



## 2025 Winter Conference Leveraging Collaboration and Innovation to Maximize Influence

January 28-31 | The Westin Rancho Mirage | Rancho Mirage, CA

Δ Indicates Board Committees

*All meeting spaces are on the lobby floor unless noted otherwise*

As of February 3, 2025

### **Tuesday, January 28**

*Morning*

**8:45 – 10:00**      **Audit Committee Δ**

*Hospitality Suite 1019*

*Guest Building 10*

**10:15 – 11:30**      **Executive Committee Δ**

*Hospitality Suite 1019*

*Guest Building 10*

*Afternoon*

**11:45 – 1:45**      **Board of Directors Luncheon and Meeting Δ**

*Ambassador 1-2*

**1:30 – 4:00**      **Registration**

*Ambassador Foyer*

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

*Ambassador 4-7*

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

**2:00 – 3:00**      **Climate & Resiliency Committee Meeting**

The Committee will hear how local utilities in the western US are adapting their operations in response to changing climate conditions and new extremes, as well as engaging their community in adaptation planning. We will also touch upon trends at the federal level regarding climate resilience.

**3:00 – 3:30**      **Networking Break**

**3:30 – 4:30**      **Biosolids Management Committee Meeting**

The Committee will discuss how federal actions related to PFAS in biosolids may develop during the new Administration, along with how state actions continue to affect biosolids management for utilities. NACWA's communication resources on the relative risk of PFAS in biosolids will also be presented, and

the Committee will discuss strategies on how to communicate effectively with the public about biosolids risks.

*Evening*

**4:45 – 5:30**

*Masters, The  
Backyard*

**Registration**

**5:00 – 6:00**

*Masters, The  
Backyard*

**Welcoming Happy Hour**

Kickoff the *Conference* by joining us at the Welcoming Happy Hour. Connect with fellow attendees, rekindle old connections, and network in a beautiful atmosphere. Happy Hour is open to all so enjoy a quick bite and meet us there!

## **Wednesday, January 29**

*Morning*

**7:00 – 8:30**

*Meet in front of the  
Ambassador Ballroom*

**Women's Water Network Coffee Walk & Talk (Separate RSVP Required)**

Enjoy a gourmet coffee and casual walk with inspiring women from across the sector, exchanging perspectives on the purposeful and pressing issues women in water face today. Join us for a refreshing blend of meaningful conversation and community connection.

**8:45 – 12:00**

*Ambassador Foyer*

**Registration**

**9:00 – 10:00**

*Hospitality 1419,  
Guest Building 14*

**Spouse & Guest Lounge**

**9:00 – 5:00**

*East Patio*

**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**

*Ambassador 4-7*

**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**

**Communication & Public Affairs Committee Meeting**

Over the past two decades, there's been a drastic change in the way we reach our customers. From the local evening news and newspapers to a variety of social media platforms, people are getting information from a vast array of sources at record speed. This discussion will explore how wastewater and stormwater utilities can adjust to meet customers where they are and where they get information.

**10:30 – 11:00**

**Networking Break**

**11:00 – 12:00**

**Utility & Resource Management Committee Meeting**

The Committee will continue to explore the challenges of managing the ever-changing water workforce by examining utility apprenticeship programs and opportunities for state and federal funding support. The committee will also discuss changes in the federal funding landscape, affordability developments and more.

*Afternoon*

**12:00 – 2:00**

*Ambassador 3*

**Awards Committee Meeting & Lunch Δ**

**12:00 – 2:30**

**Lunch on Your Own**

**2:15 – 4:30**

*Ambassador Foyer*

**Registration**

**2:30 – 5:00**

*Ambassador 4-7*

**Committee Discussion Sessions**

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 Meeting**

The Committee will delve into the potential impact of the incoming Trump administration on various water quality-related policies and how it might shape the future of water quality standards. The Committee will also focus on proposed state legislation that may affect water quality standards. Additionally, the Committee will discuss upcoming actions, such as updates on recommended human health criteria for PFOA and PFOS, the POTW Influent Study, and three new draft Water Quality Standards (WQS) Handbook Chapters. All Conference attendees are welcome to join us to learn how to best prepare your agency for the water quality race to zero ahead.

**3:30 – 4:00**

**Networking Break**

**4:00 – 5:00**

**Operations Committee Meeting**

The Committee meeting will feature a presentation and discussion on preparing the water workforce for the digital and artificial intelligence (AI) age. The presentation will summarize the current state of the water industry with adopting digital/AI and the challenges and limitations of advancing digital adoption. A utility case study will also be presented to demonstrate how employees can be upskilled and reskilled in a world that is highly competing for talent. The meeting will then move into an interaction session to discuss how utilities can improve the experiences of personnel, customers, and communities using technology.

*Evening*

**6:00 – 7:30**

*Ambassador 1-2*

**Awards Ceremony & Reception**

Join us for a celebratory evening honoring NACWA's National Environmental Achievement Awards (NEAA) recipients. The evening will feature 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, January 30**

*Morning*

**9:00 – 12:00**

*Ambassador Foyer*

**Registration**

**9:00 – 10:00**  
Hospitality 1419,  
Guest Building 14

### **Spouse & Guest Lounge**

**9:00 – 5:00**  
East Patio

### **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**  
Ambassador 4-7

### **Plenary Session I**

#### *Opening Remarks*

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

#### *Welcoming Remarks*

**Robert Ferrante**, NACWA Board Member  
Chief Engineer & General Manager  
LA County Sanitation District | Whittier, CA

**Barbara Romero**, NACWA Board Member  
Director & General Manager  
City of Los Angeles Sanitation and Environment | Los Angeles, CA

**9:45 – 10:30**

### **Utility Capital Planning and Upcoming Challenges and Opportunities in Securing External Funding**

Utilities of all sizes take different approaches in developing their capital investment plans (CIPs). They plan and prioritize projects that include multiple benefits for their communities and ratepayers and how to maximize these benefits through external funding opportunities. Each agency has its own CIP playbook, and this panel will explore lessons learned, innovative strategies, current challenges and opportunities, and how the outcome of the recent elections may change the federal funding landscape.

#### *Moderator/Panelist*

**Kristen Atha**, NACWA Board Member  
Director of Public Utilities  
City of Columbus Department of Public Utilities | Columbus, OH

#### *Panelists*

**Seema Chavan**, Senior Director of Strategic Funding  
Brown & Caldwell | Walnut Creek, CA

**Kristina Surfus**, Managing Director, Government Affairs  
NACWA | Washington, DC

**Jay Bernas**, NACWA Board Member  
General Manager  
Hampton Roads Sanitation District | Virginia Beach, VA

**10:30 – 10:50**

### **Networking Break**

10:50 – 12:00

### Is Technology the Silver Bullet for Our People Problems or Is it More Complicated?

In our fast-paced world, utility leaders are constantly inundated with the latest products, data, and methods that are marketed as holding great promise to transform utility operations and solve long-standing challenges through yet untapped innovation. But what happens when we overlook the human element in our pursuit of technological solutions? What if the cutting-edge tool meant to simplify our lives instead complicates them in ways that may be unexpected? Panelists will explore this familiar narrative and how it might impact utilities, NGOs, corporations, and government entities alike.

#### Moderator/Panelist

**Pieter Van Ry**, NACWA Board Member  
Director  
South Platte Renew | Englewood, CO

#### Panelists

**Bebe Schaefer**, Business Development  
EMA, Inc. | Englewood, CO

**Matt Collings**, Assistant General Manager  
Moulton Niguel Water District | Laguna Niguel, CA

**Liam Cavanaugh**, Deputy Chief Executive Officer/Chief Operating Officer  
Metro Water Recovery | Denver, CO

12:00

### Closing Remarks

**Diane Taniguchi-Dennis**, NACWA President

Afternoon

12:00 – 2:00

### Lunch on Your Own

1:45 – 4:00

Ambassador Foyer

### Registration

2:00 – 5:00

Ambassador 4-7

### Plenary Session II

#### Opening Remarks

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

2:00 – 2:45

#### Keynote Address

### PURIFIED: How Recycled Sewage is Transforming Our Water

In *Purified: How Recycled Sewage Is Transforming Our Water*, veteran journalist Peter Annin shows that wastewater has become a surprising weapon in America's war against water scarcity. Annin probes deep into the water reuse movement in five water-strapped states—California, Texas, Virginia, Nevada, and Florida. He drinks beer made from purified sewage, visits communities where purified sewage came to the rescue, and examines how one of the nation's largest wastewater plants hopes to recycle one hundred percent of its wastewater by 2035. At each stop, readers come face to face with the people who are struggling for, and against, recycled water. While the current filtration technology transforms sewage into something akin to distilled water—free of chemicals and safe to drink—water recycling's challenge isn't technology. It's

terminology. Concerns about communities being used as “guinea pigs,” sensationalist media coverage, and taglines like “toilet to tap” have repeatedly crippled water recycling efforts. Potable water recycling has become the hottest frontier in the race for expanded water supply options.

*Keynote Speaker*

**Peter Annin**, Director of the Mary Griggs Burke Center for Freshwater Innovation  
Northland College | Ashland, WI

**2:45 – 3:30**

**CASA/NACWA CEO and Leadership Dialogue**

With the results of the 2024 Presidential election finalized and the new Republican trifecta set to take control of both the executive and legislative branches, national and state clean water associations will continue to play a significant role in driving the sector’s public policy advocacy agenda at both the federal and state levels. The conversation will focus on the opportunities and challenges the sector will likely face. At the federal level, utilities will see opportunities for increased regulatory flexibility that can address some of the water sector’s affordability issues. In contrast, at the state level, blue states will likely look to minimize potential environmental rollbacks that a Republican-led federal government might try to implement. Leaders from NACWA and CASA will discuss how federal, and state organizations can work together to best impact clean water policies in Washington and Sacramento.

*Moderator/Panelist*

**Adam Krantz**, Chief Executive Officer  
NACWA | Washington, DC

*Panelists*

**Adam Link**, Executive Director  
California Association of Sanitation Agencies | Sacramento, CA

**David Pedersen**, General Manager  
Las Virgenes Municipal Water District | Calabasas, CA

**Diane Taniguchi-Dennis**, NACWA President

**3:30 – 4:00**

**Networking Break & Peter Annin's Book-Signing**

**4:00 – 4:55**

**The Sometimes-Wild West of Western Water Issues**

At a time when climate change, shifting precipitation patterns, and competition over water supplies are causing big challenges across the American West, clean water utilities in California are facing unique challenges. This panel will discuss these issues and how utilities are responding, including through cutting-edge water reuse technologies that are recycling wastewater for agricultural, industrial, and urban applications. Panelists will also discuss other new approaches including rainwater harvesting techniques tailored for arid climates. The conversation will focus on the intersections between policy, infrastructure, and community engagement to drive sustainable water management in drought-prone areas, focusing on scalable solutions that effectively tackle the region's growing water demands.

*Moderator/Panelist*

**Robert Ferrante**, NACWA Board Member

*Panelists*

**Barbara Romero**, NACWA Board Member

**Roger Bailey**, NACWA Board Member

General Manager

Central Contra Costa Sanitation District | Martinez, CA

**Patricia Sinicropi**, Executive Director

WateReuse | Alexandria, VA

**4:55 – 5:00**

**Closing Remarks**

**Kyle Dreyfuss-Wells**, NACWA Treasurer

Chief Executive Officer

Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District | Cleveland, OH

*Evening*

**6:00 – 7:30**

Monte Luna

Event Lawn

**Joint CASA-NACWA Reception**

Join us for our joint reception with the California Association of Sanitation Agencies (CASA)! Connect with fellow attendees, expand your network with CASA attendees, and rekindle old friendships in the beautiful courtyard. This event is open to NACWA *Conference* and CASA *Conference* attendees, so don't miss this unique opportunity to mingle!

**Friday, January 31**

*Morning*

**9:00 – 11:00**

Ambassador Foyer

**Registration**

**9:30 – 11:30**

Ambassador 4-7

**Plenary Session III**

*Opening Remarks*

**Mickey Conway**, NACWA Vice President

Chief Executive Officer

Metro Water Recovery | Denver, CO

**9:35 – 10:00**

**Assessing the Nation's True Water Affordability Needs**

For the past several decades the cost of water services has been rising faster than household incomes and inflation, and many communities face escalating needs—aging infrastructure, new regulations, climate impacts, emerging contaminants, and lead service line replacements, just to name a few. As rates climb, many households already struggle to pay their water bills. EPA's Environmental Financial Advisory Board (EFAB) developed a high-level framework for water sector affordability. While consumer assistance programs (CAPs) often dominate discussions, affordability can also be tackled through capital investments, operational strategies, rate structures, and federal support. EFAB's framework encourages utilities to incorporate these solutions into their planning and financing processes to meet community and ratepayer needs. Representatives from EFAB will provide an overview of their report and delve deeper into utilities' various options to make services more affordable for vulnerable communities.

*Speaker*

**Janet Clements**, President and Founder

One Water Econ | Loveland, CO

**Cynthia Koehler**, Executive Director  
WaterNow Alliance | San Francisco, CA

**10:00 – 11:30**

### **Concentric Circles: Local, Regional, National and Global Water Sector Collaboration**

Solutions to the water sector's current challenges often require financial and technical resources that are beyond the reach of many utilities. Collaboration not only taps greater resources for solution development, but it also expands the range of possibilities through collective ownership, diverse perspectives, and new ideas. The water sector frequently leverages collaboration through cross-sector sharing, professional associations, peer-to-peer exchanges, community outreach, and engagement on a statewide, watershed-wide or even on a global basis. This panel will explore the breadth of collaboration to leverage local success and how current collaboration efforts may change in the new political atmosphere.

#### *Moderator*

**Jason Carter**, Vice President | Business Advisory &  
Innovation Growth Director  
Arcadis | Birmingham, AL

#### *Panelists*

**Shivaji Deshmukh**, General Manager  
Inland Empire Utilities Agency | Chino, CA

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

**Tony Parrott**, NACWA Board Member  
Executive Director  
Louisville & Jefferson County Metropolitan Sewer District | Louisville, KY

**Renée Willette**, Chief Strategy Officer  
US Water Alliance | Minneapolis, MN

**11:30**

### **Closing Remarks**

**Diane Taniguchi-Dennis**, NACWA President