



2026 Utility Leadership Conference & 56th Annual Meeting

Purpose-Driven Utilities: Leading with Intention, Delivering for Communities

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

All meetings are on the 5th Floor unless otherwise noted.

Δ Board of Directors Committee

As of July 8, 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

5th 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 & Resource 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.

Committee Leader

Nathan Qualls, Co-Chair, Utility & Resource Management Committee

Executive Director

NEW Water | Green Bay, WI

Speakers

Andrew Sawyers, Director, Office of Wastewater Management

US Environmental Protection Agency | Washington, DC

Tahne Corcutt, Principal Infrastructure Funding & Grants Consultant
Jacobs | Bellevue, WA

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 Leader

Sharise Horne, Co-Chair, Environmental Justice Committee

Chief of Equity & Community Partnerships

Louisville & Jefferson County Metropolitan Sewer District | Louisville, KY

Speakers

LaTricea Adams, Chief Executive Officer

Young Gifted & Green | Memphis, TN

Peter Grevatt, Chief Executive Officer

The Water Research Foundation | Alexandria, VA

Evening

5:00 – 6:00

5th Floor Foyer

Registration

5:30 – 6:30

Lakeside Foyer

Welcoming Happy Hour

Kick off the *Conference* by joining us at the Welcoming 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!

8:30 – 9:45

Superior C

NACWA Night at the Movies

Join us for the screening of "Unless Something Goes Terribly Wrong," filmed with the Portland Water District. Enjoy a fun and eye-opening evening with refreshments and snacks. Bring your friends and join us!

Wednesday, July 15

Morning

8:00 – 9:00

Veterans Room AB

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

Connect with fellow first-time attendees, build new relationships, and gain insights that will help you make the most of your *Conference* experience. Enjoy a light breakfast while networking with peers before the day's sessions begin.

8:30 – 11:30

5th Floor Foyer

Registration

9:00 – 10:00

Veterans Room C

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, NACWA Vice President 2025-2026

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

Suzanne Coffey, NACWA Board Member

Chief Executive Officer

Great Lakes Water Authority | Detroit, MI

10:15 – 10:30

Networking Break

10:30 – 10:45

Infrastructure Investment as a Catalyst for Community Trust

This session explores how transparent capital planning and candid communication about the water sector—from the urgent need for major infrastructure investment to the realities driving rate increases—can turn public skepticism into lasting confidence. Building trust is not simply a communications overlay; it is an operational imperative that must be intentionally embedded, delivered, and sustained across every stage of the infrastructure investment lifecycle.

Featured Speaker

Daven Oswalt, President, Water Business Division

GFT, Inc. | Rancho Santa Fe, CA

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.

Moderator/Panelist

Laura Ziemelis, 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, 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
- Election of Directors
- Report of the Chief Executive Officer

Afternoon
12:00 – 2:15

Lunch on Your Own

12:15 – 2:15
Superior B

Board of Directors Meeting Δ

2:00 – 4:30
5th 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

Speakers

Andrew Sawyers, Director, Office of Wastewater Management
US Environmental Protection Agency | Washington, DC

Elizabeth Toot-Levy, Senior Water Resources Scientist
Geosyntec Consultants | Seven Hills, OH

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

Josh Weinstein, President & Creative Director
Creative Co-op | Exeter, NH

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

5th Floor Foyer

Registration

9:00 – 10:00

Veterans Room C

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 – 9:10

Opening Remarks

Kyle Dreyfuss-Wells, NACWA President 2026-2027

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, 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 Deputy Assistant Administrator 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 Deputy Assistant Administrator Caitlin McHale.

Keynote Speaker

Caitlin McHale, Deputy Assistant Administrator for Strategic Initiatives
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.

Moderator

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

Speakers

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

Chistine 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, Principal
The Policy Group, LLC | Washington, DC

12:00

Closing Remarks

Calvin Farr, Jr., NACWA Treasurer 2026-2027
General Manager/Chief Executive Officer
Prince William Water | Woodbridge, VA

Afternoon

12:00 – 2:00

Lunch on Your Own

12:00 – 2:00

Superior B

Optional Lunch – Hosted by the Water Collaborative Delivery Association: 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

5th Level 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

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

Speaker

Erica Spitzig, Partner
Taft Stettinius & Hollister LLP | Cincinnati, OH

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

Kamuron Gurol, *NACWA Board Member*
Division Director
King County Wastewater Treatment Division | Seattle, WA

Evening

5:15

Hotel Lobby

Bus Transportation - President's Reception

Please meet in the Hotel Lobby to board the bus to our President's Reception. Please note that the bus will take approximately 10 minutes to reach the venue.

5:30 – 7:00

*Gordon Green
(5400 Detroit Ave.)*

President's Reception

Join us for an evening of networking, conversation, and celebration as we honor NACWA's incoming President, Kyle Dreyfuss-Wells! Connect with attendees in a relaxed and festive atmosphere while recognizing Kyle's leadership and vision for the year ahead.

Friday, July 17

Morning

8:30 – 10:00

5th Level Foyer

Registration

9:00 – 11:00

Superior C

Plenary Session III

9:00 – 9:02

Opening Remarks

Laura Briefer, *NACWA Vice President 2026-2027*
Director of Public Utilities
Salt Lake City Corporation | Salt Lake City, UT

9:02 – 10:00

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.

Moderator/Panelist

Snehal Desai, Executive Vice President, Chief Growth & Commercial Officer

Xylem, Inc. | Pittsburgh, PA

Panelists

Sara Smith, Assistant General Manager
Metropolitan Council of Environmental Services | Saint Paul, MN

Kristen Atha, NACWA Board Member
Director
Columbus Water & Power | Columbus, OH

10:00 – 11:00

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:

- **Crisis Communications**
Explore how utilities prepare for, respond to, and recover from crises while maintaining public trust and organizational credibility.
- **Data Centers and Water Reuse**
Examine the opportunities and challenges associated with growing data center demand, water reuse investments, and long-term resource planning.
- **Innovation, Technology, and AI**
Explore how utilities are leveraging innovation, digital tools, and artificial intelligence.
- **Workforce**
Discuss workforce recruitment, retention, succession planning, and leadership development.
- **Water Quality**
Explore emerging water quality priorities, regulatory developments, public expectations, and strategies for protecting environmental and public health outcomes.

11:00

Closing Remarks

Laura Briefer, NACWA Vice President 2026-2027