

# 2026 Winter Conference

## Speaker Profiles



### **Carol Adams**

Senior Systems Analyst/  
Disaster Recovery-Business Continuity Coordinator  
Allegheny County Sanitary Authority  
Pittsburgh, PA

[LinkedIn](#)

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### **Julia Anastasio**

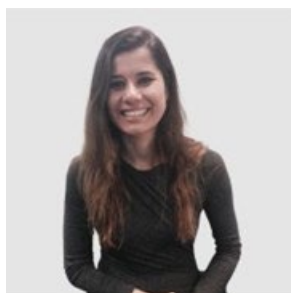
Executive Director & General Counsel  
Association of Clean Water Administrators  
Washington, DC

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**Julia Anastasio** joined the Association of Clean Water Administrators (ACWA) in May 2014 as the Executive Director and General Counsel. ACWA is an independent, nonpartisan national organization of state and interstate water program managers, who on a daily basis implement the water quality programs of the federal Clean Water Act. At ACWA, Ms. Anastasio focuses on working with state water program directors and EPA's Office of Water on ensuring that the states have the flexibility and resources they need to implement the Clean Water Act in their home states.

Ms. Anastasio has over two decades of experience in government, administrative and environmental law and federal policy development. She began her career with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection as an Executive Policy Specialist and returned to Washington, DC in 2005 to work for the America Public Works Association (APWA). While at APWA, she focused on environmental, sustainability and infrastructure development at the local, state and federal levels. Ms. Anastasio earned her BA from Franklin Marshall College, her Masters in Environmental Law and Policy from Vermont Law School, and her JD from American University.

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### **Marisela Aranguiz-Cueto**

Deputy Director of Planning, Regulatory Compliance &  
Capital Infrastructure  
Miami-Dade County Water and Sewer Department  
Miami, FL

[LinkedIn](#)

**Marisela Aranguiz-Cueto** serves as Deputy Director for Planning, Development, Regulatory, and Infrastructure at the Miami-Dade Water and Sewer Department (WASD), where she oversees the planning and delivery of the utility's largest Capital Infrastructure Program, an investment exceeding \$8.9 billion.

She holds bachelor's and master's degrees in Civil Engineering from Florida International University and brings more than 22 years of leadership experience in the water sector. Her expertise includes strategic planning, cross-functional collaboration, and organizational transformation.

Ms. Aranguiz-Cueto is the recipient of the *2021 ASCE Miami-Dade Branch Government of the Year Award* and the *2023 Florida Engineering Society Outstanding Service to the Engineering Profession Award*. She also serves as a Board Member of the Water Research Foundation.

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**Kristen Atha**

NACWA Board Member  
Executive Director  
Columbus Water & Power  
Columbus, OH  
[LinkedIn](#)

**Kristen Atha** serves as the Director, Department of Public Utilities (DPU), for the Columbus Water & Power. In this role, she leads the organization, which includes nearly 1200 employees, including the Division of Water, Division of Sewerage and Drainage and the Division of Power. The Department provides safe, reliable drinking water and wastewater services for over 1.3 million residents in central OH, and electric utilities to approximately 17,000 customers within the City of Columbus. While the Department of Public Utilities is part of the City of Columbus, we provide water and wastewater services to 26 suburban partners, serving in a regional capacity to support the growth and prosperity of the Central Ohio region. Kristen holds Bachelor's degrees in Civil and Environmental Engineering from the University of Cincinnati, and Business Administration from Miami University.

Ms. Atha has spent over 30-years building her career as an environmental engineer focused on working with municipal water and wastewater utilities. Prior to her appointment in 2022 as Director at Columbus Water & Power, she served as a Vice President and Regional Market Sector Leader for AECOM's water business line in the Midwest. Kristen also recently served as the Chair of the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC)'s Sustaining Scioto Board. The Board guides the Sustaining Scioto Implementation Plan to help the Central Ohio region adapt to climate change and ensure access to clean and abundant water for the growing Central Ohio region. Following her term as Chair, MORPC invited Kristen to serve on the Commission's Executive Committee, providing strategic direction on goals, objectives, policy and budgetary issues that impact the region.

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**Jay Bernas***NACWA Board Member*

General Manager/Chief Executive Officer

Hampton Roads Sanitation District

Virginia Beach, VA

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**Jay Bernas** was appointed General Manager by the Hampton Roads Sanitation District (HRSD) Commission in February 2022 after previously serving as the Director of Finance for seven years. He has a demonstrated history of integrating engineering, quantitative and financial skills and driving strong financial performance, including three ratings upgrades within two years and obtaining WIFIA and clean water loans projected to save ratepayers over \$600M.

Before his promotion to this position, Mr. Bernas served as Chief of Planning and Analysis for 10 years and was responsible for planning HRSD's \$1.4 billion Capital Improvement Program, performing business case analyses saving \$239M NPV, system capacity analyses to support regional growth and managing four technical sections: Geographic Information Systems, Data Analysis, Hydraulic Modeling, and Capital Planning. Prior to joining HRSD in 2005, he was a project manager with the City of Virginia Beach.

Mr. Bernas graduated from Old Dominion University in 1995 with a Bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering and earned his MBA from the College of William and Mary in 2013. He also has completed the Kenan-Flagler Water and Wastewater Leadership Program and was part of the 2008 class for LEAD Hampton Roads. He received the George Robert House, Jr. Award for the young public administrator of the year from the American Society for the Public Administration in 2006 and was recognized by Inside Business as a "Top Forty under 40" in 2011.

Appointed by the Virginia Beach City Council to serve on the Planning Commission from 2006-2013, Mr. Bernas was its Chair for the last two years of his tenure. He served as chair of the St. Gregory the Great's School Board from 2015-2019. In 2018, he was elected to the \$2.0 billion Virginia Investment Pool Board of Trustees. In 2020, he was elected to the National Association of Clean Water Agencies Board of Directors.

**Laura Briefer***NACWA Treasurer*

Director of Public Utilities

Salt Lake City Corporation

Salt Lake City, UT

[LinkedIn](#)

**Laura Briefer** is the Director of Salt Lake City Department of Public Utilities (SLCDPU). She has served as Director of SLCDPU since 2016. Ms. Briefer has

worked at SLCDPU for 17 years in various areas of the organization and has devoted a 30-year career to natural resource, environmental, and public policy professions in the public, private, and non-profit sectors. She holds a bachelor's degree in Environmental Studies from the University of California at Santa Barbara, and a Master of Public Administration from the University of Utah. Ms. Briefer additionally serves as an Adjunct Instructor in the Division of Public Affairs at the University of Utah. Ms. Briefer was recognized with the Distinguished Service Award for an Appointed Official by the UT Chapter of the American Society for Public Administration in 2024.

Ms. Briefer is a co-author of several peer-reviewed published papers alongside UT's academic institutions, focused on water resources, climate change, and watershed management. She serves on local and national boards, including the Jordan River and Utah Watershed Councils, the Utah Water Task Force, the Provo River Water Users Association, the National Association of Clean Water Agencies, and the national Water Research Foundation.



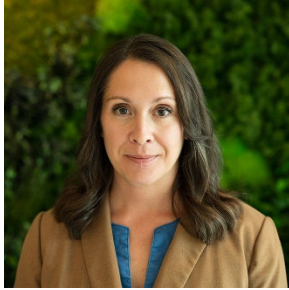
**Mickey Conway**  
*NACWA President*  
Chief Executive Officer  
Metro Water Recovery  
Denver, CO  
[LinkedIn](#)

**Mickey Conway** was named as Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for Metro Water Recovery in Denver, Colorado in January 2018. He served as Metro's General Counsel for the 4 years prior to his appointment as CEO. Metro Water Recovery operates two treatment plants and collection systems that serve over 60 local governments and special districts comprising of approximately 2 million people in the Denver Metro Area.

Prior to working at Metro Water Recovery, Mr. Conway represented wastewater and public entities for nearly twenty years as an attorney. He holds a BA from Southern Methodist University and a JD from the University of San Francisco School of Law.

Mr. Conway currently serves as President on NACWA's Board of Directors.

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**Karen Dettmer**

Director of Water Resources

Ramboll

Arlington, VA

[LinkedIn](#)

**Karen Dettmer** is Director of Water Resources at Ramboll Water Americas, with 25 years' experience in water and environmental engineering, including 16 years in local and federal government. She leads the Water Resources Division in the Americas, manages key client accounts, and advises on business development, focusing on sustainable and equitable water policy. Ms. Dettmer recently served as Managing Director for Infrastructure Implementation at the US EPA's Office of Water, supporting \$50B in water infrastructure investment and advising on regulatory priorities. Previously, she spent 15 years with the City of Milwaukee, including executive leadership roles as commissioner of Public Works and superintendent of Milwaukee Water Works. She serves on the boards of The Water Council and the University of Maryland's Civil and Environmental Engineering Department, is Director Emeritus at Discovery World Science and Technology Museum, and is a licensed professional engineer in DC, MD, VA, and WI.

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**Kyle Dreyfuss-Wells**

NACWA Vice President

Chief Executive Officer

Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District

Cleveland, OH

[LinkedIn](#)

**Kyle Dreyfuss-Wells** was appointed as Chief Executive Officer of the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District in February 2017. During her previous eight years at the Sewer District, Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells coordinated the District's watershed management efforts across District programs, including the Regional Stormwater Management Program and the application of stormwater control measures to reduce combined sewer overflows under the District's Green Infrastructure Policy. She is Region 5 representative on the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA) Board of Trustees, and Chair of the District One Natural Resources Assistance Council for the Ohio Public Works Commission's Clean Ohio Conservation Program.

Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells graduated *Summa Cum Laude* from The Ohio State University with a BS in Biology. She earned Master's degrees with honors in both Public Affairs and Environmental Science at Indiana University's School of Public and Environmental Affairs, and served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Samoa. Before joining the District, she was Director of the Chagrin River Watershed Partners, Inc.





**Calvin Farr, Jr.**

*NACWA Secretary*

General Manager/Chief Executive Officer

Prince William Water

Woodbridge, VA

**Calvin Farr, Jr.** was appointed as Prince William Water's General Manager/Chief Executive Officer in 2021. Prince William Water is the largest combined water and wastewater authority in the Commonwealth of VA and serves more than 380,000 people in Prince William County, one of the fastest-growing and most diverse communities in the DC Metropolitan Area. Mr. Farr leads an award-winning organization and a nationally recognized model for performance excellence and industry best practices, including workplace culture, operational optimization, infrastructure investments and financial viability.

During his tenure, Mr. Farr led a refresh of the organization's Mission and Vision and a collaborative creation of its 2023-2028 Strategic Plan. Prince William Water's strategic Areas of Excellence focus on delivery of an exceptional customer experience, being a workplace of choice, demonstrating environmental leadership and community engagement, providing sustainable operations, practicing sound financial stewardship, and striving to continuously improve and be innovative. Through customer, stakeholder, and workforce input, technology enhancements and a rebranding effort were initiated to further enhance the customer experience. An organizational name change to Prince William Water, plus a new logo and tagline – "Your Water, Your Environment, Our Mission" – reinforces the organization's role as an environmental leader and its commitment to the community.

Mr. Farr has extensive leadership experience in the water and wastewater industry and serves on several national industry boards, focused on legislative and regulatory policy advocacy and One Water strategies. Mr. Farr holds an Executive Master of Public Management from the University of Maryland, a Master of Environmental Engineering from the Johns Hopkins University and a BA in Civil Engineering from the Old Dominion University. Mr. Farr is also a licensed Professional Engineer (PE) in VA, MD and DC.



**James Ferguson**

Assistant Director of Planning & Regulatory Compliance

Miami-Dade County Water and Sewer Department

Miami, FL

[LinkedIn](#)

**Jim Ferguson, PE** has been working with the Miami-Dade Water and Sewer Department (WASD) for approximately 23 years. He is currently an Assistant Director leading a portfolio of approximately 190 professional,

scientific and field staff across Planning and Modeling, Regulatory Compliance , Hydrogeology Technical Services and Development Services. His past work experience at WASD includes: Senior Program Manager for the Ocean Outfall Legislation (OOL) Program and Chief Engineer overseeing the Engineering Division, including the Survey, Specification and Design Sections. As part of his duties he managed the successful \$600 million upgrade of the County's South District Wastewater Treatment Plant to meet FDEP's High Level Disinfection standards.

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**Robert Ferrante**

*NACWA Board Member*

Chief Engineer & General Manager

Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts

Whittier, CA

[LinkedIn](#)

**Robert Ferrante** became Chief Engineer and General Manager for the Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County in August 2019. He reports directly to the Boards of Directors of the Districts, comprised of the Mayors of the 78 cities located within its service area and the Board of Supervisors for unincorporated county territory. The Districts provide wastewater management for 5.6 million residents and manage roughly 20% of the solid waste in the county. In his position, he oversees all the departments and activities of the Districts'. Under Mr. Ferrante's leadership the agency has developed a food waste to energy program, is constructing a new seven-mile effluent tunnel, and is developing a large regional recycling program with other utility partners. These projects align with the Districts' mission of converting waste into resources and replacing aging infrastructure.

Mr. Ferrante joined the Districts in 1993 as a Project Engineer working on air quality issues impacting wastewater treatment. His work included representing the National Association of Clean Water Agencies with the Environmental Protection Agency in the development of the Publicly Owned Treatment Works National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants. Mr. Ferrante worked in wastewater operations for five years overseeing the Districts biogas to energy facility and treatment plant operations at the Joint Water Pollution Control Plant. He held various management roles in the Solid Waste Department overseeing the Districts' solid waste energy plants, landfills, and material recovery facilities. In 2011, Mr. Ferrante was promoted to Assistant Chief Engineer and Assistant General Manager where he oversaw the day to day operation of the Districts' departments.

Mr. Ferrante has a BS in Mechanical Engineering from the University of California, Berkeley and a MS in Environmental Engineering from Stanford University. He is a registered professional engineer in CA and board-certified environmental engineer by the American Academy of Environmental Engineers and Scientists.

Mr. Ferrante serves on various boards and commissions including CA WaterReuse and the Southern CA Coastal Water Research Program.

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**Jay Fink**

Director

Miami-Dade County Water and Sewer Department

Miami, FL

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**Jay Fink, PE** is the Director of the Miami-Dade Water and Sewer Department, where he leads one of the largest public utilities in the nation, overseeing complex water and wastewater systems serving a rapidly growing region. With more than 30 years of municipal leadership experience, Director Fink brings a deep understanding of infrastructure planning, capital delivery, and operational resilience.

Before joining Miami-Dade County, he served as Deputy Director of Public Works for the City of Miami Beach, where he advanced major stormwater and infrastructure initiatives incorporating climate adaptation, flooding projections, and long-term risk mitigation. His career also includes distinguished service in MA, where he was Commissioner of Public Works for the City of Worcester. In that role, he led a multi-year capital program to modernize aging water, sewer, and stormwater systems dating back to the 1800s, prioritizing environmental benefits and regulatory compliance.

Director Fink has held additional executive roles in the cities of Lynn, Quincy, and Newton, as well as regional Boards such as the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority Advisory Board, further strengthening his expertise in utility operations, asset management, and system modernization. Under his leadership, the Miami-Dade Water and Sewer Department continues to advance large scale capital investments focused on system reliability, regulatory compliance, climate resilience, and long-term service to residents and businesses.

He holds a BS in Civil Engineering, cum laude, from Northeastern University and a MS in Civil Engineering from Tufts University. Director Fink is a registered Professional Engineer in both FL and MA.

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**Kurt Fremont**

Division Manager, Business Operations  
City of Tacoma, Environmental Services Department  
Tacoma, WA

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**Nitin Goel**

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

[LinkedIn](#)

After building a strong technical foundation as a consulting engineering for close to a decade, **Nitin Goel** moved to Central San, first focusing on planning work, then transitioning to Asset Management and pre-design of Treatment Plant Projects. Currently, serving as Optimization Manager with broad responsibilities for all Districtwide optimization efforts. Mr. Goel has a passion for helping my team grow and evolve professionally and collaborating with workgroups all over the organization to provide better work products. Mr. Goel did his Bachelor of Technology in Civil Engineering from Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi, India and MS in Civil Engineering from Duke University.

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**Martin Griffin**

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

[LinkedIn](#)

**Martye Griffin** has always been about the 'WE' in 'WATER' and how human decisions impact water quality.

Mr. Griffin received his bachelor's degree from Lawrence University in Appleton, WI. He then received a graduate degree in biology from the Marine Biological Laboratory in MA, examining the impacts of excess nutrients on coastal ecosystems. He has over 20 years of experience working in the public and private sectors looking holistically at the interaction between human land use and water quality. With increasing societal and regulatory pressure to produce cleaner water than ever, it costs more to clean water after it is polluted than preventing the pollution in the first place.

In his role, Mr. Griffin focuses on solving problems adaptively to move at the speed of trust. Working in communities focusing on pollution prevention is just the way we must do business.

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**Kamuron Gurol**

*NACWA Board Member*

Division Director

King County Wastewater Treatment Division

Seattle, WA

[LinkedIn](#)

**Kamuron Gurol** has served as the Director of the Wastewater Treatment Division (WTD) in the Department of Natural Resources and Parks since April 2021. He manages WTD's 800+ employees in five sections, an operating budget of approximately \$200+ million, and an annual capital budget of \$350 million.

Prior to WTD, he served as the North Corridor Director for Sound Transit, and oversaw a portfolio of light rail transit expansion, new bus rapid transit service and enhanced commuter rail projects – with projects up to \$4 billion.

Before then, he was the city manager for Burien, director of community development at Sammamish, corridor planning director at WSDOT, and director of Community Development at Kitsap County. He also managed long range planning at Snohomish County and held senior planning roles for King County.

Mr. Gurol has an MPA from the Harvard Kennedy School and a BS in Geological Sciences from the University of Washington.

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**Michael Hastings**

Cyber Security Advisor

US Department of Homeland Security

South Florida

**Michael Hastings** is a Cyber Security Advisor with the US Department of Homeland Security, Cyber Security and Infrastructure Security Agency in South Florida. Michael's background includes experience as Vice President of IT Risk Management for a national commercial bank, and operational positions in cyber security, IT governance and network operations in regional and national critical infrastructure organizations. He is also an Army veteran and served as a Division Chief Information Officer. Michael holds an MBA in Technology and Management and is a Certified Information Systems Security Professional.

**Jamie Heisig-Mitchell***Co-Chair, Water Quality Committee*

Chief of Water Quality

Hampton Roads Sanitation District

Virginia Beach, VA

**Jamie Heisig-Mitchell** became Director of Water Quality in November of 2022, overseeing the Central Environmental Laboratory (CEL), Pretreatment and Pollution Prevention (P3), and the Technical Service Division (TSD). In her previous position as Chief of TSD, she managed staff involvement in environmental and wastewater monitoring and research as well as assuming responsibility for HRSD's permit negotiations and oversight of regulatory compliance with Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, and Safe Drinking Water Act programs. Mrs. Heisig-Mitchell serves on the board of the Virginia Association of Municipal Wastewater Agencies (VAMWA) and the University of Colorado Boulder's Water Reuse Advisory Board, is Chair of VAMWA's Water Quality Committee, Co-Chair of the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA) Biosolids Committee, Past-President of the Virginia Biosolids Council, member of the Eastern Virginia Medical School's Institutional Biosafety Committee, and has served on numerous VA Department of Environmental Quality Advisory Panels and Subcommittees. Mrs. Heisig-Mitchell received her MS from Old Dominion University in Norfolk, VA.

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**Sharise Horne***Co-Chair, Environmental Justice Committee*

Chief of Equity and Community Partnerships

Louisville &amp; Jefferson County Metropolitan Sewer District

Louisville, KY

[LinkedIn](#)

**Sharise Horne** is a well-seasoned veteran in the public utility arena. She currently serves as the Director of Community Benefits & Partnerships for Louisville Metropolitan Sewer District (MSD), responsible for overseeing inclusive and comprehensive programs that foster partnerships with communities within MSD's service area. She previously managed the Procurement Department where she worked for over 10 years overseeing the procurement process, ensuring agency compliance with procurement regulations and state policies, as well as directing, managing, and supervising staff. She has worked in various departments and roles within the agency during her 20 plus year tenure.

As an advocate for social justice and economic stimulation amongst underserved communities, Ms. Horne outfits programs to create job creation through workforce tools. She is currently one of approximately 10,000 nationally Certified Professional Public Buyers. Ms. Horne holds two undergraduate degrees from Indiana Wesleyan University,

both Magna Cum Laude. Who's Who Louisville, Louisville Black Achievers, and Indiana Wesleyan University have recognized her for her success and leadership.

Ms. Horne currently serves on Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer's Equity in Contracting & Procurement Taskforce, the US Water Alliance Water Equity & Affordability Taskforce, and various national and local taskforce and committees. She is a member of the National Association of Clean Water Agencies, Water Environment Federation, and Water Agency Leaders Alliance.

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**Eric Horvath**

Director of Public Works  
City of South Bend Wastewater Treatment Plant  
South Bend, IN  
[LinkedIn](#)

**Eric Horvath**, a native of South Bend, was named the city's Director of Public Works in December 2012. The City of South Bend's Department of Public Works has over 300 employees and an enterprise and capital improvement combined budget of over \$100 million per year. Mr. Horvath previously held positions with American Structurepoint, an architecture and engineering firm headquartered in Indianapolis. Mr. Horvath was responsible for the administration and operations of the regional office in South Bend, where he specialized in water, sewer, transportation, and environmental engineering design, as well as the financial management and budgetary control of large public works projects. Before his time at American Structurepoint, Mr. Horvath worked for the City of Elkhart, IN where he served as public works and utilities director and city engineer, overseeing a staff of 150 employees and an annual operating and capital budget of over \$34 million.

Mr. Horvath graduated from the University of Notre Dame in 1993 with bachelor's degrees in civil engineering and psychology. He received a MS in Public Administration from Notre Dame in 2001. Mr. Horvath is also a licensed Professional Engineer in IN.

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**Amanda Kinnick**

Assistant Director of Utility Engineering  
Miami-Dade County Water & Sewer Department  
Miami, FL

**Amanda Kinnick** is an accomplished water utility leader with over 15 years' experience in engineering, capital improvement, policy development, and executive management across public and private sectors. She is known for collaborative leadership and a strong commitment to community services, resource efficiency, and environmental stewardship.

As a licensed Professional Engineer in FL and WI, Ms. Kinnick has extensive expertise in system reliability, regulatory compliance, and performance enhancement. She has managed major infrastructure projects from inception to completion and holds a Master of Public Administration from Florida International University.

Recently promoted to Assistant Director of Utility Engineering, Ms. Kinnick manages more than 80 engineers and hundreds of projects under an \$8.8 billion multi-year Capital Improvement Plan. Her role includes budget oversight, funding strategy, and promoting teamwork among staff and stakeholders.

Previously, as a Senior Project Manager, she delivered complex infrastructure projects efficiently and leading an asset management initiative that improved decision-making through risk-based prioritization and analytics. She began her career providing specialized water and wastewater engineering solutions nationwide.



**Andrew Lee**

*NACWA Board Member*

General Manager/Chief Executive Officer

Seattle Public Utilities

Seattle, WA

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**Andrew Lee** joined Seattle Public Utilities in 2019, and is currently the Interim General Manager/Chief Executive Officer. Mr. Lee has over 20 years of experience in utilities, having worked for Seattle Public Utilities, the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, Bellevue Utilities, Brown and Caldwell, and Olivia Chen Consultants (now AECOM).

Mr. Lee, who is a Professional Engineer and Program/Project Management Professional, has extensive experience in capital planning and program management, regulatory compliance and negotiations, asset management, and drainage, wastewater, and drinking water engineering.

He has a BS degree in Civil and Environmental Engineering and an MS degree in Environmental Engineering and Sciences, both from Stanford University. Mr. Lee is a member of the Project Management Institute, and has been a past member of the American Water Works Association and the Water Environment Federation.

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**Bess McCoy**

*Co-Chair, Communications & Public Affairs Committee*

Manager of Public Affairs

Metropolitan St. Louis Sewer District

St. Louis, MO

**Bess McCoy** serves as the Manager of Public Affairs at MSD Project Clear in St. Louis, MO, where she leads communication and outreach initiatives to protect our most vital resource – water. With a focus on strategic communication, stakeholder engagement, and media relations, Bess effectively engages over 1,000 employees and 1.3 million customers in MSD’s clean water initiatives. As a dedicated advocate for clean water, she is honored to be the Co-Chair of the National Association of Clean Water Agencies Communications and Public Affairs Committee.

Before joining MSD, Bess was the Public Information Officer for the City of Creve Coeur in St. Louis County. She also spent four years in the advertising industry, specializing in online marketing and strategic research. In addition to her professional roles, Bess actively contributes to her community as the public relations lead and spokesperson for St. Louis Mardi Gras. A proud St. Louis native, Bess earned a BA in Communication from Saint Louis University.

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**Tanya McCoy-Caretti**

Director for US Water Business

Arcadis US, Inc.

Sewickley, PA

[LinkedIn](#)

**Tanya McCoy-Caretti** works with a team of water experts who deliver innovative and sustainable solutions for our clients across the water sector. With over 10 years of experience in civil engineering industry, Ms. McCoy-Caretti has a strong track record of developing and managing strategic partnerships, security and executing large-scale projects, and driving revenue growth and profitability for Arcadis.

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**Amanda McInnis**

Senior Project Manager – Northwest

Jacobs

Missoula, MT

[LinkedIn](#)

**Amanda McInnis’** extensive experience negotiating wastewater discharge permits combined with her wastewater treatment process expertise enables her to effectively Jacobs water quality and planning teams.



Her thoughtful and inquisitive approach to team management encourages the kind of innovative thinking essential to negotiating a successful compliance. Leading diverse teams of experts requires a thorough understanding of their roles and the value each can bring. Ms. McInnis has demonstrated experience leading highly technical teams through her work with facility planning. Her experience working with communities to meet water quality goals also often supports a sound legal strategy. As a committed client advocate, Ms. McInnis has a track record of successfully helping her clients obtain long-term cost-effective compliance.

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**Cassandra Moore**

Assistant Division Manager  
City of Tacoma, Environmental Services Department  
Tacoma, WA

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**Stephanie Norling**

President/Chief Executive Officer  
Communities of Resilience & Excellence  
San Diego, CA  
[LinkedIn](#)

**Stephanie Norling** is the President and Chief Executive Officer of Communities of Resilience & Excellence (C.O.R.E.), formerly Communities of Excellence 2026, a role she has held since 2014. A nationally recognized leader in community systems change and performance excellence, she has played a central role in developing and advancing the Baldrige-based C.O.R.E. Guide, a practical framework that helps communities align leadership, strategy, and measurement to achieve meaningful, measurable results.

Under Ms. Norling's leadership, C.O.R.E. launched the National Learning Collaborative, supporting communities across the country in applying systems thinking and cross-sector collaboration to complex challenges. This work has since evolved into the Impact Pathway, C.O.R.E.'s milestone-based approach to advancing sustainable community outcomes. Stephanie continues to serve as faculty, mentoring community leaders and guiding teams as they move from shared purpose to sustained impact.

Ms. Norling began her career at the Institute for Healthcare Improvement and later earned an MBA with a Certificate in Nonprofit Management from the University of San Diego. Deeply committed to performance excellence, she served for three years as a National Baldrige Examiner and currently serves on the board of the Alliance for Performance Excellence. In 2023, she received the Baldrige Foundation's Award for Leadership Excellence in recognition of her contributions to the nonprofit sector.

Driven by a passion for collaboration and innovation, Ms. Norling has dedicated her career to empowering communities to achieve transformative outcomes and improve quality of life for all residents.

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**Tony Parrott**

Executive Director

Louisville & Jefferson County Metropolitan Sewer District

Louisville, KY

[LinkedIn](#)

**Tony Parrott** has been in the public utility business for thirty years. He joined the Butler County Department of Environmental Services as Executive Director from 1995 through 2004.

In 2005, he became Executive Director of the Metropolitan Sewer District (MSD) of Greater Cincinnati—bringing wastewater services to 1,200,000 residents of Cincinnati, Hamilton County, and southwestern OH residents. While at Cincinnati MSD, Mr. Parrott successfully negotiated a federal Consent Decree with the US Department of Justice and the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which the federal court approved in August 2010. In 2013, Mr. Parrott was appointed the Executive Director of the Metropolitan Sewer District of Greater Cincinnati and the Greater Cincinnati Water Works.

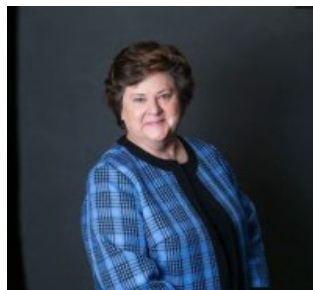
Under Mr. Parrott's leadership, the Metropolitan Sewer District of Greater Cincinnati won the 2014 US Water Prize from the US Urban Water Sustainability Council, a division of the US Water Alliance. Cincinnati MSD also received the Platinum Award for Excellence in Management from the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA) in 2015.

In 2015, he was appointed the Louisville/Jefferson County Metropolitan Sewer District's Executive Director, serving residents in Louisville Metro, Oldham, and Bullitt counties. At Louisville MSD, Mr. Parrott oversees a federal Consent Decree and an annual capital budget of \$300M to bring safe, clean waterways to the community and improve the value of water as a community resource. He is the Water Agency Leaders Alliance President. In 2011, Mr. Parrott was honored as a WEF Fellow by the Water Environment Federation, and in February 2014, he was recognized by NACWA with a National Environment Achievement Award. His expertise was further acknowledged in 2017, when he was appointed to the US EPA's Environmental Financial Advisory Board. In 2021, Mr. Parrott's contributions were recognized by his appointment to the National Forum for Black Public Administrators Board of Directors.

He was awarded the NACWA President Award in 2022; in 2023, MSD was awarded the NACWA Utility of the Future Award. In 2024, Mr. Parrott was appointed to the US Water Alliance Board of Directors and in November 2024 he received the Owner of the Year Award from the Design Build Institute of America.

In 2025, he was awarded the National Environmental Achievement Award for Utility Leadership.

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**Susan Pekarek**

*NACWA Board Member*  
General Manager  
Johnson County Wastewater  
Olathe, KS  
[LinkedIn](#)

**Susan Pekarek** is the General Manager for Johnson County Wastewater. She has been with Johnson County for 19 years and was promoted to General Manager in 2016 after serving as the Chief Engineer for three years. Ms. Pekarek provided capital improvement planning and management prior to becoming Chief, leading over \$100M in capital projects supporting growth and asset renewal. She is responsible for overseeing the strategic direction and operations of the Wastewater Department at Johnson County.

Ms. Pekarek graduated from Kansas State University with BS and MS in Civil Engineering. She holds a Professional Engineering license in the state of KS and a Class IV Wastewater Operator's license. She is active in professional organizations including the National Association of Clean Water Agencies and served as the President of the Kansas Water Environment Association in 2017-18. Ms. Pekarek is a graduate of the 2019 Leadership Overland Park Class.

A native Kansan, Ms. Pekarek grew up in rural northeast KS and currently resides in Johnson County.

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**David Persinger**

*NACWA Board Member*  
General Manager  
Anchorage Water & Wastewater Utility  
Anchorage, AK

**David Persinger** is the General Manager of the Anchorage Water and Wastewater Utility (AWWU) in Anchorage, Alaska, where he oversees all aspects of utility operations. With over 20 years of experience in water and wastewater utility management, Mr. Persinger started his career at AWWU as an Engineering Intern. He has progressed through multiple leadership roles, including oversight of treatment operations, maintenance operations, and environmental permitting. A licensed Professional Engineer and recipient of the *George Warren Fuller Award*, he is a committed advocate for sustainable infrastructure, collaborative

leadership, and environmental stewardship. Mr. Persinger brings a strong record of utility governance, public service, and technical expertise to the clean water sector.

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**Kishia Powell**

*NACWA Board Member*

General Manager/Chief Executive Officer

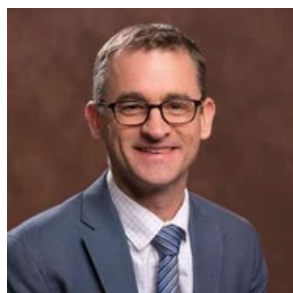
WSSC Water

Laurel, MD

[LinkedIn](#)

**Kishia Powell** is a dynamic force in the global water sector with 27 years of experience in both the public and private sectors across the US and London. She leads a team of 1789 strong and manages the day-to-day operations of the largest water utility in MD – the 8th largest in the country – and ensures water and water resource recovery services are safely provided to 1.9 million customers throughout a 1,000-square-mile service area. WSSC Water has a combined operating and capital budget of \$1.8 billion, and a six-year capital program of 4.8 billion. Ms. Powell served on President Biden’s National Infrastructure Advisory Council’s Subcommittee for Expanding Workforce Development. She currently serves on the board of the National Association of Clean Water Agencies, (formerly as President), representing over 400 clean water agencies across the country; the Water Research Foundation’s Board of Directors; and the Baltimore Water Task Force. In May 2023, the Maryland Society of Professional Engineers honored her with the *Industry Icon Award*.

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**Nathan Qualls**

*Co-Chair, Utility & Resource Management Committee*

Executive Director

NEW Water

Green Bay, WI

[LinkedIn](#)

**Nathan Qualls** has been with NEW Water since 2008. Prior to his role as Executive Director, he worked as the Director of Technical Services and Staff Engineer in NEW Water’s Engineering Department. He has a wealth of experience in the wastewater sector, including industrial wastewater treatment prior to his work with NEW Water. Mr. Qualls has a BS in Chemical Engineering from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He is a registered Professional Engineer in WI.

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**Lisa Rhea**

Water Resources Director  
Hillsborough County Public Utilities  
Tampa, FL

[LinkedIn](#)

**Lisa Rhea** is a FL Professional Engineer with an MS in Environmental Engineering from the University of South Florida and currently serves as the Hillsborough County Water Resources Department Director. She oversees a team of approximately 800 employees to ensure the daily operations of the County's water, wastewater and reclaimed water service areas to meet the growing needs of the community. The Water Resources Department owns and operates four water treatment plants, two water booster stations, five wastewater treatment plants, over 900 lift stations, and over 6,000 miles of pipe connection all the facilities. Design and construction are underway for two new facilities, a 60-MGD water treatment plant and a 24-MGD wastewater treatment plant. The Department includes engineering, capital project development and delivery with a 5-year CIP value of \$2.2 billion, and customer service and financial management with revenues exceeding \$400 million. Prior to joining Hillsborough County, she worked in private consulting at Jones Edmunds and Associates, served as the Director of Public Works for the City of Oldsmar, and managed wastewater services for the City of St. Petersburg.

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**Tim Ruggaber**

Founder and Principal  
HydroDigital  
South Bend, IN

[LinkedIn](#)

**Tim Ruggaber** is a founder and a Principal with HydroDigital. He has worked in the Digital Water arena since 2004 and has developed a number of tools for Real Time Control, Real Time Decision Support Systems, and Real Time Monitoring Systems. He has extensive experience in managing multidisciplinary teams that involve hydraulic and hydrological modeling, real-time control development and implementation, and complex computing platforms. Mr. Ruggaber has worked in providing solutions for wastewater collection systems for over 40 wastewater utilities in North America and Europe, reducing the amount of untreated wastewater overflows by more than 20 billion gallons and reducing new infrastructure needs by more than \$4 billion.

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**Andrew Sawyers**

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

[LinkedIn](#)

**Andrew Sawyers** is the Director of the Office of Wastewater Management (OWM) at US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Prior to joining OWM, Mr. Sawyers was the Deputy Director of the EPA's Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water. Prior to joining EPA, Mr. Sawyers was the Program Administrator for the MD Water Quality Financing Administration, managing MD's Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds and MD's Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund. Mr. Sawyers has a PhD from Johns Hopkins University in Geography and Environmental Engineering.

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**Joshua Schimmel**

*NACWA Board Member*  
Executive Director  
Springfield Water and Sewer Commission  
Agawam, MA

The management of day-to-day operations, strategic direction, and personnel is overseen by Executive Director **Josh D. Schimmel**.

Mr. Schimmel joined the wastewater department of Springfield DPW in 1993 prior to the formation of the Commission in 1996. He served in Engineering and as Director of Wastewater Operations at the Commission before becoming Executive Director in 2016.

Mr. Schimmel serves on the boards of the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA) and the Massachusetts Coalition for Water Resources Stewardship (MCWRS). He is also active in several other state, regional, and national water industry organizations, including the Massachusetts Water Works Association (MWWA) and the New England Water Environment Association (NEWEA).

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**Jean Smith**

*Co-Chair, Communications and Public Affairs Committee*  
Director of Administration and External Affairs  
Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District  
Cleveland, OH

**Jean Smith** joined the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District (Cleveland, OH) in 2006 as a Public Information Specialist. She currently serves as Director of Administration and External Affairs, and is responsible for



internal and external communications, public outreach and education as well as media relations. She serves as the Co-Chair of the National Association of Clean Water Agencies' Communications and Public Affairs Committee.

Prior to the Sewer District, Mrs. Smith worked for the American Red Cross Northern Ohio Blood Services Region handling communications and media relations for 19 counties. She worked for Clear Channel Communications, including as Promotions Director for 96.5 Kiss FM and Mix 106.5.

A native of Columbus, OH, she holds a Bachelors degree from Baldwin Wallace University and a MPA Degree and a MBA Degree from Cleveland State University (CSU).

Mrs. Smith lives in Lakewood, which sits on the beautiful Lake Erie, with her husband Brad, daughter Harper, son Declan, and pups, Jack, Cooper and Nola.

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**Robert Smith**

UE Asset Management Specialist  
San Jacinto River Authority  
Conroe, TX

[LinkedIn](#)

**Robert Smith** currently serves as Utility Enterprise Asset Management Specialist with San Jacinto River Authority supporting the water and wastewater operations. He oversees data management and supports users within their Enterprise Asset Management system (EAM), Water Information Management System (WIMS), Digital Water System (DWS) and Inventory Management system (D365). Using over 20 years of experience working with data management, Robert focuses on improving water and wastewater operations through data integration and standardizing processes. SJRA's digital transformation has increased efficiency, consistency, and workforce proficiency, which improves asset visibility, maintenance planning, risk assessment and decision making.

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**Jennifer Steffens**

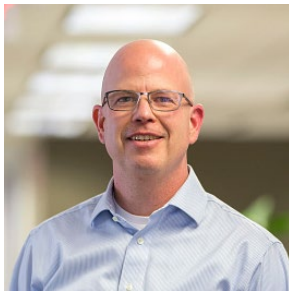
Director of Digital Water  
Carollo Engineers, Inc.  
Atlanta, GA

[LinkedIn](#)

**Jennifer Steffens** is a Professional Engineer and Carollo's Director of Digital Water, where she leads the firm's strategy and practice in applying advanced analytics, AI/ML, and real-time intelligence to help water utilities operate with greater confidence, resilience, and efficiency. With two decades of experience in digital transformation across water, wastewater, and stormwater systems,

Ms. Steffens works closely with utilities to translate data into actionable insights that improve treatment performance, optimize operations, and support effective decision-making.

Ms. Steffens is a frequent collaborator with NACWA utility members and a champion of digital tools that elevates our water workforce rather than replace it, ensuring that technology strengthens the expertise of operators, engineers, and utility staff. Her work centers on practical, operator-focused innovation and is known for her ability to bridge technical depth with real-world application, guiding utilities through the complexities of digital modernization amid workforce pressures, climate uncertainty, and evolving regulatory landscapes. She is a trusted advisor to clients navigating this transition and a leading voice in shaping the future of digital water.



**Trent Stober**

Senior Vice President  
HDR Engineering, Inc.  
Columbia, MO  
[LinkedIn](#)

**Trent Stober** is the Senior Vice President with experience in water quality assessment and regulatory projects that have shaped major municipal infrastructure programs across the nation. He has managed projects that include wastewater and stormwater utility planning, discharge permitting, assessment of receiving water-beneficial uses and their attainability, and watershed monitoring and management.

Mr. Stober is passionate about collaboration between regulators, utilities and other stakeholders to address community priorities related to the Clean Water Act and other infrastructure needs. In his role as director, he manages a diverse staff in technical areas such as integrated municipal planning, regulatory and enforcement action support, program and project management, asset management, and utility operations. He is a regulatory specialist with a history of applying his experiences, knowledge and practical approaches to solve challenging problems.

Mr. Stober is proud of being a trusted advisor for many communities as they address more stringent regulatory requirements, including some of the most complicated quality issues in Missouri and Environmental Protection Agency Region 7. He has testified quarterly on water quality and permitting issues for over 10 years before the Missouri Clean Water Commission, which is appointed by the Governor to oversee the Missouri Department of Natural Resources Water Protection Program.

He holds a Master's degree in Civil Engineering and a Bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Missouri and was recently inducted as a member of the University's Civil Engineering Academy of Distinguished Alumni.

**Todd Swingle**

*NACWA Board Member*  
Chief Executive Officer  
Toho Water Authority  
Kissimmee, FL

[LinkedIn](#)

**Todd Swingle** serves as the Chief Executive Officer/Executive Director for the Toho Water Authority (Toho) in Kissimmee, FL. Toho serves approximately 170,000 connections with services including Water, Wastewater, and Reuse Water. Mr. Swingle leads over 600 employees that operate 24 water and water reclamation facilities, over 4,600 miles of pipelines and 630 pump stations.

Before joining Toho, Mr. Swingle spent over 25 years serving in various environmental management roles in the utilities, consulting, and manufacturing spaces in the US and globally. He is active in a variety of civic and professional organizations focused on community and the environment. Professionally, Mr. Swingle serves as a board member for the National Association of Clean Water Agencies, the Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies, the Water Research Foundation, and the Florida Water Environment Association Utility Council. Mr. Swingle holds Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in Environmental Engineering from the University of Central Florida, an MBA from the University of Florida, and is a registered Professional Engineer.

**Brian Valentino**

*NACWA Board Member*  
Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer  
Western Monmouth Utilities Authority  
Manalapan, NJ

[LinkedIn](#)

**Brian Valentino** currently serves as Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer of the Western Monmouth Utilities Authority (WMUA). He has led clean water, stormwater, wastewater, and electric utility operations across multiple jurisdictions, and has been a driving force behind award-winning initiatives in sustainability, workforce development, and public policy.

Mr. Valentino is the founder and Academy Director of the Environmental Professional Development Academy (EPDA), an acclaimed leadership pipeline program that has graduated over 150 clean water professionals nationwide. Under his leadership, EPDA has earned the National Environmental Achievement Award, the OneWater Award, and contributed to WMUA's designation as a Water Resources Utility of the Future Today.

At the state level, he serves as Vice President of the Association of Environmental Authorities (AEA), where he oversees the association's budget, governance, strategic planning, conferences, membership growth, and legislative strategy. He has also been nominated to the New Jersey State Clean Water Council, cementing his influence on statewide water policy. Additionally, he serves on the Board of Directors of the National Association of Clean Water Agencies.

He has served on the Global Policy Committee of the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) and actively contributes to legislative and regulatory discourse across state and national platforms.

Mr. Valentino champions a culture-driven approach to visionary utility management rooted in innovation, service, equity, and future-focused leadership.

He holds a BA degree in Political Science from Marymount University and a Master of Public Administration degree from American University.

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**Rick Warner**

Water Market Strategic Leader Americas  
Jacobs  
Milwaukee, WI  
[LinkedIn](#)

**Rick Warner's** water journey began at the Truckee Meadows Water Reclamation Facility in NV, where he honed his technical expertise in environmental compliance and process optimization. Over the years, he has held leadership roles in public utilities, private consulting, and national water organizations — bringing a unique blend of technical depth, strategic vision and collaborative spirit to every project.

He has led regional initiatives like OneWater Nevada, a pioneering potable reuse program, and co-founded the Nevada Water Innovation Institute and Partnering for Impact, both of which foster innovation and collaboration across the water sector. His expertise lies in helping communities navigate the intersection of water scarcity, climate resilience and infrastructure modernization.

At Jacobs, Mr. Warner continues to lead strategic growth efforts for water mega markets, helping communities implement programs that deliver affordable, equitable and lasting results. His work bridges technical excellence with community engagement, delivering infrastructure that reflects the values and needs of the people it serves.

Mr. Warner has served as President of the Water Environment Federation (WEF), Director of the Water Research Foundation (WRF) and Chair of independent expert panels for the National Water Research Institute (NWRI). He has also contributed to national initiatives

with the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), US State Department, and WaterReuse Association. With a passion for mentoring and a commitment to public service, Mr. Warner continues to shape the future of water through thought leadership, advocacy and collaboration.

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**Rob Whitson**

Director of Operations, US West  
Aquasight  
Troy, MI  
[LinkedIn](#)

**Rob Whitson** serves as Aquasight's Director of Operations for the US West Region. He has nearly two decades in the water, wastewater, and waterpower sectors with experience working with large municipal utilities, Fortune 500s, and others to drive adoption of new wastewater and water technologies, and design and implement water quality compliance programs that benefit rate payers and the environment.