

Strategic Plan NACWA's Core Ideology & Big Audacious Goal (10 Year Planning Horizon)

Core Ideology

Core Purpose:

Be the leading advocate for responsible national policies that advance a sustainable approach to clean water.

Core Aspirations:

- Act as catalysts for change: Advocate and achieve widely-embraced and sustainable national policies.
- Every utility a member: Demonstrate the importance and effectiveness of NACWA to encourage every public utility to join.
- Advance advocacy through communications: Engage all stakeholders to advance our advocacy agenda and highlight the value of NACWA and membership and the services our members provide every day.

Core Values:

- Accountability, integrity, and credibility in all that we do.
- Scientifically, economically, and socially informed environmental policy.
- Visionary and solutions-oriented leadership embracing innovation and diverse input.
- Collaboration as a preferred strategy.
- Honesty and transparency in our dealings with the public, elected and appointed officials, and each other.
- Fiscal responsibility.
- Environmental stewardship.

Big Audacious Goal

The public, the economy, and the environment experience profound benefits as a result of sustainable policies and regulation that balance the protection and use of our nation's water resources.

Outcome-Oriented Goals & Strategies (3-5 Year Planning Horizon)

Goals are high-level statements that reflect the key priorities of the Association over the next 3-5 years that we plan to accomplish.

Strategies set forth a plan of action to achieve each goal.

ADVOCACY GOALS

1. Further secure the role of clean water agencies as public health, environmental and economic stewards by ensuring sufficient regulatory flexibility to meet or move beyond Clean Water Act obligations – including through use of integrated planning concepts and appropriate, realistic analysis of community affordability concerns – while at the same time promoting a robust federal funding partnership to support regulatory compliance obligations.

Strategies to achieve this goal:

- *Increase the use and acceptance of integrated planning in both the permitting and enforcement context, and codify integrated planning principles in the Clean Water Act.*
 - *Secure revisions to EPA's affordability approach that recognize the financial realities impacting clean water utilities and their local communities.*
 - *Increase and expand available federal funding for clean water infrastructure investment by:*
 - ✓ *Supporting funding for the CWSRF and WIFIA programs;*
 - ✓ *Maintaining tax-exempt status for investments in municipal bonds;*
 - ✓ *Exploring tax incentives to support public/private financing partnerships;*
 - ✓ *Exploring viability of a LIEHEAP-type subsidy program or a variable rate program for low-income ratepayers.*
 - *Pursue a communications campaign that promotes utilities as best suited to prioritize their compliance needs.*
2. Advocate for properly promulgated clean water regulations and policies that are based on valid science and achieve environmentally-beneficial and cost-effective water quality improvements, and safeguard clean water utilities from unreasonable enforcement actions especially in the wet weather context.

Strategies to achieve this goal:

- *Engage EPA through rulemaking and other processes to ensure regulatory actions are based on valid science and grounded in statute and do not impose significant new costs on clean water utilities and their ratepayers with little resulting water quality improvement.*

- *Engage in litigation and advocate for increased Congressional oversight as necessary to protect clean water utilities from inappropriate regulatory mandates, including regulatory action that are not supported by valid science or have not undergone sufficient public review and comment.*
 - *Explore statutory reforms to provide clean water utilities greater flexibility in meeting water quality-based standards, including greater use of compliance schedules.*
 - *Utilize regulatory, legislative and legal advocacy to ensure appropriate, consistent regulations and enforcement for wet weather issues on a nationwide basis, and provide utilities with key advocacy tools and resources to address wet weather concerns.*
 - *Support and promote rational, cost-effective stormwater policies and regulations, including defense of the “maximum extent practicable” standard and legal defense of stormwater funding programs.*
3. Advance statutory reforms to modernize the Clean Water Act and incorporate tools that support innovative approaches by clean water agencies to achieve national water quality goals, including tools that promote watershed-based approaches.

Strategies to achieve this goal:

- *Support and promote federal programs that incentivize collaborative watershed approaches to addressing water quality impairment and that optimize the role of clean water utilities as resource recovery agents.*
 - *Promote legislation that extends NPDES permit terms, incorporates greater use of integrated planning principles, and addresses affordability concerns.*
 - *Effectively communicate that new tools are needed in order for the Clean Water Act to address 21st century challenges such as nonpoint source pollution, resiliency, climate change, energy production, emerging contaminants, etc.*
 - *Engage key stakeholders in a dialogue about the need to reform the CWA and how best to accomplish this goal.*
4. Empower and support clean water utilities to pursue new forms of innovation -- including implementation of advanced technologies and utility operation techniques that maximize water quality benefits for the investment dollar -- in order to address challenges of serving growing populations and meeting greater environmental responsibilities with fewer financial resources.

Strategies to achieve this goal:

- *Pursue regulatory and statutory changes that embrace and facilitate Utility of the Future (UOTF) concepts, such as removing potential regulatory barriers to the use of recovered materials like struvite from the wastewater process, addressing contaminants of emerging concern, facilitating use of green infrastructure and low-impact development, and exploring the role of “big data” in helping utilities operate more efficiently and economically.*

- *Disseminate UOTF approaches throughout the utility community to advance innovation on both a national and local level.*
- *Raise awareness among regulatory agencies, Congress, and key stakeholders – including through strong communications materials, meetings, hearings, publications, conferences, and other outreach methods – of the need to treat clean water utilities as co-equals or co-regulators in achieving clean water goals.*
- *Provide utilities with statutory and legal certainty to pursue innovative technologies and approaches in achieving their Clean Water Act obligations.*

MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT & ENGAGEMENT GOALS

1. Increase NACWA's membership through Board of Directors, existing member, and staff participation in strategic member outreach.

Strategies to achieve this goal:

- *Develop materials that Board Members and Member Agencies can use during their speeches, conferences, local/regional utility meetings etc., to communicate value of NACWA membership.*
- *Leverage attendance at key conferences or regional meetings to visit nearby potential or current members to personally discuss benefits of membership.*

2. Expand and diversify NACWA's membership to strengthen the Association's advocacy and increase its financial viability.

Strategies to achieve this goal:

- *Develop specific, customizable, outreach/recruitment plans and materials for key potential member groups where there is significant membership potential. Key potential member groups to be explored include but are not limited to small and medium sized agencies, stormwater utilities, large lapsed and non-member agencies in states where NACWA is not represented.*
- *Create new opportunities for Affiliate members to engage with the Association, especially from industries such as finance or technology that may have new and growing interest in the work of NACWA's Member Agencies.*
- *Create compelling marketing communications that quantify and highlight the benefits of membership to existing and potential Member Agencies and Affiliates.*

3. Expand Member Agency and Affiliate participation in NACWA.

Strategies to achieve this goal:

- *Consistently provide exceptional member service and improved member experience.*

- *Identify and facilitate opportunities for both current and next generation water sector leaders to participate and engage in Association initiatives and activities.*
- *Expand NACWA's reach into Member Agencies to inform, and provide opportunities for, the next generation of utility leaders on the importance of clean water advocacy.*
- *Create forums for Member Agencies and Affiliates to exchange information, knowledge and resources.*

COMMUNICATIONS GOALS

1. Communicate effective messages using appropriate channels to:
 - Support the Association's advocacy;
 - Engage and retain members;
 - Recruit new members; and
 - Highlight the central role the nation's clean water agencies play in the environmental, economic and social well-being of America.

Strategies to achieve this goal:

- *Oversee and manage development and implementation of a strategic communications plan that maximizes efficiency and impact of NACWA's communications initiatives.*
- *Effectively engage and communicate with key audiences including Congress, federal and state regulators, existing and prospective members, traditional and non-traditional partners and the media.*
- *Advance communication that highlights successes, accomplishments and innovations of NACWA Member Agencies and outlines how the Association's advocacy efforts have helped support these successes.*
- *Be instrumental in both the federal and local arena by communicating vibrant national policies and messages that inspire members to engage in national grassroots advocacy and encourage similar messages and actions at the state, county and local level.*

2. Raise awareness and expand our collective voice by coordinating with water sector partners on communications initiatives when working together will more effectively and efficiently advance common goals and generate greater value.

Strategies to achieve this goal:

- *Leverage partnerships with other organizations to raise awareness, expand voice and increase visibility.*
- *Continuously evaluate new strategic partnership opportunities.*

3. Better facilitate member-to-member exchange of outreach information, resources and tools.

Strategy to achieve this goal:

- *Provide a forum for the exchange of information, resources and tools between small, medium, and large utilities.*