



2023 Winter Conference *Galvanizing Ratepayer Trust in Turbulent Times*

February 13 – 16 | Fairmont Sonoma Mission Inn | Sonoma, CA

Δ Indicates Board Committees

As of 11/17/2022

Monday, February 13

Afternoon

4:30 – 5:30 **Registration**

*Sonoma Valley
Room Foyer*

Evening

5:00 – 6:00 **Welcoming Reception**

*Sonoma Valley
Room + Patio*

Tuesday, February 14

Morning

8:00 – 9:15 **Executive Committee Δ**

Vineyard Room

8:30 – 12:00 **Registration**

Pavilion Entrance

9:00 – 5:00 **NACWA Networking Lounge**

Tower Room

NACWA has added more time for you to network during this year's Winter Conference. The NACWA Networking Lounge will give you an opportunity to connect with your peers all day on Tuesday and Wednesday.

9:00 – 10:00 **Spouse & Guest Lounge**

Harvest Suite

9:00 – 5:00 **Core Leadership – Strategic Leaders Training Workshop (Pre Registration Required)**

Big 3 Event Space

9:30 – 10:45 **Committee Discussion Session**
Will More Data Dig Us Out or Dig Us Deeper Into the PFAS Enigma?

Pavilion

Hosted by the Biosolids and Water Quality Committees

In recent years, the water sector's attention has been commandeered by PFAS. Without a clear scientific understanding of the impacts or risks, clean water utilities are under immense pressure to collect and provide regulators and the

public quantitative data on PFAS concentrations in their influent, effluent and biosolids. This investigative monitoring can lead to identifying and addressing upstream polluters to a degree, but with a suite of chemicals so pervasive and so ubiquitous in our everyday lives, will the collection and reporting on the presence of PFAS erode the public's trust beyond repair? With perspective from utilities and key stakeholders, the discussion will explore this important question.

11:00 – 12:00

Wine Room

Audit Committee Δ

11:00 – 12:00

Pavilion

Committee Discussion Session

Nutrients: What Happens When the Math Doesn't Add Up

Hosted by the Water Quality and Legal Affairs Committees

Clean water utilities caught between a state's approach to nutrient management and EPA's – or an environmental organization's – push to have point sources do more, face the prospect of unattainable limits divorced from meaningful water quality improvements. Such "do more" approaches are often based on the flawed application of toxics-based formulas, ignoring the unique properties of nutrients and the contributions of other sources. Where utilities are not the major contributor and "doing more" will lead to diminishing returns or even negative impacts, utilities are pushing back. This discussion will explore what states and clean water agencies can do if EPA's playbook continues to treat nutrients as just another toxic pollutant.

Afternoon

12:15 – 2:30

Kenwood Ballroom

Board of Directors Luncheon and Meeting Δ

12:15 – 2:30

Lunch on Your Own

2:00 – 4:00

Pavilion Entrance

Registration

2:30 – 3:45

Pavilion

Committee Discussion Session

Don't "Look Up": Look to One Water

Hosted by the Climate & Resiliency Committee and the Reuse Workgroup

Communities around the globe are witnessing first-hand the impacts of a changing climate on water scarcity and water quality. Attention is growing to "Look Up" and act before it's too late. The Biden Administration is focused on environmental and climate reform, and it should look to the water sector for inspiration on a holistic approach. This session will include experiences on how the One Water approach is allowing utilities to deal with climate challenges that are impacting water resource sustainability and how it can continue to transform the sector.

4:00 – 5:00

Pavilion

Committee Discussion Session

Federal Environmental Justice Initiatives: All Talk or Talkin' Turkey?

Hosted by the Environmental Justice Committee

The federal government has been busy lately putting out various documents and policies related to environmental justice, but what do they all mean from a practical perspective? This discussion will explore how recent federal environmental justice initiatives can impact clean water utility funding, policies, permitting, and compliance, and what utilities can do in response.

Evening

6:00 – 7:30

Sonoma Valley
Room + Patio

NEEA Awards Ceremony & Reception

Join us for a celebratory evening honoring NACWA's National Environmental Achievement Awards recipients. The evening will begin with an Awards Ceremony showcasing the very best NACWA's member agencies have to offer from operations to public outreach, as well as individuals who have made a difference for both their community and their utility. Following the ceremony, join your colleagues in celebrating the evening's honorees at the Awards Reception.

Wednesday, February 15

Morning

8:00 – 9:30

Big 3 Event Space

Women's Water Network Breakfast *(Separate RSVP Required)*

Join your fellow women in the water sector leaders for breakfast! This complimentary breakfast for women attendees of the Winter Conference provides a unique opportunity for learning and networking with your peers. RSVP is required by February 10 to attend.

9:00 – 11:45

Pavilion Entrance

Registration

9:30 – 5:00

Tower Room

NACWA Networking Lounge

The lounge provides an opportunity to connect with your peers on during the conference.

9:00 – 10:00

Harvest Suite

Spouse & Guest Lounge

9:45 – 10:45

Pavilion

Committee Discussion Session

Optimizing Operations to Keep the Wastewater Flowing

Hosted by the Operations and Utility and Resource Management Committees

In the past, keeping a clean water system functioning properly meant preserving the old 'out of sight, out of mind' mentality. These days, however, when something goes wrong, it not only shines a light on the clean water utility, it can undermine years of effort spent to build and maintain trust with the community. Simply staying off the community's radar screen is no longer an option for many utilities. Overflows, basement backups, and infrastructure repair-related impacts present both challenges and opportunities to maintaining the public's trust. This session will focus on the policies that affect how utilities keep their infrastructure operating optimally and how utilities can communicate with the public about what this means for them.

10:45 – 11:00

Networking Break

11:00 – 12:00

Pavilion

Committee Discussion Session

The Path Forward for Security Policy and Practice

Hosted by the Security & Emergency Preparedness Committee

The security of water utilities is receiving increased attention by Congress, EPA, and the Department of Homeland Security, especially in the area of cybersecurity. There is wide agreement that cybersecurity needs to be improved, but no consensus on the best way to accomplish this. Recent natural disasters have also reinforced the need for utilities to be prepared for all types of

emergencies. This discussion will focus on the path forward for improving the sector's cybersecurity and the practical measures utilities can take to protect themselves from all hazards.

Afternoon

12:00 – 2:00

Lunch on Your Own

1:45 – 4:00

Pavilion Entrance

Registration

2:00 – 5:00

Pavilion

Plenary Session I

Welcoming and Opening Remarks

Panel Discussion

Making the Right Investments in a Time of Climate Uncertainty

Extreme climatic events – from fires to flooding to drought – are occurring with greater frequency, duration, and magnitude, and the economic and environmental impacts from these events can be devastating for water utilities and their communities. Public awareness of these impacts is prompting growing local and national investment to ensure that climate risks are taken into account and clean water utilities remain on sound footing. Panelists will explore how water utilities are mitigating operational and financial risks in an era of climate uncertainty and how those efforts are contributing to the overall resiliency of their communities.

Panel Discussion

Operationalizing One Water

As the challenges to sustainable clean water service provision grow, the One Water approach is looked to as a solution that will resonate with ratepayers who view 'water as water' without seeing the sector's many silos. But what does this mean on-the-ground for clean water utilities? How can a One Water approach be integrated into utility planning and practice? What technological advances, operational practices and policy solutions will be needed to drive the One Water approach forward? Thought leaders and utility executives will share how the One Water approach can be operationalized and highlight where more work is needed.

Evening

5:00 – 6:30

Big 3 Space Event

Reception

Thursday, February 16

Morning

9:00 – 10:00

Pavilion Entrance

Registration

9:30 – 11:00

Pavilion

Plenary Session II

Panel Discussion

Ensuring Community Trust Through Effective Utility Governance and Operations

There is no surer way for a clean water utility to lose the trust of its customers and community than by suffering a dramatic and public failure that impacts basic utility service, such as the recent events in Jackson, Mississippi. But internal utility management issues, such as a utility's procurement practices or whether a utility's workforce reflects the community it serves, can also chip away at a utility's relationship with its community. Panelists will discuss how utilities with a strong and transparent governance system, along with a responsive operational plan to address emergencies, are better positioned to maintain the community's trust.

Panel Discussion

Instituting Successful, Utility-Led Environmental Justice Practices

No community, city, or state has a perfect track record on environmental justice, but many utilities are taking action to address the environmental justice concerns in their communities. Peer-to-peer sharing can play a critical role in developing the approaches clean water utilities can use to advance equity and inclusion goals. Utility executives will discuss their own organizations' environmental justice initiatives and the lessons their communities have learned along the way with representatives from the community groups pushing for more action.

Afternoon

12:00 – 2:00

Lunch on Your Own

1:45 – 4:00

Pavilion Entrance

Registration

2:00 – 5:00

Pavilion

Plenary Session III

Panel Discussion

Effectively Communicating with Ratepayers

All clean water utilities are, at their core, customer service providers. Communicating effectively with customers and ratepayers is vital for community trust, whether for basic issues like how the utility functions and what services it provides, or more complicated and charged issues like rate increases, service interruptions, or public concern over environmental issues, such as PFAS. Utility communications professionals will discuss how to build and maintain trust by optimizing outreach to utility customers for a variety of circumstances, including use of both traditional and social media, as well as how to respond when the unexpected occurs.

Panel Discussion

Promoting Trust Through Rates and Affordability Measures

Despite periodic infusions of federal money, rate revenue has consistently funded most water spending at the local level. Making the case for those rates and needed increases is often when a utility's relationship with its community or communities is tested the most. Regardless of the driver, when it comes to dipping into ratepayers' pocketbooks, a utility's job gets more complicated. This

is especially true where growing affordability considerations are requiring communities to adapt and look for ways to respond to the needs of those who are unable to pay. Perspectives from utilities and other stakeholders will explore the challenges of maintaining the necessary revenue to keep pace with new regulations and aging infrastructure while still addressing community affordability.

Closing Remarks