



## 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 December 12, 2024

### **Tuesday, January 28**

*Morning*

**8:00 – 9:15**                      **Audit Committee Δ**

*Mission Hills Boardroom*

**9:30 – 10:45**                      **Executive Committee Δ**

*Mission Hills Boardroom*

*Afternoon*

**11:00 – 1:45**                      **Board of Directors Luncheon and Meeting Δ**

*Ambassador 1*

**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**

*Evening*

**4:45 – 5:30**                      **Registration**

*Ambassador Foyer*

**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**

*Ambassador 3*

### **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*

### **Spouse & Guest Lounge**

**9:00 – 5:00**

*Hospitality 1019*

### **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**

**3:30 – 4:00**

### **Networking Break**

**4:00 – 5:00**

### **Operations Committee Meeting**

*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*

### **Spouse & Guest Lounge**

**9:00 – 5:00**  
*Hospitality 1019*

### **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**

**9:30 – 10:15**

### **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.

*Moderators/Panelists*

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

**Pam Elardo**, Strategic Services Arena Leader  
Brown & Caldwell | Seattle, WA

*Panelists*

**Kristen Atha**, NACWA Board Member

Director of Public Utilities

City of Columbus Department of Public Utilities | Columbus, OH

**Kristina Surfus**, Managing Director, Government Affairs

NACWA | Washington, DC

**10:15 – 10:45**

**Networking Break**

**10:45 – 11:00**

**Accelerating Innovation in the Water Sector through Collaboration with Universities, Startups, Venture Capital and Other Non-Traditional Partners**

With no margin for error, clean water utilities often take a conservative approach to innovation. However, collaborations with universities, businesses/startups, venture capital and other non-traditional partners are helping some in the water sector embrace new thinking and approaches. This session will explore the important role collaboration can play in jumpstarting innovation and how some in the water sector are already working to deliver true impact via collaboration with academia and the finance and tech sectors.

**11:00 – 11:55**

**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

*Panelist*

**Liam Cavanaugh**, Chief Operating Officer

Metro Water Recovery | Denver, CO

**11:55 – 12:00**

**Closing Remarks**

*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**

**2:00 – 2:45**

**Keynote Address**

**2:45 – 3:30**

## **CASA/NACWA CEO and Leadership Dialogue**

### *Panelists*

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

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

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

**3:30 – 3:45**

## **Networking Break**

**3:45 – 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.

### *Panelists*

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

**Roger Bailey**, NACWA Board Member  
General Manager  
Central Contra Costa Sanitation District | Martinez, CA

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

**Patricia Sinicropi**, Executive Director  
WateReuse | Alexandria, VA

**4:55 – 5:00**

## **Closing Remarks**

*Evening*

**6:00 – 7:30**

*Peter Dye  
Driving Range*

## **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 – 12:00**

*Ambassador 4-7*

**Plenary Session III**

**9:30 – 10:00**

**Low Income Assistance Report**

As part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), Congress directed EPA to conduct a Water Affordability Needs Assessment to estimate the potential for a federal low-income water assistance program. With the expiration of the Low Income Household Water Affordability Program (LIHWAP) at the end of 2023, which helped 1.7 million households pay their water bills by preserving or restoring access to clean and safe water services and providing essential resources for water systems to invest in and rebuild their infrastructure, there remains a tremendous need for a robust federal water affordability program.

**10:00 – 10:15**

**Networking Break**

**10:15 – 11:45**

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

The water sector's current challenges require financial, and technical resources and solutions 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.

*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

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

**Renee Willette**, Chief Strategy Officer  
US Water Alliance | Federal Way, WA

**11:45 – 12:00**

**Closing Remarks**