



# 2019 Strategic Communications: H2O Conference

The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Cuyahoga River Fire: Mission-Driven Communications for Today's Clean Water Utilities

June 3 - 4, 2019 | The Westin Cleveland | Cleveland, OH

## Monday, June 3

*Morning*

8:00 – 12:00      Registration

*Orchid Foyer*

9:00 – 9:15      Welcome & Opening Remarks

*Orchid West*

**Kyle Dreyfuss-Wells**  
*NACWA Board Member*  
Chief Executive Officer  
Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District  
Cleveland, OH

9:15 – 10:15      *Does My Utility Have to Be Cool? Building Brand Equity with Your Unique Service Community*

*Orchid West*

**Building Brand Equity:** The clean water utility's relationship to its service community is its lifeblood, and for most that relationship begins with the utility's brand. Building positive public perception improves value to and from the customer in countless ways—a negative one will have the opposite effect. Experts/panelists discuss the principles of building brand equity for clean water utilities, the role of traditional and nontraditional tactics like social media and leveraging the psychology of branding to generate customer support, increase value for operations, and ultimately increase communications ROI.

*Moderator*

**Lisa Van Riper**  
*Co-Vice Chair, NACWA Communications & Public Affairs Committee*  
Director of Communications  
Alexandria Renew Enterprises  
Alexandria, VA

*Panelists*

**Todd Morgano**

Senior Vice President, Public Relations  
Falls Communications  
Cleveland, OH

**Gary Belan**

Senior Director, Clean Water Supply  
American Rivers  
Washington, DC

**Vincent Morris**

Communications and Government Relations Manager  
DC Water  
Washington, DC

10:15 – 10:30

Networking Break

10:30 – 11:50  
*Orchid West*

*Can You Hear Me Now? - Customer Relations That Influence Consumer Behavior*

**Customer Relations:** For utility communications teams, proactive public education should rank among its most important objectives as it is mission-critical not only in building brand equity, but in justifying rate increases, dealing with affordability issues, supporting operations/compliance, and promoting project initiatives. Having a communications platform that *influences* consumer behavior should be the goal of every utility. Expert panelists will discuss the principles of building a platform that is proactive and influential, as well as informative.

*Moderator*

**Bess McCoy**

*Co-Vice Chair, NACWA Communications & Public Affairs Committee*  
Public Affairs Specialist  
Metropolitan St. Louis Sewer District  
St. Louis, MO

*Panelists*

**Josh Weinstein**

President and Creative Director  
Creative Co-Op  
Exeter, NH

**Marty Flynn**

Assistant General Manager  
Clark County Water Reclamation District  
Las Vegas, NV

**Michelle Zdrodowski**  
Chief Public Affairs Officer  
Great Lakes Water Authority  
Detroit, MI

*Afternoon*  
12:00 – 1:00  
*Orchid East*

#### Luncheon

As you take advantage of the opportunity to network, a private sector communications expert has been invited in to provide key tips and insight.

**Arianne Shipley and Stephanie Zavala**

*Award-Winning Water Public Educators and Communicators*

The H2duO

Fort Worth, TX

12:45 – 4:30  
*Orchid Foyer*

#### Registration

1:00 – 2:00  
*Orchid West*

#### *River on Fire: Partnering with Media to Tell the Clean Water Story*

**Media Storytelling:** The Cuyahoga River Fire national media story—and the resulting success of the Clean Water Act—is demonstrable proof that clean water communications can influence the public toward embracing and acting upon clean water priorities. As we proactively work with media, we must ask whether our story-telling, messaging and media pitching are benefitting our missions and objectives. Panelists—which include top media professionals—will discuss elements of the Clean Water Story—e.g., Utility of the Future, true “environmentalism,” community benefits and more—that not only have the potential to earn media hits locally, but also have the potential to create public impact that will help your utility’s local and national clean water mission.

#### *Moderator*

**Jean Smith**

*Chair, NACWA Communications & Public Affairs Committee*

Manager of Community and Media Relations

Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District

Cleveland, OH

#### *Panelists*

**Micki Byrnes**

President & General Manager

WKYC-TV Channel 3

Cleveland, OH

**Todd Mesek**

Chief Marketing Officer

Ideastream

Cleveland, OH

**Ed Stevens**

Chairman and Chief Executive Officer  
Stevens Strategic Communications, Inc.  
Westlake, OH

2:00 – 3:00  
Orchid West

*River on Fire: Crisis Communications That “Win”*

**Crisis Communications:** In a crisis no-one truly “wins,” but the Cuyahoga River Fire crisis shows that strategic communications can actually produce long term benefits for the utility and the communities they serve. Learn the principles of strong Crisis Communications planning, strategic response to natural disasters or local crises, and proactive communications principles that strengthen clean water’s public standing.

*Moderator*

**Nathan Gardner-Andrews**

Chief Advocacy Officer  
National Association of Clean Water Agencies  
Washington, DC

*Panelists*

**Bruce Hennes**

Chief Executive Officer  
Hennes Communications  
Cleveland, OH

**Allen Pfenninger**

Vice President  
Fahlgren Mortine  
Cleveland, OH

**Alanna Reed**

Director of Communications  
City of Houston, Public Works & Engineering, Public Utilities  
Houston, TX

3:00 – 3:15

Networking Break

3:15 – 4:15  
Orchid West

*Blazing a Trail: Building Proactive MarComm Campaigns*

**Planning and Executing Campaigns:** Communications campaigns, properly executed, can build utilities and advance even the most difficult clean water initiatives. Experts discuss the successful communications campaigns—from data used to justify rate increases, to public education about project initiatives, to building the case for communications programs and ROI—that are building utilities like yours. Learn from case studies that can be scaled, with takeaways that can guide strategic planning for any utility, of any size, in any region.

*Moderator*

**Jean Smith**

*Chair, NACWA Communications & Public Affairs Committee*  
Manager of Community and Media Relations  
Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District  
Cleveland, OH

*Panelists*

**David Martin**

Global Strategic Partnerships  
BlueW.org  
Ontario, Canada

**Rukiya Campbell**

Communications Director  
City of Atlanta, Department of Watershed Management  
Atlanta, GA

4:15 – 5:00  
*Orchid West*

*Spreading Like River-fire: Innovative Community Outreach*

**Creative Community Outreach Campaigns:** Community outreach begins with the word “community.” No matter what the objective, the success of any outreach does not depend primarily on a utility’s budget, but on deploying strategic efforts that are relevant, timely, and compatible with the utility’s unique service community. Panelists discuss the unique Community Outreach programs that they’ve deployed, and most importantly, the keys to the programs’ success, and the best practices that can be translated to any service community.

*Moderator*

**Karyn Le Blanc**

Senior Vice President  
Stratacomm  
Washington, DC

*Panelists*

**Todd Danielson**

Chief Utilities Executive  
Avon Lake Regional Water  
Avon Lake, OH

**Katie Knoll**

Senior Consultant  
Raftelis  
Denver, CO

**Bryan Stubbs**

Executive Director and President  
Cleveland Water Alliance  
Cleveland, OH

**Jennifer Elting**  
Community Relations Specialist  
Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District  
Cleveland, OH

*Evening*

5:00

*Orchid West*

Closing Remarks/ Adjourn

**Tony Viardo**

Director, Communications & Marketing  
National Association of Clean Water Agencies  
Washington, DC

5:30 – 6:30

*Vanda North & South*

Networking Reception

## Tuesday, June 4

*Morning*

8:30 – 10:00

*Orchid Foyer*

Registration

9:00 – 9:15

*Orchid West*

Opening Remarks

**Adam Krantz**

Chief Executive Officer  
National Association of Clean Water Agencies  
Washington, DC

**Matthew Gray**

Chief of Sustainability  
City of Cleveland  
Cleveland, OH

9:15 - 10:15

*Orchid West*

*Say What You Mean: The Communicator's Role in  
Organizational Success*

**Internal Communications:** Building a strategic communications platform requires buy-in from everyone in the organization—from the Board, to the boss, to your colleagues. This is an increasingly crucial issue as the water sector evolves. Whether it's communicating ROI or having a seat at the table during critical decisions; whether its reporting to the Board or speaking up staff meetings; relating the true value of strategic communications and getting buy-in is crucial to your—and your organization's—success. Expert panelists will discuss strategies and best practices in properly communicating “Communications Value,” helping smart communicators to transform their organizations.

*Moderator*

**Tom Sigmund**  
NACWA Board Member  
Executive Director  
NEW Water  
Green Bay, WI

*Panelists*

**Josh Weinstein**  
President and Creative Director  
Creative Co-Op  
Exeter, NH

**Alan Heymann**  
President  
Blue Drop  
Washington, DC

10:15 – 10:30 *Results of 2019 National Water Utility Survey Report*

**StratComm Data:** Sound communications strategy starts with strong data. Learn the surprising results from high-level national opinion surveying, and spot the trends that will help your utility reach, message and impact your communities.

*Presenter*

**Adam Davis**  
Co-Founder and Senior Counsel  
DHM Research  
Portland, OR

10:30 – 10:45 Networking Break

10:45 – 12:00 *Mean What You Say: The Communicator's Role in Workforce Recruitment*  
*Orchid West*

**Internal Communications:** We've all heard of the "silver tsunami" and the imminent challenge of recruiting young professionals to the clean water sector. Many in our organizations—even leadership—may not understand that this is as much a *communications* issue as it is about human resources. Is your utility attractive to young professionals? Are you communicating the utility's true value? Your brand and internal communications will not only determine job satisfaction, but effectiveness in attracting the next generation of talented professionals. A critical and timely discussion for the future of all clean water agencies, experts will explore the latest principles of effective internal communication, employee branding, tactics (from social media to job boards), and proactive workforce outreach.

*Moderator*

**Victoria Johnson**  
Program Consultant  
Jacobs  
Dallas, TX

*Panelists*

**Jennifer Rice**  
Lead Senior Analyst, Workforce Planning  
San Francisco Public Utilities Commission  
San Francisco, CA

**Jaelyn Vincent**  
Chief of Staff  
Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission  
Laurel, MD

**Ben Brugler**  
Chief Executive Officer and President  
Akhia Communications  
Hudson, OH

*Afternoon*  
12:00  
*Orchid West*

Closing Remarks and Adjourn

**Tony Viardo**  
National Association of Clean Water Agencies