



## 2026 Utility Leadership Conference & 56<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting **Purpose-Driven Utilities: Leading with Intention, Delivering for Communities**

July 14 - 17 | Hilton Cleveland Downtown | Cleveland, OH

All meetings are on the 5<sup>th</sup> Floor unless otherwise noted.

Δ Board of Directors Committee

As of June 10, 2026

### **Tuesday, July 14**

*Morning*

**9:00 – 1:00**

*Superior A*

#### **Women's Water Network Forum** *(Optional - Separate Registration Required)*

Join NACWA's Women's Water Network for a dynamic half-day program focused on succession planning, mentorship, and the defining moments that shape leadership journeys. This interactive session will bring together women leaders from across the water sector to share personal insights, reflect on pivotal career decisions, and explore how transitions—both expected and unexpected—can influence professional growth and purpose. Through facilitated discussions and a featured reflective conversation with industry leaders, participants will examine how values, resilience, and mentorship have guided their paths and how those lessons can be passed on to support the next generation.

**11:45 – 1:45**

*Veterans Room C*

#### **Executive Committee Meeting and Lunch Δ**

*Afternoon*

**1:30 – 4:00**

*5<sup>th</sup> Floor Foyer*

#### **Registration**

**2:00 – 4:30**

*Superior C*

#### **Committee Discussion Sessions**

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

**2:00 – 3:00**

#### **Utility Resources Management Committee**

Building on ongoing conversations among NACWA's members regarding affordability and meeting growing revenue needs, the Committee discussion will dive into how utilities can strategically braid limited federal funding and financing, municipal bonds, and grants with private capital solutions like platform investments, energy contracts, and credit enhancements to stretch every dollar further. We will ground this conversation in affordability, highlighting the need for continued water bill assistance programs to integrate into long-term financial strategies that deliver for both communities and critical infrastructure.

*Speaker*

**Judith Ibarra-Bianchetta** *(invited)*, Vice President  
Tetra Tech, Inc. | Pasadena, CA

**3:00 – 3:30**

#### **Networking Break**

**3:30 – 4:30**

#### **Environmental Justice Committee**

AI-driven data center expansion is creating challenges for some communities and raising questions of whether principles of environmental justice and community transparency

and engagement are being fully considered. What is the appropriate role of public water utilities in this space and how can they navigate both the potential opportunities and the environmental and public health impacts this growth presents? At the same time, how can targeted funding and technical assistance better equip very small and economically disadvantaged utilities to participate in the data center debate/negotiations – and benefit, rather than be left behind? The Committee meeting will focus on the roles that water utilities, environmental and other non-governmental organizations and research-based nonprofits play in economic development, environmental protection, and environmental justice strategies – ensuring that growth happens *with* communities, not to them.

#### *Committee Leaders*

**Sharise Horne**, *Co-Chair, Environmental Justice Committee*  
Chief of Equity & Community Partnerships  
Louisville & Jefferson County Metropolitan Sewer District | Louisville, KY

**Emanuel Briggs**, *Co-Chair, Environmental Justice Committee*  
Director, Community Affairs  
DC Water | Washington, DC

#### *Speakers*

**LaTricea Adams**, Chief Executive Officer  
Young Gifted & Green | Memphis, TN

**Peter Grevatt** (*invited*), Chief Executive Officer  
The Water Research Foundation | Alexandria, VA

#### *Evening*

**5:00 – 6:00**  
5<sup>th</sup> Floor Foyer

#### **Registration**

**5:30 – 6:30**  
Lakeside Foyer

#### **Welcome Happy Hour**

Kick off the *Conference* by joining us at the Welcome Happy Hour. Connect with fellow attendees, reconnect with familiar faces, and network in a relaxed atmosphere. Happy Hour is open to all so enjoy a quick bite and meet us there!

### **Wednesday, July 15**

#### *Morning*

**8:00 – 9:00**  
Veterans AB

#### **First Time Attendee Networking Breakfast** (*Separate Registration Required*)

**9:00 – 11:30**  
5<sup>th</sup> Floor Foyer

#### **Registration**

**9:00 – 10:00**  
Superior B

#### **Spouse & Guest Lounge**

**9:00 – 5:00**  
Lakeside Foyer

#### **NACWA Networking Lounge**

The lounge provides an opportunity to connect with your peers during the *Conference*.

**9:00 – 11:45**  
Superior C

#### **Plenary Session I**

**9:00 – 9:15**

#### **Opening & Welcoming Remarks**

*Opening Remarks*

**Kyle Dreyfuss-Wells**, 2026-2027 NACWA President  
Chief Executive Officer  
Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District | Cleveland, OH

*Welcoming Remarks*

**Chris Ronayne**, Cuyahoga County Executive  
Cuyahoga County | Cleveland, OH

**9:15 – 10:15**

**Leading with Purpose: Building a Public Service Ethos from the Inside Out**

Leadership sets the tone; culture ensures the work gets done well. This panel brings together clean water leaders to explore how intentional leadership, organizational culture, and authentic stakeholder engagement shape not only system performance, but public trust itself. Through a candid conversation, panelists will examine what it truly takes to build trust from the inside out – aligning leadership, values, and service to transform utilities into engines of resilience, public service and community strength.

*Moderator*

**Beverley Stinson**, Executive Vice President, Global Water Business Line Leader  
AECOM | Chelmsford, MA

*Speakers*

**Bret Berthold**, Executive Director/Chief Executive Officer  
Metropolitan St. Louis Sewer District | Saint Louis, MO

**Diana Christy**, Director  
Metropolitan Sewer District of Greater Cincinnati | Cincinnati, OH

**10:15 – 10:30**

**Networking Break**

**10:45 – 11:45**

**Powering Growth Together: Utilities, Data Centers, and Community Priorities**

As data center expansion takes place at unprecedented speed, communities are growing increasingly uncertain and often distrustful—raising urgent questions about the viability of data centers in some communities. This discussion will explore how wastewater utilities—after decades of continued efforts to build public trust— can play a valuable role at the negotiating table to help set guardrails, ensure transparency, and shape partnerships that will help turn rapid data center growth into resilient, community-aligned infrastructure investments.

*Speaker/Moderator*

**Laura Weintraub**, Vice President, Marketing & Client Development  
LimnoTech | Ann Arbor, MI

*Panelists*

**Keylin Lopez**, Manager, Federal Affairs  
Data Center Coalition | Washington, DC

**Mark Peterson**, Deputy General Manager  
Loudoun Water | Ashburn, VA

**Tom Birmingham** (*invited*), Water Team Manager  
Meta | Rye, NH

**Chris Pomeroy**, President  
AquaLaw PLC | Richmond, VA

**11:45 – 12:00**

*Superior C*

### **Annual Association Business Meeting**

- Report of the President
- Report of the Treasurer
- Proposed *Bylaws* Amendment
- Election of Directors
- Report of the Chief Executive Officer

*Afternoon*

**12:00 – 2:15**

### **Lunch on Your Own**

**12:15 – 2:15**

*Superior A*

### **Board of Directors Meeting Δ**

**2:30 – 4:30**

*5<sup>th</sup> Floor Foyer*

### **Registration**

**2:30 – 5:00**

*Superior C*

### **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**

### **Biosolids Management Committee**

The saga over EPA's draft PFAS risk assessment for biosolids continues to evolve, with new Agency guidance – still forthcoming – expected to clarify what the draft does (and perhaps even more importantly does not!) mean, and what direction EPA is headed next on this issue. The Committee will dig into what the guidance says and what it could mean in practice, while also examining how other EPA offices are grappling with the widespread presence of PFAS and the challenges of managing these persistent chemicals.

*Committee Leader*

**Kurt Fremont**, *Co-Chair, Biosolids Management Committee*  
Division Manager, Business Operations  
City of Tacoma, Environmental Services Department | Tacoma, WA

*Speaker*

**Brian D'Amico** (*invited*), Director, Engineering and Sciences Division,  
Office of Wastewater Management  
US Environmental Protection Agency | Washington, DC

**3:30 – 3:45**

### **Networking Break**

**3:45 – 5:00**

### **Communications and Public Affairs Committee**

Don't miss the official debut of NACWA's bold strategic communications initiative—the culmination of more than a year of research, planning, collaboration, and development. This landmark effort represents a forward-looking approach designed to transform the way public clean water utilities communicate while coordinating utility outreach efforts and elevating the influence of the clean water sector as a whole. The Committee will explore how effective communications planning mirrors the critical pre-construction and procurement phases of a major project—where vision, planning, coordination, and resource alignment lay the foundation for successful execution.

*Committee Leaders*

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

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

*Speakers*

**Mack Bradley**, President  
StandPoint Public Affairs | St. Louis, MO

**Gabrielle Cherre**, Chief of Staff  
StandPoint Public Affairs | St. Louis, MO

*Evening*

**6:00 – 7:30**

*Superior A*

**Awards Ceremony & Reception**

Join us for a celebratory evening honoring exceptional NACWA utility facilities for their outstanding achievements in compliance, and individuals for their unmeasured service to NACWA. Following the Ceremony, we invite you to join your colleagues in celebrating the evening's honorees at the Awards Reception.

**Thursday, July 16**

*Morning*

**8:30 – 11:30**

*5<sup>th</sup> Floor Foyer*

**Registration**

**9:00 – 10:00**

*Superior B*

**Spouse & Guest Lounge**

**9:00 – 5:00**

*Lakeside Foyer*

**NACWA Networking Lounge**

The lounge provides an opportunity to connect with your peers during the conference.

**9:00 – 11:45**

*Superior C*

**Plenary Session II**

**9:00 – 9:05**

**Opening Remarks**

**9:05 – 9:10**

**Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District Video**

**9:10 – 10:15**

**Purpose to Performance: How Operational Excellence, Capital Strategy, and Collaboration Deliver Value**

Delivering reliable service in today's environment requires more than doing so with less—it demands doing things differently. This discussion will explore how clean water utilities are advancing operational excellence, rethinking capital delivery, and embracing regional collaboration to drive performance. Hear from utility executives and advisors on practical strategies that strengthen affordability, enhance resilience, and build public trust.

*Moderator*

**Joe Crea**, Vice President  
Raftelis | Cincinnati, OH

*Speakers*

**Paul Sayan** (*invited*), Deputy Bureau Head  
Baltimore City Department of Public Works | Baltimore, MD

**Rebecca West**, Chief Executive Officer  
Renewable Water Resources | Greenville, SC

**Whit Wheeler**, Department Director II  
Raleigh Water | Raleigh, NC

**10:15 – 10:45**      **Networking Break**

**10:45 – 11:00**      **EPA Office of Water Priorities and Initiatives**

Hear from EPA's top water official about the Agency's top priorities and how these will impact the clean water community in the years ahead. There will also be a unique opportunity for audience Q&A with Assistant Administrator Kramer.

**Jess Kramer** (*invited*), Assistant Administrator, Office of Water  
US Environmental Protection Agency | Washington, DC

**11:00 – 12:00**      **From Utilities to Ecosystems: Advancing Clean Water Priorities Through Unexpected Allies**

This panel will challenge the water sector to step out of its traditional lanes and expand its engagement beyond the usual municipal water stakeholders. The discussion will explore how utilities can strengthen their influence by building diverse partnerships—sometimes with unexpected allies—to amplify the sector's voice and impact.

*Speakers*

**Tom Kiernan**, Chief Executive Officer  
American Rivers | Washington, DC

**Christine Keck**, Vice President, Chief Legislative & External Affairs Officer  
American Water | Camden, NJ

**Courtney Briggs**, Senior Director, Government Affairs  
American Farm Bureau Federation | Washington, DC

**Christian Richter** (*invited*), Principal  
The Policy Group, LLC | Washington, DC

*Afternoon*

**12:00 – 2:00**      **Lunch on Your Own**

**12:00 – 2:00**      **Optional Lunch – Hosted by the Water Collaborative Delivery Association:  
Superior A**      **How a “Squiggly Line” Leads to Greater Cost Certainty through the Power of Collaborative Delivery** (*Free; Separate RSVP Required*)

Curious about the “squiggly line”? Join the Water Collaborative Delivery Association (WCDA) for a complimentary luncheon to learn more about the benefits of collaborative delivery, with a focus on the management of project costs throughout the project lifecycle and how an iterative cost development process can create early cost certainty and avoid bid-day surprises. All attendees will receive a copy of WCDA's *Water and Wastewater Collaborative Delivery Handbook*, 6th Edition.

Please complete [this form](#) by **July 6** to RSVP for this event.

**1:30 – 4:30**      **Registration**  
5<sup>th</sup> Level Foyer

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

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

**2:00 – 3:00**      **Legal Affairs Committee**

Legal considerations are a key factor in utility decision-making, but when the legal landscape is uncertain, it can be difficult for utility leaders to know how to plan. Unsettled legal questions loom in PFAS litigation, courtroom battles over federal funding

cuts, negotiations over a surge in local data centers, and many other issues important to clean water utilities. Join NACWA's Legal Affairs Committee as committee members share what they are seeing and provide perspectives on how utility counsel can help achieve the best outcomes for their communities.

*Committee Leaders*

**Devon Goodrich**, *Co-Chair, Legal Affairs Committee*  
Senior Counsel, Environmental Law Division  
New York City Department of Law | New York, NY

**Emily Jackson**, *Co-Chair, Legal Affairs Committee*  
Chief Legal Officer  
Metro Water Recovery | Denver, CO

**3:00 – 3:30**

**Networking Break**

**3:30 – 4:30**

**Water Quality Committee**

Clean water utilities have invested billions to curb nitrogen and phosphorus—often driven by sources beyond their control—delivering decades of measurable progress even as population growth has surged. Now, nutrient policy is entering a far more complex and costly phase. The Committee will examine the inflection point clean water utilities face as regulators layer nutrient obligations on top of PFAS, 6PPD, microplastics, and other emerging contaminants—all under intensifying regulatory pressure and rising community expectations. Importantly, the discussion will move beyond the challenge to focus on solutions, strategies, and policy pathways that have been effective at reducing nutrient loads while balancing affordability and long-term sustainability.

*Committee Leaders*

**Martin Griffin**, *Co-Chair, Water Quality Committee*  
Director of Ecosystem Services  
Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District | Madison, WI

**Jamie Heisig-Mitchell**, *Co-Chair, Water Quality Committee*  
Chief of Water Quality  
Hampton Roads Sanitation District | Virginia Beach, VA

*Speakers*

**Roy Hesemann**, Utilities Director  
City of Cedar Rapids, Utilities Department | Cedar Rapids, IA

*Evening*

**5:30 – 7:00**

**President's Reception**

Please join us to celebrate incoming President Kyle Dreyfuss-Wells!

**Friday, July 17**

*Morning*

**9:00 – 10:30**

5<sup>th</sup> Level Foyer

**Registration**

**9:00 – 11:45**

Superior C

**Plenary Session III**

**9:30 – 9:32**

**Opening Remarks**

9:32 – 10:45

### Innovation in a Rapidly Changing Landscape: Setting the Pace for the Water Sector

Innovation in the water sector is no longer just about new technology—it's about new ways of working. As market pressures, climate risks, and community expectations accelerate, clean water utilities are increasingly finding that meaningful innovation depends on trusted, mission-aligned partnerships that deliver tangible public benefits.

*Speaker/Moderator*

**Snehal Desai**, Executive Vice President, Chief Growth & Commercial Officer  
Xylem, Inc. | Pittsburgh, PA

*Panelists*

**Lisa Garcia** (*invited*), Commissioner  
New York City Department of Environmental Protection | Queens, NY

**Sara Smith** (*invited*), Assistant General Manager  
Metropolitan Council of Environmental Services | Saint Paul, MN

**Jay Fink** (*invited*), Director  
Miami-Dade County Water and Sewer Department | Miami, FL

10:45 – 11:45

### The Final Word: Choose the Conversation that Shapes Your Next Move

End on impact by joining a curated discussion with your fellow clean water leaders on the biggest forces facing utilities today. Each table tackles a timely issue – giving you the chance to trade insights, test ideas, and walk away with perspective you can put into action.

Table Topics:

- Communications
- Data Centers and Water Reuse
- Affordability
- Innovation, Technology, and AI
- Workforce
- Water Quality

11:45

### Closing Remarks