



2023 Strategic Communications: H2O Workshop

June 6-7 | Hilton Historic Santa Fe Plaza | Santa Fe, NM

As of June 6, 2023

Monday, June 5

3:00 – 5:00

Optional Art Museum Social Activity *(Separate RSVP Required)*

Arrive a little early and take part in optional social activities to explore some of what Santa Fe has to offer and make some new friends. Join us for a tour of the Georgia O’Keeffe museum. Participation is limited to the first 20 people for each activity on a first come, first served basis. NACWA will cover the costs for the museum entrance fee. Separate RSVP required.

Tuesday, June 6

8:30 – 11:30

Promenade

Registration

9:00 – 12:00

Mesa A&B

Plenary Session I

9:00 – 9:15

Opening Remarks

Jean Smith, *Co-Chair, NACWA’s Communications & Public Affairs Committee*

Director of Administration and External Affairs

Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District | Cleveland, OH

Introductory Remarks

Tom Sigmund, *NACWA President*

Executive Director

NEW Water | Green Bay, WI

Welcoming Remarks

Jesse Roach, *Water Division Director*

City of Santa Fe | Santa Fe, NM

9:15 – 10:25

Storm Clouds Approaching – The Role of Clean Water Utilities in Communicating about PFAS

They are all over the news – the so called “forever chemicals” (also known as PFAS) that are found everywhere and have everyone talking. The media, politicians and the public are all concerned and want answers – and because clean water utilities are passive receivers of these chemicals, our sector is right in the crosshairs. So how should clean water communicators respond to this challenge? How should we talk about this complicated issue in a way that

is based on facts and science while also acknowledging the fear and the unknown that is out there? This panel will address these complex questions and provide suggestions for how clean water utilities can navigate tricky PFAS waters.

Amanda Wegner, Communications & Public Affairs Manager
Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District | Madison, WI

Kirsten B. Williams, Chief Communications and Stakeholder
Engagement Officer & Executive Vice President
DC Water | Washington, DC

Amanda Waters, Counsel
McGuireWoods, LLP | Tysons, VA

10:25 – 10:30

Pop-Up Scenario

Solving a Communications Challenge in Real Time

Put your communications skills to the test to solve a real-life communications challenge and meet new colleagues – all at once! Everyone will be assigned a group number and each group will be given a communications scenario to respond to. Talk with members of your group throughout the day to solve the scenario and be ready to report out at the end of the day!

10:30 – 10:45

Networking Break

10:45 – 11:55

The Importance of Clean Water Communications – Refreshing the Fundamentals and How to Take Your Game to the Next Level

While we all may be at different places in our journey as clean water communicators, we can all agree on the importance of effective communications for the clean water sector and the passion we all share for what will do. Perfect for both beginners and seasoned communications professionals, this panel will remind us of the basics of successful communications programs and provide tips on how to elevate your program to the next level.

Tricia Garrison, Public Affairs & Education Manager
NEW Water | Green Bay, WI

Bess McCoy, *Co-Chair, NACWA's Communications &
Public Affairs Committee*
Manager of Public Affairs
Metropolitan St. Louis Sewer District | St. Louis, MO

Vince Morris, Senior Vice President
KGL Communications | Washington, DC

11:55 – 12:00

Closing Remarks

Jean Smith, *Co-Chair, NACWA's Communications &
Public Affairs Committee*

12:00 – 1:45

Canyon

Luncheon

Lessons on Effective Water Communications from the American Southwest

The issue of water scarcity is a growing one across the United States, and more and more Americans are being asked to conserve water. This is especially true in the Santa Fe area and throughout northern New Mexico. And while not every part of the country is dealing with water scarcity, the manner in which local officials in Santa Fe and across the Southwest communicate to their customers about the importance of water conservation has lessons for all clean water communications professionals. Hear from local water officials on how they try to communicate critical water conservation messages to their customers.

Opening Remarks

Bess McCoy, *Co-Chair, NACWA's Communications & Public Affairs Committee*

Featured Speaker

Bill Schneider, *Water Resources and Conservation Manager
City of Santa Fe | Santa Fe, NM*

1:45 – 4:30

Promenade

Registration

2:00 – 5:00

Mesa A&B

Plenary Session II

2:00 – 2:05

Opening Remarks

Bess McCoy, *Co-Chair, NACWA's Communications & Public Affairs Committee*

2:05 – 3:00

Mesa A & B

Breakout & Workshop Sessions: Choose Your Own Adventure, Part I

1. Keeping an Even Keel in Uncharted Waters

A utility brand cannot miss the boat – it must endure and stay on course through squalls and rocky conditions. This workshop will feature case studies that illustrate the balance needed to combat negative news and misinformation about a utility with proactive, factual information to keep a utility's brand from running aground.

Jamie Floer, *Communications Manager
Toho Water Authority | Kissimmee, FL*

Mesa C

2. Crisis Communications: Planning for the "What If"

The world is full of examples on how not to handle a crisis. Most recently, the Southwest airline debacle and Norfolk Southern railway accident are top of mind. Watching these incidents unfold in the media brought many questions to mind about their internal crisis communications planning efforts. This session will focus on how we

plan for a crisis, what tools clean water utilities should have at the ready and what are the risks if you don't. Be prepared to be put in a scenario and engage with your peers in this interactive discussion.

Karyn Le Blanc, Chief Executive Officer
KGL Communications | Washington, DC

Pecos

3. How to Win Public Support for Higher Rates, a New Utility, or that Thing You Want to Build

People support what they help build. A strong and well-thought-out stakeholder engagement strategy gives them that opportunity and can help build support for potentially controversial utility actions. This workshop will highlight how communications, coupled with active engagement strategies, helped build support for 1.) higher rates for a water utility; 2.) the creation of a new stormwater utility; and 3.) the siting of a new wastewater treatment facility. Participants will walk away with a multi-step approach to communications and engagement that will work in almost any scenario.

Matt Wittern, Senior Consultant
Raftelis | Greenwood Village, CO

3:00 – 3:30

Networking and Pop-Up Scenario Discussions

3:30 – 4:30

Breakout & Workshop Sessions: Choose Your Own Adventure, Part II

Mesa A & B

1. Pollution Prevention Success Stories

Many utilities have initiated various kinds of campaigns and public outreach efforts to try and effect behavior change among the public to reduce local water pollution and impacts to utilities. Whether its outreach on “non-flushable” products, reminders to pick up pet waste, or requests to use less lawn fertilizer, these types of pollution prevention campaigns can take many different forms. This session will feature a discussion of tactics, strategies and lessons learned.

Tricia Garrison, NEW Water

Jean Smith, *Co-Chair, NACWA's Communications & Public Affairs Committee*

Mesa C

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Matt Wittern, Raftelis

4:30 – 5:00

Mesa A&B

Pop-Up Scenario Report Out

5:00

Mesa A&B

Closing Remarks

Bess McCoy, Co-Chair, NACWA's Communications & Public Affairs Committee

5:30 – 6:30

Ortiz

Networking Reception

Wednesday, June 7

8:30 – 10:30

Promenade

Registration

9:00 – 12:00

Mesa A&B

Plenary Session III

Opening Remarks

Nathan Gardner-Andrews, Chief Advocacy & Policy Officer
NACWA | Washington, DC

9:05 – 10:15

Mesa A & B

Breakout & Workshop Session

Choose Your Own Adventure, Social Media Version

1. Essentials for Shooting Better Video and Photos In-House

This workshop is designed to provide communications professionals with useful tips and tricks that will help them create better looking photos and video in-house. Learn from an experienced professional as she shares her "secrets of the trade" that have helped produce top quality work for national and international brands – and that you

can put to work at your utility to improve your graphics and social media presence.

Emileigh Barrett, Creative Producer
Creative Co-op | Exeter, NH

Mesa C

2. So Your Utility Wants to Start or Increase its Social Media Presence Where and What Should You Post?

LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook... The list of social media platforms goes on and on and seems to be growing every day. This can make it challenging for a public clean water utility to know where and how it should be posting, especially for those that want to begin or increase their social media presence. This workshop will explore the ins and outs of establishing a strong social media presence and how to do it most effectively.

Vince Morris, Senior Vice President
KGL Communications | Washington, DC

Pecos

3. How Personal Social Media Profiles Can Bring Greater Influence and Credibility

Public utilities across the country use their social media on a regular basis, but how many of their executive leaders help expand their reach? A utility executive's social media presence can direct new eyes and credibility to an organization like no other voice can. But while it might seem second nature to professional communicators, many utility executives are not as comfortable with a personal online profile, complete with all its posts, likes and hashtags. This session will discuss why getting utility leaders on social media can be so important and how to help make it happen.

Makenna Sturgeon, Associate Consultant
Raftelis | Denver, CO

10:15 – 10:45

Networking Break

10:45 – 11:45

Mesa A&B

Panel Discussion

The Role of Environmental Justice in Clean Water Communications

The issue of Environmental Justice (EJ) is playing an increasingly important role in policy and planning discussions around clean water issues, and appropriately so. But for public clean water agencies to meaningfully engage in these conversations, they need to change the way they communicate and interact with their customers and the public. This means ensuring that EJ communities play a much more prominent role in utility outreach and decision making, among other things. This panel will explore how utilities can be better partners in these important EJ discussions.

Sheryl Lauder, Communications Director
Louisville & Jefferson County Metropolitan Sewer District | Louisville, KY

Wesley Sydnor, Chief of Government and Public Affairs
Louisville & Jefferson County Metropolitan Sewer District | Louisville, KY

Scott Wyland, Reporter
Santa Fe New Mexican | Santa Fe, NM

Kenetta Ridgell, Senior Communications and Outreach Manager
Little Rock Water Reclamation Authority | Little Rock, AR

11:45 – 11:50

Closing Remarks

Nathan Gardner-Andrews, NACWA

12:00 – 1:45

Canyon

Optional Women's Water Network Luncheon

(Separate RSVP Required)

Join your fellow comms women water sector leaders for lunch for the first time at StratComm:H2O! This complimentary event for women attendees provides a unique opportunity for learning and networking with your peers. RSVP is required.

1:45 – 2:30

Promenade

Registration

2:00 – 4:15

Mesa A&B

Plenary Session IV

2:00 – 2:05

Opening Remarks

Nathan Gardner-Andrews, NACWA

2:05 – 3:00

Internal Communications – Why Your Most Important Audience is Sometimes Your Own Utility Colleagues

The clean water sector relies on the hard work and dedication of an essential labor force. Keeping your utility team informed, engaged and motivated over the long-haul can be a challenge, especially if you operate in a small communications team. This panel will provide examples of tactics to keep your workforce happy and motivated, including all-team presentations, weekly bulletins, photo/video projects, and acknowledgments of individuals and teams for outstanding work.

Rich Bindell, Strategic Communications Specialist
AlexRenew | Alexandria, VA

Jack Hennes, Senior Communications Specialist
Metro Water Recovery | Denver, CO

Rienna Nuber, Senior Communications Manager
Metro Water Recovery | Denver, CO

3:00 – 3:15

Networking Break

3:15 – 4:15

Smart Communications Tools to Help Recruit the Next Generation

Clean water utilities face two daunting tasks – creating a new generation of environmental stewards, and developing and attracting a new generation of future employees for our sector. Utility communications professionals can and must play a critical role in accomplishing both these goals. This panel will examine how utility communicators are already engaged in these efforts, both in working with utility HR departments to recruit new employees and in encouraging young students to learn more about water issues and the importance of clean water careers.

Kathy Bentz, Director of Communications and
Community Engagement
Prince William County Service Authority | Woodbridge, VA

Kathleen Vaught, Public Communications Manager
North Texas Municipal Water District | Wylie, TX

4:15

Closing Remarks

Nathan Gardner-Andrews, NACWA