2024 Utility Leadership Conference and 54th Annual Meeting
Dealing with Disruption: A New Approach for the Water Sector

July 23 - 26 | Hyatt Regency Buffalo | Buffalo, NY

All meetings are on the Mezzanine level unless otherwise noted.

Δ Board of Directors Committee

As of June 24, 2024

Tuesday, July 23
Morning
9:00 – 1:00  Women’s Water Network Program (Optional - Separate Registration Required)
Grand Ballroom EFG

Afternoon
12:00 – 1:45  Executive Committee Meeting and Lunch Δ
Ellicott Room,
2nd Floor

1:30 – 4:30  Registration
Grand Ballroom Foyer

2:30 – 5:00  Committee Discussion Sessions
Grand Ballroom ABC
All Conference attendees are welcome to attend the committee meetings, whether or not they are members of the committee.

2:30 – 3:30  Environmental Justice Committee
Grand Ballroom ABC
Environmental Justice Committee
For the first time, the federal government set a goal through its Justice40 Initiative to invest in disadvantaged communities that are marginalized, underinvested, and/or overburdened by pollution. But even before these federal goals were set, many clean water utility leaders were already working to implement Environmental Justice (EJ) initiatives that have resulted in clear community benefits – often while facing internal and external pushback. With a federal election ahead, the Committee will showcase how utilities can successfully “root” their EJ programs to insulate them from potential disruptive forces that may chip away at the progress made to date. All Conference attendees are welcome to attend the committee discussion, whether or not they are members of the committee.
From issues the Supreme Court is tackling to major EPA initiatives, a lot is up for grabs in environmental law. The Committee will feature discussions about what is at stake for clean water utilities and how utilities can rise to meet the legal challenges the sector is facing. All Conference attendees are welcome to attend the committee discussion.

Beth Card
Senior Policy Advisor
Smith, Costello & Crawford | Boston, MA

James B. Slaughter
Principal
Beveridge & Diamond PC | Washington, DC

**Wednesday, July 24**

**Morning**

8:00 – 9:15  Financial Plan Task Force Breakfast Δ
Niagara Room

9:00 – 11:30  Registration
Grand Ballroom Foyer

9:00 – 10:00  Spouse & Guest Lounge
Ellicott Room, 2nd Floor

9:00 – 5:00  NACWA Networking Lounge
The lounge provides an opportunity to connect with your peers during the conference.

9:30 – 12:00  Committee Discussion Sessions
All Conference attendees are welcome to attend the committee meetings, whether or not they are members of the committee.

9:30 – 10:30  Utility & Resource Management Committee
The Committee will feature a presentation and discussion exploring the balance between the benefits of digitalization and growing cybersecurity risks. Through the lens of recent cyber-attacks, the presentation will also look ahead to the impact of emerging technologies including artificial intelligence. Using a utility case study, the Committee will also discuss long range capital planning and the challenge of predicting future regulatory needs and drivers. All Conference attendees are welcome to attend.

Ian Bramson
Vice President – Global Industrial Cybersecurity
Black and Veatch | Denver, CO

Kamuron Gurol
Division Director
King County Wastewater Treatment Division | Seattle, WA

10:30 – 11:00 Networking Break

11:00 – 12:00 Biosolids Management Committee
Grand Ballroom ABC
Given the realization that PFAS – at least for the time being – is a concern that is here to stay, the Committee will discuss recent state and federal biosolids happenings and their impacts on biosolids management. We will hear from the Director of EPA’s Office of Science and Technology, Deborah Nagle, on the Agency’s final Biosolids Working Group discussions and what is coming later this summer on risk assessment. The Committee will also discuss concerns over how to effectively communicate relative risk of PFAS in biosolids absent any Clean Water Act Part 503 standards. All Conference attendees are welcome to attend.

Deborah Nagle
Director, Office of Science and Technology
US Environmental Protection Agency | Washington, DC

Afternoon
12:00 – 1:30 Optional Lunch – Collaborative Delivery Fundamentals and Equitable Risk Allocation (Free; Separate RSVP Required)
Regency Ballroom
Join the Water Collaborative Delivery Association (WCDA) for a lunchtime session on the fundamentals of collaborative delivery methods for water and wastewater, with a focus on equitable risk allocation for all parties. This event is open to all, and will be of particular benefit to senior leadership, legal counsel, and procurement professionals responsible for making risk-related business decisions and implementing them in design and construction contracts.

Please complete this form by Wednesday, July 3 to RSVP for this event.
12:00 – 2:30  Lunch on Your Own

12:15 – 2:00  Awards Committee Meeting and Lunch Δ
Boardroom, 2nd Floor

2:00 – 4:30  Registration
Grand Ballroom Foyer

2:30 – 5:00  Committee Discussion Sessions
Grand Ballroom ABC
All Conference attendees are welcome to attend the committee meetings, whether or not they are members of the committee.

2:30 – 3:30  Operations Committee Discussion
Grand Ballroom ABC
The Committee will feature a presentation on smart sewer programs, including a utility case study. Discussion topics will include the successes of these programs over time, the improvements made along the way, and next steps as the programs reach maturity. The Committee will also feature a presentation on energy management and how utilities can establish energy goals and accelerate the growth of their energy programs. Opportunities for Department of Energy funding for energy conservation and production at clean water utilities will also be highlighted. All Conference attendees are welcome to attend.

3:30 – 4:00  Networking Break

4:00 – 5:00  Water Quality Committee Discussion
Grand Ballroom ABC
The Committee will discuss a variety of water quality-related “disruptions” that are poised to make regulatory compliance more challenging and expensive for clean water agencies. These upcoming federal water quality criteria updates – especially EPA’s forthcoming recommended human health criteria for PFOA and PFOS – will have serious impacts on utilities. The Committee will discuss what is likely coming on the PFAS front along with other updates, like emerging nutrient issues from EPA Regions 5 and 10 dealing with hypoxia and dead zones that may set the tone for the rest of the country. All Conference attendees are welcome to join us to learn how to best prepare your agency for the water quality race to zero ahead.

Deborah Nagle
Director, Office of Science and Technology
US Environmental Protection Agency | Washington, DC

Evening
6:00 – 7:30  Awards Ceremony & Reception
Grand Ballroom EFG
& Regency Ballroom
Thursday, July 25

Morning

8:45 – 11:30  Registration
Grand Ballroom Foyer

9:00 – 10:00  Spouse & Guest Lounge
Ellicott Room,
2nd Floor

9:00 – 5:00  NACWA Networking Lounge
Sun Garden Lounge
The lounge provides an opportunity to connect with your peers during the conference.

9:00 – 12:00  Plenary Session I
Grand Ballroom ABC

9:00 – 9:05  Opening Remarks
Oluwole “OJ” McFoy, NACWA President 2023-2024
General Manager
Buffalo Sewer Authority | Buffalo, NY

9:05 – 9:20  Welcoming Remarks
The Honorable Byron Brown, Mayor
The City of Buffalo | Buffalo, NY

9:20 – 9:50  Keynote Address
Although artificial intelligence (AI) in general is not new, the power of generative AI suddenly gained the attention of the world with the launch of ChatGPT in late 2022. The publicly available, free service raised questions about the appropriate use of AI, how it will impact jobs and the economy, and the legal issues involved with its use. Our keynote speaker will explore how AI is currently being used and how the future will be shaped by this technology.

9:50 – 10:40  Panel Discussion
AI... The Big Picture and What May Be Coming Water’s Way
As AI continues to evolve and new uses for it emerge, our current ways of doing business may rapidly change. Although the impacts of AI in the water sector are just beginning, utilities can learn from how disruptions from AI are taking shape within the sector and how these compare to experiences outside the sector. Building on the keynote address, panelists will discuss the benefits, as well as the potential pitfalls, of using AI in operations, from how they analyze data and make decisions, to how workforce needs may evolve.

Jim Cooper, Global Director, Water Optimization
Arcadis | Akron, OH

Ori Reshef, Chief Solutions Officer
Kando | Tel Aviv, Israel
10:40 – 10:55 Networking Break

10:55 – 11:40 Panel Discussion
How Community Engagement Drives Better Outcomes. . . The Buffalo Case Study
With utilities under pressure to address complicated issues such as PFAS, affordability, and environmental justice, community engagement has never been more important. Developing partnerships and listening to the perspectives of community members can help utilities understand the impacts of their investment priorities, as well as raise support in the community for the actions required to meet increasing regulatory demands – including raising rates. In this case study of the City of Buffalo, panelists will discuss the successes and ongoing challenges of community engagement.

Moderator
Porsha Ari Parson, Chief Marketing and PR Strategist
Ari Parson PR | Buffalo, NY

Panelists
Franchelle Parker, Executive Director
Open Buffalo | Buffalo, NY

Oluwole “OJ” McFoy, NACWA President 2023-2024

11:40 – 11:55 Annual Association Business Meeting
Grand Ballroom ABC
- Report of the President
- Report of the Treasurer
- Election of Directors
- Report of the Chief Executive Officer

11:55 – 12:00 Closing Remarks
Oluwole “OJ” McFoy, NACWA President 2023-2024

Afternoon
12:15 – 2:15 Board of Directors Meeting Δ
Grand Ballroom EFG

2:00 – 4:00 Registration
Grand Ballroom Foyer

2:30 – 5:00 Plenary Session II
Grand Ballroom ABC

2:30 – 3:35 Rethinking Relationships . . . Getting Out of Our Comfort Zone
With the challenges of meeting complex and costly regulatory requirements, growing affordability pressures, and rapidly evolving technology, utilities are being asked to rethink existing
and consider forming new partnerships. Whether it is a new way of interfacing with public officials and politicians, close partners in the private sector including engineering and consulting firms, or investor-owned utilities, efforts by NACWA and its utility members to collaborate may need to take more nontraditional paths. Panelists will focus on the trends demanding new partnerships and how utilities and the organizations that represent them must adapt.

**Keynote**  
Matthew Pine, Chief Executive Officer  
Xylem | South Bend, IN

**Moderator**  
Mickey Conway, NACWA Treasurer  
Chief Executive Officer  
Metro Water Recovery | Denver, CO

**Panelists**  
David Goldwater, Vice President, Public Policy  
Stantec | Fairfax, VA  

Jennifer Prescott, Senior Vice President and  
Chief Digital Information Officer  
CDM Smith | Denver, CO  

Reese Tisdale, President & Chief Executive Officer  
Bluefield Research | Boston, MA

3:35 – 3:50   Networking Break

3:50 – 5:00   What Can the Clean Water Sector Learn from Alternative Perceptions?  

Regulatory developments related to PFAS have captured the attention of the media and the public, but long-time concerns related to aging infrastructure, wet weather and affordability remain. Utility leaders’ preferred approaches to these issues often differ from environmental groups and other organizations. While it is easy to keep our heads down and focused on the issues at hand, it is important to listen to the perceptions of these organizations and alternative opinions from within the sector. Although these conversations may at times be uncomfortable, they can help utilities to learn new approaches to dealing with their challenges and potentially find a middle-ground where collaboration based on mutual understanding can be reached.

**Moderator**  
Diane Taniguchi-Dennis, NACWA Vice President  
Chief Executive Officer
Clean Water Services | Hillsboro, OR

Panelists

Jessica Dandridge-Smith, Executive Director
The Water Collaborative | New Orleans, LA

Katy Lackey, Senior Associate, Water Equity & Climate
Resilience
PolicyLink | Oakland, CA

Kelly Moser, Senior Attorney and Leader of the Water Program
Southern Environmental Law Center | Chapel Hill, NC

Evening
6:00 – 7:30  President’s Reception
Top of the Falls,
Goat Island Rd.
Niagara Falls, NY

Friday, July 26
Morning
8:00 – 9:15  New Board Orientation Breakfast Δ
Niagara Room

9:00 – 10:30  Registration
Grand Ballroom Foyer

9:30 – 12:00  Plenary Session III
Grand Ballroom ABC

9:30 – 10:00  Improving the Messenger: Words that Work for Water
Utilities know they do vital work to protect health and the
environment under increasingly complex and difficult regulatory
challenges and that their communities could not function without
them. But does the public understand this? How can utility leaders
sharpen their messaging around their mission – locally and
nationally? How can we more compellingly describe our work in
ways that break through to the media, to our ratepayers and our
local stakeholders? Karyn LeBlanc and Vincent Morris will provide
a synopsis of their findings based on survey and focus groups
conversations and provide suggestions on how we can refine our
“Elevator Pitch” - and begin building a renewed interest and
appreciation for our work.

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

Vincent Morris, Senior Vice President
KGL Communications | Washington, DC
10:00 – 11:15  **Navigating Turbulent Leadership Waters**

Utility leaders are finding that their roles are expanding from simply running a treatment facility that meets its regulatory requirements, to guiding their agency through complex financial situations, HR/workforce issues, and an increasingly political environment. This panel will dive into the top challenges of today’s utility leaders, how some leaders are dealing with these challenges more effectively, and how these skills and strategies can be developed and passed along to their peers and staff, as well as the next generation of water sector leaders.

*Panelists*

- **Beate Wright**, Founder and Chief Executive Officer
  Wright for You, LLC | Clifton, VA

- **Alan Heymann**, Founder and Coach
  Peaceful Direction | Silver Spring, MD

- **Michael Mucha**, Past Chair
  Institute for Sustainable Infrastructure | Madison, WI