



2026 Winter Conference

Managing Instability: The Essential Role of Local Leadership

February 2 - 5 | JW Marriott Miami | Miami, FL

Δ Indicates Board Committees

All meeting spaces are on the 5th floor unless noted otherwise.

As of January 23, 2026

Monday, February 2

Morning

9:00 – 10:00

Audit Committee Meeting Δ

Buenos Aires I

10:15 – 11:30

Executive Committee Meeting Δ

Buenos Aires I

11:45 – 1:45

Board of Directors Luncheon and Meeting Δ

Salons EFG

Afternoon

1:30 – 4:00

Registration

Pre-Assembly Area

2:00 – 4:30

Committee Discussion Sessions

Salons ABCD

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

2:00 – 3:00

Biosolids Management Committee Meeting

Statehouses are rapidly becoming the front lines of the PFAS debate—and biosolids are squarely in the crosshairs. As EPA signals next steps on its draft sewage sludge risk assessment for PFOA and PFOS, we anticipate a wave of renewed and expanded state legislation aimed at restricting—or outright ending—land application programs. NACWA has already pushed back on several bills that would have effectively dismantled these programs, and we expect more are coming. This Committee discussion will deliver critical federal updates on EPA's PFAS work in biosolids and preview our state advocacy strategy, including a look at NACWA's newly released State PFAS Guide and Model Legislation—tools the sector will need to stay engaged, informed, and influential.

3:00 – 3:30

Networking Break

3:30 – 4:45

Communications & Public Affairs Committee Meeting

Discover how the Little Rock Water Reclamation Authority developed a communications strategy to help turn a rate adjustment into a quiet win. Then learn how to use research and data to better understand customers and build a sound strategic communications plan. Attendees will walk away with practical strategies for

engaging stakeholders, shaping compelling messages, and building campaigns that earn trust.

Evening

4:30 – 5:30

Pool, 7th Floor

Registration

5:00 – 6:00

Pool, 7th Floor

Welcoming Happy Hour

Kick off the *Conference* by joining us at the Welcoming Happy Hour. Connect with fellow attendees in a beautiful outdoor atmosphere. Happy Hour is open to all, so meet us there to enjoy a quick bite before starting your evening!

Tuesday, February 3

Morning

7:30 – 9:00

Pool Deck

Women's Water Network Event *(Separate RSVP Required)*

The new year is underway, and a month into our resolutions—whether they're focused on personal growth, professional renewal, or both—NACWA's Women's Water Network is inviting you to take a moment and pause. Join us on the rooftop of the conference hotel for an early morning opportunity to help you reset and recharge. This experience will be a restorative and rejuvenating way to calm the mind, release tension, and start the day feeling centered and renewed.

8:30 – 12:00

Pre-Assembly Area

Registration

9:00 – 10:00

Buenos Aires I

Spouse & Guest Lounge

9:00 – 5:00

Buenos Aires II

NACWA Networking Lounge

The NACWA Networking Lounge will give you an opportunity to connect with your peers on Tuesday and Wednesday.

9:30 – 12:00

Salons ABCD

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

Water Quality Committee Meeting

Water quality drivers continue to shape—and in many cases accelerate—major capital and operational investments for clean water utilities. While this Administration has not aggressively pursued new federal standards, states and environmental NGOs are intensifying pressure on utilities to go further and faster. From high-stakes nutrient debates tied to Puget Sound impairments, to escalating PFAS challenges in New England, to increasingly complex and consequential modeling assumptions, the regulatory and technical landscape is shifting. This discussion will highlight the issues NACWA members need on their radar now—and the emerging trends that could drive the next wave of utility decision-making and investment.

10:30 – 11:00

Networking Break

11:00 – 12:00

Security & Emergency Preparedness Committee Meeting

While cyber attacks continue to be a top issue of concern, utilities need to take a more holistic view of security. This discussion will focus on the convergence of cybersecurity and physical security, and how utilities must consider these interdependencies to maintain operations. Guest speakers from the Cyber Security and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), will provide information on what utilities should do to improve their security and how the no-cost resources available to utilities through CISA and other federal agencies can help. Updates will also be

provided on how NACWA and other water sector associations are engaging on security issues.

Afternoon

12:00 – 2:00

London I

Awards Committee Meeting & Lunch Δ

12:00 – 2:30

Lunch on Your Own

2:15 – 4:30

Pre-Assembly Area

Registration

2:30 – 5:00

Salons ABCD

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

Environmental Justice Committee Meeting

More than a year into this Administration's pullback on environmental justice and diversity, equity, and inclusion, utilities are facing tough choices and real consequences. What's changing inside organizations—and what's being abandoned? Are clean water utilities feeling pressure, facing resistance, or second-guessing past decisions? This discussion will take a candid look at how NACWA has embedded EJ into its new Strategic Plan and will take the pulse on how federal policy is reverberating at the state and local level.

3:30 – 4:00

Networking Break

4:00 – 5:00

Operations and Utility & Resource Management Joint Committee Meeting

Utilities are navigating growing and intersecting challenges with customer affordability, revenue growth, and clean water compliance. This joint session of the Utility & Resource Management and Operations Committees will provide updates on work that NACWA and the water sector are doing to examine alternative revenues and approaches utilities are taking to address the instability of federal funding and finance. NACWA will also introduce its new Clean Water Innovation Initiative and Innovation Blueprint effort to create a comprehensive clean water innovation advocacy strategy. The Initiative will be led by a Technology & Innovation Task Force and aimed at positioning clean water utilities for long-term success in an increasingly digital, AI-enabled, and data-driven future.

Evening

6:00 – 7:30

Salons EFG

Awards Ceremony & Reception

Join us for a celebratory evening recognizing NACWA's National Environmental Achievement Award (NEAA) honorees. The evening will feature the some of the very best initiatives from NACWA's member agencies, 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.

Wednesday, February 4

Morning

9:00 – 12:00

Pre-Assembly Area

Registration

9:00 – 10:00

Buenos Aires I

Spouse & Guest Lounge

9:00 – 5:00
Buenos Aires II

NACWA Networking Lounge

The NACWA Networking Lounge will give you an opportunity to connect with your peers on Tuesday and Wednesday.

9:30 – 12:00
Salons ABCD

Plenary Session I

Opening Remarks

Mickey Conway, NACWA President
Chief Executive Officer
Metro Water Recovery | Denver, CO

Welcoming Remarks

Jay Fink, Director
Miami-Dade County Water and Sewer Department | Miami, FL

Introductory Remarks

Laura Briefer, NACWA Treasurer
Director of Public Utilities
Salt Lake City Corporation | Salt Lake City, UT

9:45 – 10:30

Investing Holistically: It's a Money Issue, But It's Not Just a Money Issue

With federal uncertainty, climate disruption, and rapid advances in technology, public clean water utilities continue to play a critical role and provide local leadership in protecting public health, safety, and the environment. During this challenging time, there's a powerful opportunity to reframe water infrastructure—not just as a cost, but as a smart investment in community well-being and economic vitality—to make the business case for the revenues needed to deliver our essential services. This panel will explore how several utility leaders have strategically crafted their story around water infrastructure funding.

Moderator

Trent Stober, Senior Vice President
HDR Engineering, Inc. | Columbia, MO

Panelists

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

Lisa Rhea, Water Resources Director
Hillsborough County Water Resources | Tampa, FL

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

10:30 – 10:50

Networking Break

10:50 – 12:00

Achieving Your Greatest Potential: Best Leadership Practices for Your Utility

As more communities face technical, social, and financial challenges, utilities are increasingly taking a leadership role. These leading utilities are demonstrating that innovative and skillful water management can significantly contribute to long term sustainability and resilience. Water leaders will highlight lessons learned from practicing adaptive management strategies and forming partnerships while remaining personally resilient in times of unprecedented disruption.

Moderator

Rick Warner, Water Market Strategic Leader
Jacobs | Milwaukee, WI

Panelists

Tanya McCoy-Caretti, Director for US Water Business
Arcadis | Sewickley, PA

Brian Valentino, NACWA Board Member
Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer
Western Monmouth Utilities Authority | Manalapan, NJ

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

12:00

Closing Remarks

Laura Briefer, NACWA Treasurer

Afternoon

12:00 – 2:00

Lunch on Your Own

1:45 – 4:00

Pre-Assembly Area

Registration

2:00 – 5:00

Salons ABCD

Plenary Session II

Opening Remarks

Calvin Farr Jr., NACWA Secretary
General Manager/Chief Executive Officer
Prince William Water | Woodbridge, VA

2:05 – 2:45

Keynote Address

Leading Across the Systems That Shape Communities

Public clean water utilities operate at the intersection of multiple systems that shape community life, including public health, environmental conditions, economic activity, workforce stability, and community trust. As a result, utility leaders are increasingly called to think and lead beyond their organizational boundaries.

Stephanie Norling, President and CEO for Communities of Resilience & Excellence or CORE will introduce a systems leadership perspective focused on understanding interdependencies, aligning efforts across sectors, and creating conditions for shared progress. Drawing on CORE's work with communities nationwide, she will illustrate what leading across systems looks like in practice and how utility leaders can expand their impact without needing to control every lever.

Speaker

Stephanie Norling, President/Chief Executive Officer
Communities of Resilience & Excellence | San Diego, CA

2:45 – 3:30

Utility Leaders are Community Leaders: Advancing from Utilities of Excellence to Communities of Excellence

Utilities have an integral role in ensuring their communities grow and strive for excellence despite external challenges. Through meaningful community engagement and involvement as well as intentional and adequately resourced efforts, utilities can foster community engagement, organization, and communication. This panel will explore how utilities can enable their communities to thrive through real world stories and outcomes.

Moderator

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

Panelists

Kishia Powell, NACWA Board Member
General Manager/Chief Executive Officer
WSSC Water | Laurel, MD

Andrew Lee, NACWA Board Member
General Manager/Chief Executive Officer
Seattle Public Utilities | Seattle, WA

Tony Parrott, Executive Director
Louisville & Jefferson County Metropolitan Sewer District | Louisville, KY

3:30 – 4:00

Networking Break

4:00 – 4:55

Using Creative Solutions to Maximize Benefits with Fewer Resources

Public utilities have long been in strong partnership with their state and federal regulators in ensuring public health, environmental stewardship, and affordability for their communities. Nevertheless, as challenges rise for utilities to obtain capital funding and manage competing interests and expectations at the local, state, and federal levels, public utilities are finding innovative ways to navigate our new normal. This panel will explore how utility leaders are using tools like Integrated Planning to stay in the “driver’s seat” despite changing landscapes and are continuing to meet state and federal requirements while also providing affordable and sustainable solutions for their communities.

Moderator

Mickey Conway, NACWA President

Panelists

Susan Pekarek, NACWA Board Member
General Manager
Johnson County Wastewater | Olathe, KS

Jay Bernas, NACWA Board Member
General Manager/Chief Executive Officer
Hampton Roads Sanitation District | Virginia Beach, VA

Julia Anastasio, Executive Director & General Counsel
Association of Clean Water Administrators | Washington, DC

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

4:55 – 5:00

Closing Remarks

Mickey Conway, NACWA President

Evening

6:00 – 7:00

Pool, 7th Floor

Reception

Join us for our reception to connect with fellow attendees and expand your network at the beautiful outdoor pool.

Thursday, February 5

Morning

8:30 – 11:00

Pre-Assembly

Registration

9:00 – 11:15

Salons ABCD

Plenary Session III

Opening Remarks

David Persinger, NACWA Board Member

General Manager

Anchorage Water & Wastewater Utility | Anchorage, AK

9:00 – 10:00

Breakout Sessions: Choose Your Own Adventure

This session will provide a discussion opportunity on priority topics with fellow participants. Each table will have a different topic and a discussion leader to help facilitate the conversation.

Table Topics:

- Communications
- Data and Technology
- Climate and Resiliency
- Community and Business Transparency
- Governance and Transparency
- Environmental Stewardship and Energy Efficiency
- Lessons for Water's Future

10:00 – 10:45

Fireside Chats: Digital Transformation in Wastewater Treatment

As AI and digital water technology continues to advance, collaboration between utilities and the technology sector becomes more essential. However, it's critical that adoption of any new technology is done in a way that is cognizant of the needs of each utility and their community, as well as done on a timetable that gives the utility adequate time to adapt. This session will allow utilities and their technology partners to walk through how they navigated and adapted new technology uses to their unique needs and goals.

Chat #1: Treatment Optimization and Asset Management

Rob Whitson, Director of Operations, US West Region
Aquasight | Troy, MI

Nitin Goel, Planning and Optimization Division Manager
Central Contra Costa Sanitary District | Martinez, CA

Chat #2: Managing Real-Time Wet Weather Operations

Tim Ruggaber, Founder and Principal
HydroDigital | South Bend, IN

Eric Horvath, Director of Public Works
City of South Bend Wastewater Treatment Plant | South Bend, IN

Chat #3: Proactive Operational Intelligence and Insights

Jennifer Steffens, Director of Digital Water
Carollo Engineers, Inc. | Atlanta, GA

Robert Smith, UE Asset Management Specialist
San Jacinto River Authority | Conroe, TX

10:45 – 11:15

Leading the Way on Resiliency and Adaptation

Given today's political and economic reality, clean water utility leaders are under extreme pressure to make smart decisions with less time, funding, and resources to adapt to increasingly unpredictable weather and climate conditions while maintaining operational readiness and flexibility and supporting growth. How then, can utilities prepare for the future resiliency and sustainability of their operations and communities? This session dives into how forward-thinking utilities and their partners

are pushing past current barriers and creating a new, more resilient and adaptable future.

Speakers

Karen Dettmer, Director of Water Resources
Ramboll | Arlington, VA

Marisela Aranguiz-Cueto, Deputy Director of Planning,
Regulatory Compliance & Capital Infrastructure
Miami-Dade Water and Sewer Department | Miami, FL

Amanda Kinnick, Assistant Director of Utility Engineering
Miami-Dade Water and Sewer Department | Miami, FL

11:15

Closing Remarks

David Persinger, NACWA Board Member