



2024 Winter Conference Claiming the High Ground for Public Clean Water Utilities

February 13 – 16 | Hilton Austin | Austin, TX

Δ Indicates Board Committees

All meeting spaces are on the 4th floor unless noted otherwise

As of February 12, 2024

Tuesday, February 13

Morning

8:00 – 9:15 **Audit Committee Δ**

Meeting Room 417

9:30 – 11:00 **Executive Committee Δ**

Meeting Room 417

Afternoon

12:00 – 1:45 **Board of Directors Luncheon and Meeting Δ**

Salon D

1:30 – 4:00 **Registration**

Ballroom Foyer

2:00 – 4:30 **Committee Discussion Sessions**

Salon C

All Conference attendees are welcome to attend the committee meetings, whether or not they are members of the committee.

2:00 – 3:00 **Biosolids Management Committee**

The Committee will discuss the latest federal and state developments on PFAS and biosolids covering first-hand highlights from EPA's ongoing "working group" on biosolids management and where current efforts stand with EPA's risk assessment framework for PFOA and PFOS and other contaminants. The Committee will also discuss other emerging biosolids management concerns.

3:00 – 3:30 **Networking Break**

3:30 – 4:30 **Utility and Resource Management Committee**

The Committee will build on the dialogue from NACWA's *Water Workforce Virtual Workshop* with a discussion of hybrid work arrangements and what

approaches utilities have employed to make sure operations staff, who cannot work remotely, can also benefit from greater flexibility. Andrew Sawyers, Director of EPA's Office of Wastewater Management, will join the discussion on workforce and share his perspectives on a range of infrastructure funding topics including implementation of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and related technical assistance, cybersecurity and more.

Evening

4:45 – 5:30

*The Reverbery,
Lobby Level*

Registration

5:00 – 6:00

*The Reverbery,
Lobby Level*

Welcoming Happy Hour

Wednesday, February 14

Morning

7:00 – 8:30

Salon A-B

Women's Water Network Breakfast & Yoga (Separate RSVP Required)

Unleash your inner Zen! Join the Women's Water Network for an exciting early morning of yoga. Whether you're a complete novice or looking for a moment of mindfulness and tranquility – this beginner's class is for you. Local Austin yogi, Rachel Cohen, will guide participants through a 45-minute class to embrace your well-being with like-minded clean water warriors. A grab and go breakfast will be provided for all who register, regardless of whether you plan to join us for yoga!

8:45 – 12:00

Ballroom Foyer

Registration

9:00 – 10:00

Meeting Room 417B

Spouse & Guest Lounge

9:00 – 5:00

Meeting Room 417A

NACWA Networking Lounge

The NACWA Networking Lounge will give you an opportunity to connect with your peers on Wednesday and Thursday.

9:30 – 12:00

Salon C

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

Climate and Resiliency Committee

The Committee will discuss the shifting national and state policy landscape with regard to climate change and resiliency planning and the important implications for clean water agencies. The Committee will also discuss how clean water agencies can leverage opportunities from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) to support investments that make utilities more resilient and sustainable.

- 10:30 – 11:00** **Networking Break**
- 11:00 – 12:00** **Legal Affairs Committee**
Building upon the dynamic discussions at NACWA’s 2023 *Clean Water Law & Enforcement Seminar*, the Committee will do a deeper dive into new National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) requirements related to resiliency and climate change, EPA’s upcoming post-Long Term Control Plan (LTCP) combined sewer system permitting guidance, and other emerging legal issues facing utilities, with a focus on how utilities can embrace their role as environmental stewards while still protecting themselves from untenable levels of legal risk.
- Afternoon*
12:00 – 2:30 **Lunch on Your Own**
- 2:15 – 4:30** **Registration**
Ballroom Foyer
- 2:30 – 5:00** **Committee Discussion Sessions**
Salon C
All Conference attendees are welcome to attend the committee meetings, whether or not they are members of the committee.
- 2:30 – 3:30** **Water Quality Committee**
Clean water agencies are juggling a variety of regulatory priorities all at once and are facing greater pressure to do more on nutrients, PFAS, and other pollutants. As the list of pollutants pile up and allowable discharge limits go down, the Committee will discuss the challenges associated with measuring pollutants in parts per trillion levels – or possibly in the future to parts per quadrillion levels – and the likelihood that Clean Water Act water quality standards variances will be necessary to strike the balance between what’s achievable and what’s practical.
- 3:30 – 4:00** **Networking Break**
- 4:00 – 5:00** **Operations Committee**
As clean water utilities continue to deal with escalating costs and scheduling issues for water infrastructure projects, improving project delivery is more important than ever. The Operations Committee meeting will begin with a presentation on planning, delivery, and project optimization, exploring how infrastructure life cycle value can be maximized rather than focusing only on initial capital cost. Environmental justice considerations in infrastructure projects will also be discussed, and the meeting will conclude with an update on “Do Not Flush” labeling and flushability standards for wipes.
- 6:00 – 7:30** **Awards Ceremony & Reception**
Salon A & B
Join us for a celebratory evening honoring NACWA’s National Environmental Achievement Awards (NEAA) recipients. The evening will begin with an Awards Ceremony showcasing the very best of NACWA member agencies’ initiatives, from operations to public outreach, as well as individuals who are making a difference for their communities. Following

the ceremony, join your colleagues in celebrating the evening's honorees at the Awards Reception.

Thursday, February 15

Morning

7:30 – 9:00

Salon D

Utility Executive Breakfast Meeting (Invite Only)

9:00 – 12:00

Ballroom Foyer

Registration

9:00 – 10:00

Meeting Room 417B

Spouse & Guest Lounge

9:00 – 5:00

Meeting Room 417A

NACWA Networking Lounge

The NACWA Networking Lounge will give you an opportunity to connect with your peers on Wednesday and Thursday.

9:30 – 12:00

Salon C

Plenary Session I

Opening Remarks

Oluwole "OJ" McFoy, NACWA President

General Manager

Buffalo Sewer Authority | Buffalo, NY

Welcoming Remarks

Anna Bryan-Borja, Assistant Director of Business Services

Austin Water | Austin, TX

Adam Krantz, Chief Executive Officer

NACWA | Washington, DC

9:45 – 10:45

Claiming the High Ground and Expanding the Public's Conscious Connection with Water

Elevating the connection between the selfless work public clean water agencies do for their communities each day and the resulting improvements in water quality over the last fifty years has never been more critical than now. Clean water agencies are the last line of protection for sustaining these gains, but the investments and stewardship poured into improving water quality, and the additional economic and social benefits that result, are often overlooked by the public and the media. Utility leaders from across the country will explore how trailblazing clean water agencies are successfully expanding the public's conscious connection with water and how these strategies are helping to claim the high ground for clean water.

Moderator

Beverley Stinson, Executive Vice President

AECOM | Chelmsford, MA

Panelists

Jean Block, Chief Executive Officer
Little Rock Water Reclamation Authority | Little Rock, AR

Alana Shockey, Deputy Director, Sustainability and Regulatory Compliance
City of Columbus (OH) Department of Public Utilities | Columbus, OH

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

10:45 – 11:00

Networking Break

11:00 – 11:55

Connecting Drops to Trust: Building Community Confidence through an Effective Communications Strategy

Public clean water utilities have quietly served their communities under the radar for decades, essentially operating out of sight and out of mind. When utilities did engage in communications outreach, it was typically done in reaction to negative press. However, in today's 24/7 news cycle and with the prevalence of social media, it has never been more important for clean water utilities to emerge from the shadows and have a proactive communication strategy to inform their community of the vital work being done to protect water quality and public health. Utility communications professionals and utility executives will discuss how an engaging and transparent communication strategy is critical for building public trust, catalyzing community engagement and allowing a utility to tell its story on its own terms.

Moderator

Jean Smith, *Co-Chair, Communications & Public Affairs Committee*
Director of Administration and External Affairs
Northeast Ohio Regional Sewerage District | Cleveland, OH

Panelists

Brian Hoelscher, *NACWA Board Member*
Executive Director & Chief Executive Officer
Metropolitan St. Louis Sewer District | St. Louis, MO

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

Michael Mucha, Executive Director
Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District | Madison, WI

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

11:55 – 12:00

Closing Remarks

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

Afternoon
12:00 – 2:00

Lunch on Your Own

1:45 – 4:00
Ballroom Foyer

Registration

2:00 – 5:00
Salon C

Plenary Session II

Opening Remarks

Oluwole “OJ” McFoy, NACWA President

2:00 – 2:20

Water Wisdom: A Dialogue Exploring Achievements and Untapped Opportunities with EPA Assistant Administrator Radhika Fox

In this conversation with NACWA President OJ McFoy, Outgoing EPA Assistant Administrator for Water Radhika Fox will share insights on the successes during her tenure, as well as the challenges and opportunities ahead for clean water.

Radhika Fox, Assistant Administrator Office of Water
US Environmental Protection Agency | Washington, DC

Oluwole “OJ” McFoy, NACWA President

2:20 – 3:30

Sustainable Solutions: Navigating Regulatory Pressures While Driving Community Well-Being and Economic Prosperity

Public water and wastewater agencies are linchpins in their community – not only ensuring clean and safe water for their communities by meeting all federal and state regulatory requirements, but also providing jobs and stimulating economic development. Without these round-the-clock essential services, local development – whether residential or business – would likely cease to occur. This roundtable discussion will explore how clean water agencies operating with a One Water mindset are successfully navigating often-relentless regulatory pressures and finding creative ways to protect public health and the environment, all while supporting community growth.

Moderator

Trent Stober, Senior Vice President
HDR Engineering, Inc. | Columbia, MO

Panelists

Todd Swingle, NACWA Board Member
Executive Director
Toho Water Authority | Kissimmee, FL

Dawn Ambrosio, Chief Strategy Officer
Metro Water Recovery | Denver, CO

Larry Patterson, Executive Director
Upper Trinity Regional Water District | Lewisville, TX

Peter Grevatt, Chief Executive Officer
Water Research Foundation | Alexandria, VA

3:30 – 3:45

Networking Break

3:45 – 4:55

Unraveling Water's 'Mega-Trends' to Tell a Proactive Utility Leadership Story

The water sector faces a confluence of mega-trends – issues so critical that their impact will be felt by a majority of utilities for years to come – demanding strategic attention and prioritization from utility leaders. From workforce to PFAS to historic federal funding and more, these are the issues that will both keep utility leaders up at night but also present the best opportunities to highlight the essential role of clean water utilities. Building on conversations from NACWA's Leadership Meeting in Asheville this past November, roundtable participants will discuss these mega-trends, how they are shaping today and will shape tomorrow's decision-making, and how the water sector can and must harness the opportunity these trends present to best tell its story.

Moderator

Kishia Powell, NACWA Board Member
General Manager/Chief Executive Officer
WSSC Water | Laurel, MD

Panelists

Tim Braun, Vice President, Enterprise Solutions
Xylem, Inc. | South Bend, IN

Karri Ving, Managing Principal, Business Consulting and
Environmental, Social, and Governance
Brown and Caldwell | Walnut Creek, CA

Mahesh Lunani, Founder and Chief Executive Officer
Aquasight, Inc. | Troy, MI

Sharon Peters, President and Chief Executive Officer
EMA, Inc. | North Vancouver, BC, Canada

4:55 – 5:00

Closing Remarks

Elizabeth Fazio-Hale, NACWA Board Member
General Manager/Chief Executive Officer
Gulf Coast Authority | Houston, TX

Evening

6:00 – 7:00

Salon B

Live Music Capital Reception

Friday, February 16

Morning

9:00 – 11:00

Ballroom Foyer

Registration

9:30 – 12:00

Salon C

Plenary Session III

Opening Remarks

Oluwole "OJ" McFoy, NACWA President

9:30 – 10:30

The Water Governance Challenge and Advancing a Positive Narrative for the Water Sector

The tens of thousands of drinking water and wastewater utilities that comprise the US water sector face unprecedented compliance challenges, especially those utilities that are considered under-resourced. These challenges pose significant reputational risk, both from the potential inability to comply with the increasingly complex and costly regulatory regime and the acute affordability concerns resulting from efforts to keep up. At the same time, some environmental advocacy groups are painting clean water agencies as polluters, especially in the context of PFAS, while some investor-owned utilities and advocacy groups – whether intentional or not – are tainting the reputation of the entire sector by drawing attention to the non-compliance of a few public utilities.

How can the water sector step up to the governance and reputational challenges? What have other sectors, like the energy sector, done to address these challenges? Can it be a potential model for the water sector? What can we do to brand the public water sector in a more positive light and position utilities as effective public health and environmental advocates?

Featured Speaker

Manny Teodoro, Professor of Public Affairs
LaFollette School of Public Affairs | Nelson Institute for
Environmental Studies
University of Wisconsin-Madison | Madison, WI

Moderator

Brent Fewell, Founder and Chair
Earth & Water Law Group | Washington, DC

Panelists

Adel Hagekhalil, Chief Executive Officer & General Manager
Metropolitan Water District of Southern California | Los Angeles, CA

Beth Garza, Senior Fellow, Energy
R Street Institute | Washington, DC

Manny Teodoro, Professor of Public Affairs
LaFollette School of Public Affairs | Nelson Institute for
Environmental Studies
University of Wisconsin-Madison | Madison, WI

10:30 – 11:00

Networking Break

11:00 – 11:55

Embracing Adaptive Change Management Strategies to Keep the Clean Water Sector Flowing Forward

Clean water utilities are often described as conservative and slow to change and for good reason – ensuring 100 percent compliance with environmental regulations provides little room for error. But with the convergence of climate change and profound technological and social shifts – like the recent explosion of artificial intelligence – utilities must accelerate change or face potentially existential consequences. Roundtable participants will discuss the latest thinking on change management and why accelerating change is essential if clean water utilities want to continue meeting the needs of their communities.

Moderator

Luis Montestruque, Principal
Hydrodigital | South Bend, IN

Panelists

Oluwole “OJ” McFoy, NACWA President

Rob Priestas, Administrator of Division of Sewerage & Drainage
City of Columbus Department of Public Utilities | Columbus, OH

Reese Johnson, Superintendent
Metropolitan Sewer District of Greater Cincinnati | Cincinnati, OH

11:55 – 12:00

Closing Remarks

Oluwole “OJ” McFoy, NACWA President