

CAPTURING NATIONAL REUSE

Collaboration Key to Leveraging
Water Reuse's Opportunity Window

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As clean water professionals and stakeholders, we must recognize and mark the pivotal times in our sector.

The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced on February 27, 2019 that it would facilitate the development of a National Water Reuse Action Plan. The Agency's Assistant Administrator for Water Dave Ross made the announcement during a water reuse summit in San Francisco, and framed the plan as a collaborative effort between the water sector and federal agencies, with the goal of fostering water reuse as a

vital component of integrated water resources management. Utilities and businesses that have developed and implemented water recycling programs received this news with great excitement because they are well aware of how collaboration has led to incredible innovation in water reuse. They also know the potential that water recycling has in reshaping how we manage water in our communities.

COLLABORATION THAT LEADS TO ACTION

The WaterReuse Association represents utilities, businesses, and end users that are on the leading edge of innovation in water recycling. Our members are eager to collaborate. On April 18 of this year, EPA released a discussion framework for development of a draft water reuse action plan for public comment; and to rally the water sector behind this process, WaterReuse collaborated with other national water organizations including the Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies, the American Water Works Association, the National Association of Clean Water Agencies, the Water Environment Federation, and the Water Research Foundation. The WaterReuse Association hosted two workshops—in Los Angeles, CA on April 18, 2019 and in Alexandria, VA on May 9, 2019—to gather feedback for input to the EPA. We also surveyed our

members to cast the widest possible net. We are pleased that EPA will release a draft Water Reuse Action Plan at the 34th Annual WaterReuse Symposium, September 8-11, 2019 in San Diego, CA.

The Water Reuse Action Plan will identify barriers and opportunities to advance water reuse and recycling. This information will help the water sector prioritize and better coordinate existing research and development, financing, and implementation of water reuse across the United States as part of integrated water resources management. EPA has previously supported water reuse efforts, including development of the 2017 *Potable Reuse Compendium and Guidelines for Water Reuse*, but the Water Reuse Action Plan is the first initiative of this magnitude that is coordinated across the water sector.

ROLES AND OPPORTUNITIES

There is an ongoing debate as to the appropriate role of the federal government in water recycling. WaterReuse has

active organizations in nine states that work closely with state legislators and regulators to advocate for policies that create environments where water reuse can flourish. There is an important federal role as well. The development of a National Water Reuse Action Plan will establish a national imperative for safe, reliable and locally controlled water supplies. We also need Congress and the Trump Administration to align laws, regulations and funding to help states and local governments find local solutions.

The versatility of recycled water as a resource creates great opportunity. Water reuse is the process of intentionally capturing wastewater, stormwater, saltwater or graywater and cleaning it as needed for a designated beneficial freshwater purpose. Recycled water is a proven solution to a multitude of water management challenges, including water supply resiliency, population growth, environmental enhancement and habitat creation, extreme wet weather events and combined sewer overflow, and saltwater intrusion, among other issues.



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We have seen tremendous growth in water recycling in our traditional recycling centers of the arid west and south. This has largely been attributed to water supply challenges and the need for drought-resilient, sustainable supplies such as recycled water. However, there is new and exciting growth in more water-rich areas in the Pacific Northwest, and in cities such as Chicago, Atlanta, New York and others that are now looking toward water recycling to help manage stormwater and receiving water quality challenges. In addition, other areas on the eastern seaboard such as Hampton Roads, VA are incorporating water reuse strategies to support their region's resiliency and sustainability goals.

BREAKING THROUGH BARRIERS

Although the interest in water reuse is skyrocketing, these projects can face economic, technical, and social barriers. Creative collaborations on technology and financing can remove some barriers and lead to innovations that protect a community's water future and serve as models for others. Utilities, industry, large water users, and technology providers have found it in their mutual interest to collaborate to make specific water reuse projects a reality.

The national growth in water reuse makes the federal role even more important. Investment in water reuse builds communities that are modern, sustainable and stable—ready for families to flourish and businesses to grow. Just as the water sector has come together to support the development of a Water Reuse Action Plan, it has also come together to urge increased federal investment in programs that help finance these projects, including the State Revolving Funds, the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act, and the Title XVI water reuse program. The Trump Administration and Congressional Democrats have said they are keen to move forward with a large infrastructure investment, and we cannot afford to let this moment pass. The water recycling community must now urge Congress to support the Administration's push for increasing investment in our nation's infrastructure, including water infrastructure.

EPA's leadership in elevating water reuse nationally as an important component of an integrated management approach for our nation's resources has the potential to make a significant impact on how communities manage their water. The water sector will continue to work together to advance policies and secure funding to sustain and improve America's water infrastructure. EPA's National Water Reuse Action plan is just one example, but an excellent example, of how the water sector finds success in collaboration. 💧