the belief that with enough dedication and enough hard work, things can change for the better. This belief has provided me with the motivation and determination to achieve many goals in my career.

Ultimate career goal: I eventually would like to participate in the political process. I believe my years of public service and exposure to the internal workings of government will prepare me for a role that will prove beneficial to my region and state.

BUSINESS PHILOSOPHY

Guiding business principle: The difference between successful people and everyone else simply is that successful people take

opportunities when they are presented.

Turning point/defining moment in your career:

Joining the staff of Storm Water Management. The unique nature of this environmental regulatory

opportunities when they are presented.

Yardstick of success: This favorite quote, by Bessie Stanley, embodies all the elements of success: 'He that has achieved success who has lived well, laughed often and loved much; who has gained the respect of intelligent men and the love of little children; who has filled his niche and accomplished his task; who has left the world better than he found it, whether by an improved poppy, a perfect poem, or a rescued soul; who has never lacked appreciation of earth's beauty or failed to express it; who has always looked for the best in others and given them the best he had; whose life was an inspiration; whose memory a benediction.'

Best way to keep competitive edge: Set a goal to learn something new every day.

Characteristics that a good leader must have: Consistency, patience, persistence and humility are all crucial, but above all one must be consistent

LIFE LESSONS

Mentors: I truly have been fortunate to be exposed to so many consummate professionals throughout my career. I continually do my best to recognize the strength and wisdom of the experience of others and learn from it. My personal mentors are my wife, grandmother, mother and father.

Best advice you've received: Get over yourself, you're not that important. Humility wins respect.

Worst advice you've received: It's OK to drink the water in Cancun because it's a tourist spot.

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Most important lesson learned: That I will never know enough, and every person I encounter has the potential to see things from a new and inspiring perspective

Civic organization involvement: My most prominent civic involvement is serving on the board of Trees for Alabama.

PASTIMES, ETC.

Word that best describes you: Resolute

First choice for a new career: College professor

Favorite book: *The Talisman* by Stephen King and Peter Straub

Favorite movie: 'The Goonies'

Favorite restaurant: Bob Baumhower's Wings Sports Grille

Favorite vacation spot: Dauphin Island, Ala.

Guilty pleasure: Fantasy fiction novels