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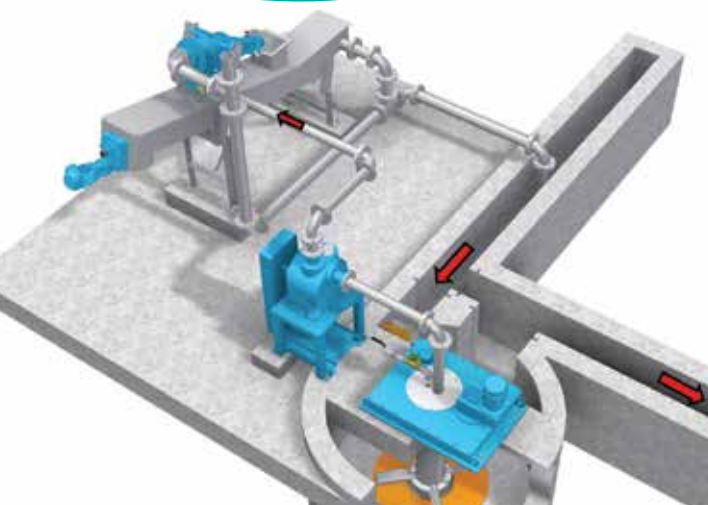


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*Steve Seibert,
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Water Engineering and Beyond

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A New Mission Statement and Strategic Goals

By Timothy Wedin



Thanks to everyone who attended the 98th Annual Meeting in Madison this year. It was a fantastic event that included a strong technical program, and great outings. Thanks to Past President Troy Larson, the Local Arrangements Committee, and the Technical Committee for all your hard work!

At our Awards Banquet on the Thursday of the Conference, I shared with you the efforts that the Executive Committee has been working on to continue to grow and improve the Association. An ad hoc Committee, led by Amy Underwood, worked with WEF to identify what CSWEA is doing well, and where we can improve. This included a survey that you completed, telling us what you thought the Association was doing well, and what we could improve on. With this input, the Ad Hoc Committee wrote a new Mission Statement: *"The Central States Water Environment Association facilitates connection, training, and technical excellence for current and future water professionals."*

Three strategic initiatives were identified as a part of this process; three areas where we wanted to focus on continued improvement.

The first of these is **Connection**. This initiative is focused on developing a connecting and welcoming culture. The goal is to connect Young Professionals with Seasoned Professionals, not only to help YPs understand how to get more involved, but to help SPs understand what YPs are looking for in CSWEA.

The second initiative is the development of our **Water Workforce**. CSWEA will continue to provide and promote opportunities for members to be involved in CSWEA, not only in events but also in committees. We will also seek to improve ways to increase operator involvement in CSWEA. We are proud of our Ops

Challenge Teams, and their success at WEFTEC, including the Pumper's 1st Place finish in Division 3. Additionally, we will reach out to the workforce of the future by expanding participation in the Water's Worth It Essay Competition, participating in Children's Water Festivals in our communities, and finding ways to encourage the pursuit of careers in the water workforce.

The third is continuing to maintain a high degree of **Technical Excellence** in the Association. One of the strengths that has been identified is the high quality of the technical programs that we offer at the Annual Meeting, and at other educational events that our association and state sections hold throughout the year. We will continue to expand on this by offering sessions focused on soft skills such as teamwork, leadership, and other practical skills. Another important part of this initiative is the collaboration between state sections to improve the

exchange of knowledge, understanding what events and activities have worked well in one section, and whether and how they can be replicated in the other sections.

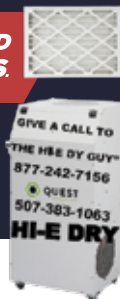
The Committee has been working for the past two years on the Strategic Plan. With your input, we identified these three areas, Connections, Water Workforce, and Technical Excellence, as things that CSWEA does well, and things that we can continue to improve. Now we get to the tough part: implementation. This is where we need your help. Talk with your Section Chair about volunteer opportunities. Participate as a member of a committee, like the Public Education Committee. Share your experiences from this year's conference and other events throughout the year with your co-workers and your supervisor. Help them see the value of continued participation in CSWEA events. With your help, we can facilitate connections, training, and technical excellence for current and future water professionals. **CS**

"The Committee has been working for the past two years on the Strategic Plan."

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Working Toward a Better Future

Written by Anna Munson



Anna Munson



Liz Heise

If you were one of the 573 attendees at the 98th CSWEA Annual Meeting at the end of May, then you were part of the largest group we have ever gathered for our Annual Meeting. Thank you for making this year's Annual Meeting a huge success! We'll be meeting in St. Paul, MN next year, and our local arrangements committee has already started planning the events.

CSWEA members have been busy with activities that extend beyond our member association. Members from each state gathered in Washington DC for the DC Water Fly-in. The DC Water Fly-in was part of Water Week 2025, organized by 15 water associations and foundations including WEF, ASCE, and AWWA. WEF and the National Municipal Stormwater Alliance (NMSA) co-led the National Stormwater Policy Forum early in the week. The forum provided a venue for utility leaders, industry experts, and policy makers to discuss solutions to stormwater challenges. On Tuesday, Senator Mark Kelly from Arizona (Senate Environment and Public Works Committee) provided commentary during an EPA water priority and goal panel discussion. Wednesday featured the DC Water Fly-in, with over 700 water professionals meeting with federal agencies and congressional leaders on Capitol Hill.

The main issues discussed with policy makers were:

1. **PFAS regulation and compliance** – Rising costs and complexity for utilities, concerns regarding availability of laboratories to provide the requested testing, and the need for federal support and clear guidance.
2. **Infrastructure investment** – Ongoing funds are needed beyond just the IJUA to address problems with aging systems



nationally, supply chain challenges, and labor shortages.

3. **Climate resilience and cybersecurity** – Investments are required to safeguard water and wastewater systems from both climate and cyber threats, enhance adaptation and protection of water systems.
4. **Water affordability and equity** – Federal support is required for utilities to provide safe, affordable water for all communities in the US; there is a need to balance costs with compliance.
5. **Workforce development** – Need to address the labor shortages and aging workforce.

This issue of CS Water includes an article co-authored by the DC Water Fly-in representatives that provides more detail about the briefings and discussions that occurred during Water Week 2025. CSWEA provides a stipend for up to two professionals from each state to participate in the DC Water Fly-in, and WEF provides scholarships and special programming for young professionals to attend. The 2026 event will be held on April 14-15. The CSWEA Government Affairs Committee, Section Chairs, or Delegates can connect anyone interested in learning more about the DC Water Fly-in with members who have previously attended.

Each year, WEF hosts three WEFMAX events to provide opportunities for members to meet others from member associations across the US and Canada and to learn new ways to lead their associations. Anna Munson attended WEFMAX in Oklahoma City in early April. The theme of this WEFMAX was membership engagement. Highlights of the presentations and discussions include:

1. Ideas for engaging members with more operations and maintenance focus
 - Host events that do not require the members to be 21+ years old.
 - Consider breakfast or lunch events for those who work shifts instead of business hours.
 - Offer ops/maintenance skills training gatherings.
2. The business case for diversity, equity, and inclusion
 - Focusing on affordability, aging infrastructure, response to extreme weather events, and service to our communities must continue regardless of the words we use to describe the initiatives.
 - Who have we unintentionally left behind or underserved? Are we serving all people with respect? Does our workforce reflect the communities we serve?
 - Can we remove some barriers in our industry roles to open the door to qualified candidates who might not know about the water industry? This does not require lowering any standards, just an openness to think carefully about the skills we need.
3. Member engagement ideas
 - Have goals for each member association (MA) committee to work toward and assign someone to be responsible for checking on progress toward the goals.
 - Trim out committees that are no longer relevant to the MAs goals.
 - Micro-volunteering is a good hook for members who don't want to commit to a larger role.
 - Define responsibilities; volunteers like to know what is expected of them and want meaningful tasks.
 - Event ideas
 - Competitions – BBQ cookoff, Trivia night, cornhole tournaments, mini-golf, pickleball, ax throwing, kickball.

- Bike tour, walking tours, motorcycle rides.
- Facility tours.
- Service projects (youth-focused, environment-focused, other).
- Taste testing events (beer, wine, salsa, chili, etc.)
- Professional or minor league sports.

Finally, CSWEA members are encouraged to check out the newest WEF community,

the Emerging Contaminants Community. The group of nearly 200 WEF members are working to establish WEF as a recognized leader and trusted resource of information on emerging contaminants for water professionals, the public, and decision makers developing policy and regulations. CSWEA members can apply to be part of this community and any of the other communities through the WEF website by navigating to the *Membership & Community* page. [CS](#)

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The Incredible Ways We Use Water



By Lindsey Busch

Dear friends and colleagues,
As we kick off another term here at the Wisconsin Section of CSWEA, I want to extend a warm welcome to each of you. It's an exciting time for our organization, and I'm filled with gratitude for all the amazing work you continue to do in advancing our shared mission of water quality, sustainability, and community service.

Reflecting on CSWEA's recent 98th Annual Meeting this past May, it's clear that our collective passion and dedication are stronger than ever. The Madison event had **record attendance** and brought together so many brilliant minds, offering not only insightful discussions but also opportunities to connect and collaborate. I enjoyed catching up with so many of you over those busy couple of days. Thank you to everyone who participated, and for those who couldn't make it, we look forward to seeing you at future events.

As we embrace the joys of summer and the incredible ways we use water, whether it's for recreation, relaxation, or essential daily life, we're reminded of how critical our work is in preserving and protecting this precious resource. When I think back on some of my favorite memories, I am struck by how much of them are related to water, like in the photo of the dog boating. This time of year is a perfect opportunity to celebrate the progress we've made.

Looking to the months ahead, we have several **upcoming events** our committees have worked hard to put together. I encourage all of you to attend and get involved – your participation and insights



are what make our Section strong! One of the best ways to engage with the overall association is through CSWEA CSX, which will be held on July 17 and 18. Following that, we have the Northwoods Collection System Seminar on July 24, Management Seminar on August 6, Industrial Pretreatment Seminar on August 12, and the YP Brewer Game (both YPs and seasoned professionals are welcome) on August 27, which is always a fun time. Finally, don't forget about WEFTEC right down the road in Chicago on September 29 through October 1. Our CSWEA event will be held that Sunday, September 28.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment and passion for this industry. I look forward to seeing what we will achieve together this year as we continue to strengthen our community and make a positive impact on water quality across Wisconsin and beyond.

Here's to a wonderful summer and an inspiring year ahead! [CS](#)



Some of my favorite family memories involve water.

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Carrying Momentum Forward



By Shanna Czeck

I always enjoy attending the CSWEA Annual Meeting and this year was no exception. The 98th Annual Meeting was well done. It was great to see familiar faces and meet new people, visit the exhibit hall to see what each vendor has to offer, learn from the technical sessions, and share information and ideas with each other. I often find myself inspired and ready to take action – both at work and within the association. At work, I like to bring back what I learned to share with colleagues. Perhaps it's a different approach



in treatment or maybe it's a new technology or service that is being offered. In the association, I like to hear what each of the committees and sections are working on and consider if I can apply that to what I work on.

There really is no better time to take the momentum and inspiration that is generated during the Annual Meeting and run with it! The

Minnesota Exchange (MNX) is being held next week in St. Cloud and all members are welcome. Looking at registration, I can see familiar names along with quite a few new ones. I'm looking

forward to hearing what each committee intends to focus on for the remainder of the year and seeing how we can help each other accomplish those goals. We also have several leadership roles available in various committees that I hope we can find volunteers for.

If you missed MNX this year, it's not too late to be more involved in the section. There are so many ways to be engaged in CSWEA – there truly is something for everyone! Our section has 10 different committees: Government Affairs, Collection System, Industrial Wastes, Membership, Operations/Safety/Laboratory, Public Education, Resource Recovery and Energy, Students & Young Professionals, Stormwater, and Awards. These committees are always looking for new members to bring a fresh perspective and a willingness to help out! You can learn more about what each committee is responsible for by checking out the section bylaws which are posted on the CSWEA website at www.cswea.org/minnesota/resources/governance. You can also reach out to committee chairs using the contact information listed on the Minnesota section 'About Us' page.

Conference planning is another great way to help! It takes a lot of time and resources to plan conferences, and Minnesota has several in the upcoming year. The Conference on the Environment is in November 2025 in Minneapolis, the Innovative Conference is in February 2026 in St. Cloud, and the 99th CSWEA Annual Meeting is in May 2026 in St. Paul. Many hands make less work for everyone, and this work is very rewarding – it's a different experience on conference day when you know that you helped bring the event together.

The next year is going to be busy for the Minnesota section. If you've been thinking about getting more involved – now is the time. I encourage you to reach out to myself or any of the section leadership to ask questions. Let's take the momentum from the Annual Meeting and carry it forward for the rest of the year! CS

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By Tony Romza

At this year's Annual Meeting, I had the incredible honor of being inducted into the **7S Society**, alongside my fellow IL inductee, Natalie Cook. It was a complete surprise and a privilege that I do not take lightly. Earning the 7S Shovel is something I've aspired to since becoming active in CSWEA about eight years ago. I was fortunate to have a boss (shout-out to Matt Streicher!) who was already a 7S member and encouraged me to get involved. That encouragement led me to chair the Illinois Collections Committee and compete on the CSWEA Ops Challenge Team. Thank you, Matt, for your support and mentorship.



Getting involved with CSWEA has been one of the most rewarding professional experiences of my 14-year career. From Annual Meetings and YP events (I aged out a few years ago, sadly, but still show up when they let the "old folks" hang around!) to the Ed Seminar and the Ops Challenge, the people

in CSWEA are generous with their time and knowledge. Having a network of professionals to collaborate with and bounce ideas off of is truly invaluable. Shout out the 2025 Annual Meeting speakers for giving some incredible and insightful talks!

This year, I'm proud to serve as the Illinois Section Chair. I take this responsibility seriously and am committed to encouraging engagement, especially among younger professionals. Our industry is facing a significant generational shift, with many experienced leaders retiring or ramping down. While it's daunting to step into the shoes of such impactful individuals, I'm excited to see how the next generation will rise to the occasion and shape the future of our field.

If you've ever thought about getting more involved in CSWEA, now is the time. Whether you're just starting your career or have years of experience, your voice, energy, and ideas are needed. Join a committee, attend an event, volunteer your time – there are countless ways to contribute, and you will not regret it! The future of our industry depends on passionate professionals stepping up, sharing knowledge, and shaping what comes next. Let's keep the momentum off the Annual Meeting and build a stronger, more sustainable future for Illinois and the great **Sentral States**!

Notable Illinois events coming soon... Keep an eye open for registration! **CS**

Young Professionals

- July 14: Happy Hour with APWA after the Collections Systems Conference (see below).
- July 15: Flowing Forward Tri-State YP Webinar.

Laboratory/Pre-Treatment

- September 10: PFAS Seminar.

Collections

- July 14 Seminar @ NIU Naperville. REGISTRATION OPEN.

Operations

- June 20: Operator Training Webinar, Preliminary and Primary Treatment.
- July 14: Operator Training, Math 2, in-person at the Collections Seminar.
- August TBD: Operator Training Webinar, Disinfection.
- September 9: Operations Seminar at Fox Metro WRD.
- September TBD: Operator Training Webinar, Activated Sludge 1.
- October TBD: Operator Training Webinar, Activated Sludge 2.
- November TBD: Operator Training Webinar, Collections.

Government Affairs

- March 11, 2026: Seminar in conjunction with IAWA, Springfield, IL.

For those who don't know me, I've spent my entire life in the "central states." I grew up in the Chicago suburbs and eventually attended Marquette University in Milwaukee, where I earned degrees in both Physics and Civil Engineering. It took me five years – but not in a traditional "victory lap" sense, that fifth year was packed with 18-credit semesters full of design courses. I have been back in Illinois since 2011 and am raising my family in the Burbs. HOWEVER, I miss Milwaukee... one of the most underrated cities in the country!

After graduating in 2011, I was lucky to land a position with RJN Group. I started in June and quickly fell in love with the industry – consulting for communities, solving the often-overlooked challenges of underground infrastructure, and pushing the boundaries of technology in our field. I took a few years from late 2018 to 2022 to join a utility and garnered more respect for the public sector and the difficulties of managing a limited budget with unlimited things to do. Ultimately, I returned to RJN in 2022... I missed my clients!



Ben Meier

Operations Foreman,
Kishwaukee Water Reclamation District, Dekalb, IL

Ben Meier has been a steady presence at the Kishwaukee Water Reclamation District (KWRD) for more than 16 years, bringing a combination of hands-on skills, technical expertise, and a relentless drive for improvement. As Operations Foreman, he plays a central role in managing the day-to-day functions of the District's state-of-the-art facility, ensuring everything from process optimization to equipment maintenance runs smoothly and effectively.

Ben didn't set out to work in wastewater. His early years were shaped by his father's business, where he learned the value of hard work and picked up a wide range of practical skills, including landscaping and vehicle maintenance. After exploring jobs in golf course upkeep, furniture retail, and the automotive industry, he followed a recommendation to apply at KWRD. What began as just another job quickly turned into a meaningful career. Ben now holds Classes 1-4 wastewater operator certifications in Illinois.

Starting as an operator at the District's older attached-growth plant, Ben quickly demonstrated his ability to adapt and lead. Today, he manages a team of four and is involved in nearly every facet of the facility's operations. The plant itself is a biological nutrient removal facility that incorporates bar screens, grit removal, primary clarifiers, final clarifiers, UV disinfection, gravity belt thickening, anaerobic digestion, centrifuge dewatering, and combined heat and power (CHP) systems and treats an average influent flow of about 4.5 MGD.

Ben's reach truly does span across the plant. From lab analysis and GIS mapping to SCADA programming and process troubleshooting, his fingerprints are on nearly every system. He taught himself Excel from

“For those just entering the field as operators, Ben encourages a mindset of curiosity and initiative, what he calls being a knowledge thief: watching, listening, asking questions, and staying approachable.”

scratch and developed a suite of detailed spreadsheet tools for process control, tracking critical metrics such as sludge age, digester hydraulic retention times, polymer dosage, and annual chemical costs. These tools have become essential to KWRD's day-to-day operations, improving process accuracy and the District's ability to comply with its NPDES permit. The self-made spreadsheets have even been shared with other utilities looking to refine their own systems!

His drive for continuous improvement also led him to play a leading role in the District's participation in ComEd's Strategic Energy Management (SEM) program, which began in 2022. Ben co-led the implementation effort, collaborated with colleagues to present the District's approach, and helped share strategies and tools with other facilities. The result was a win-win: significant energy savings and enhanced treatment performance.

Among his most challenging projects was a yearlong rehabilitation of the District's failing tertiary sand filter beds. The work was physically and mentally demanding but critical to maintaining compliance with effluent permits during a pivotal period of transition at the District.

As a more recent member of CSWEA, Ben was encouraged by colleagues to get involved and has fully embraced the opportunity. After attending his first annual meeting this year in Madison, he's eager to build connections,

learn from others, and give back by sharing the District's insights and challenges with the broader wastewater community.

Looking ahead, Ben is focused on how utilities can better prepare for the evolving landscape of emerging contaminants like PFAS. He sees regionalization and technologies like solar power and biogas utilization as critical to long-term sustainability. He's also a firm believer in questioning the status quo, constantly evaluating whether standard practices are still the best path forward.

For those just entering the field as operators, Ben encourages a mindset of curiosity and initiative, what he calls being a *knowledge thief*: watching, listening, asking questions, and staying approachable. He values the wide range of skills and perspectives across the wastewater industry and appreciates how organizations like CSWEA foster a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement. At the core of his philosophy is a simple but powerful belief: there are no unimportant jobs in wastewater.

Outside the plant, Ben keeps busy with landscaping projects and carves out time for unique hobbies like riding electric unicycles, sailing, and disc golf. With three kids and a full schedule, he still manages to bring energy and curiosity to everything he does. Be sure to introduce yourself the next time you see Ben! **CS**



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98TH ANNUAL MEETING RECAP

MAY 28-30, 2025 | MONONA TERRACE, MADISON, WI

One Water for All

Celebrating Unity, Innovation, and Excellence at CSWEA's 98th Annual Meeting

The Central States Water Environment Association's 98th Annual Meeting brought together water professionals from across the region for an unforgettable gathering at Madison's iconic Monona Terrace, May 28–30, 2025. With the powerful theme *"One Water for All,"* this year's event emphasized collaboration and stewardship across all sectors of the water cycle. Attendees were treated to a robust Technical Program featuring industry-leading experts, as well as a dynamic Exhibit Hall showcasing cutting-edge technologies and solutions.

This special feature captures just a glimpse of the energy and excellence that defined the event. Enjoy a selection of vibrant photos from the many engaging sessions, networking events, and celebrations – plus a spotlight on CSWEA's 2025 Award Winners, whose outstanding contributions continue to advance our profession.

Conference Highlights



Conference Highlights





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Passing of the Gavel

The Central States WEA gavel is used at all CSWEA meetings. Gus Radebaugh designed the gavel in the shape of an Imhoff cone. Wood for the first gavel came from the timbers used in Urbana, IL at the first municipal wastewater treatment plant (septic tank) constructed in Illinois.

This year the gavel was passed from Troy Larson of Strand Associates, Inc. to Tim Wedin of Metropolitan Council.

RED SUSPENDERS

Red Suspenders have been passed from President to President and are symbolic of the support that the new President will receive from the entire Executive Committee and members of CSWEA.



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CSWEA Awards



Service Award

Troy Larson, President 2024-25



Service Award

Amanda Sheposh, WEF Delegate at Large
2021-24



Service Award

Jeremy Cramer,
PWO Representative 2023-25



Service Award

Matt Seib, Wisconsin Section Trustee 2023-25



Service Award

Amanda Streicher,
Illinois Section Trustee 2023-25



Operations Award

Brandon Huston, City of Albert Lea, MN



Operations Award

Emily Lecuyer, Northern Moraine WRD, IL



Operations Award

Jacob Becken, NEW Water, WI



Collection System Award

Bradley Bennet,
Urbana and Champaign SD, IL

CSWEA Awards



Collection System Award
Adam Gordon, Metropolitan Council, MN



Collection System Award
Erin Abramson, City of Superior, WI



Gus H. Radebaugh Award
Matt Seib



Industrial Environmental Achievement Award
Andes Candies



Young Professionals of the Year Award
Liz Heise, IL



Young Professionals of the Year Award
Liz Kramer, MN



Young Professionals of the Year Award
Rahim Ansari



Water Stewardship Award
Sarah Guzman



Sustainability & Green Infrastructure Award
Tracy Hodel, St Cloud



Bill Boyle Educator of the Year Award
Coleman Henry



Water Technology Innovator Award
Mohammed Haque



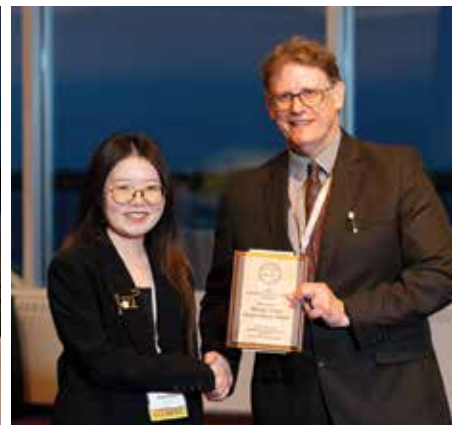
Academic Excellence Award
Julius Ross, University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point



Academic Excellence Award
Kristin Muench, University of Wisconsin – Platteville



Academic Excellence Award
Nathan Zick, Milwaukee School of Engineering



Academic Excellence Award
Wenxin Zhang, University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee



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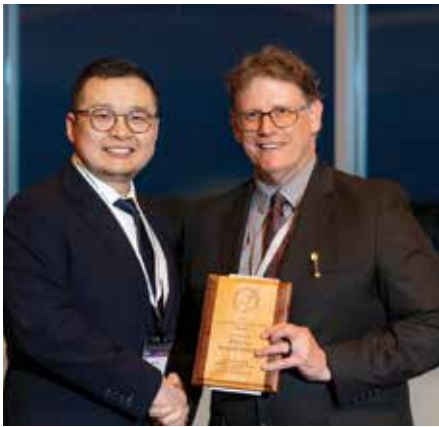
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CSWEA Awards



Academic Excellence Award
Zihao Lu, Marquette University



Academic Excellence Award
Zoe Stansbury, University of Wisconsin – Madison



Kelman Scholarship Award
Jessica Calteux, Marquette University

WEF Awards



Willaim D. Hatfield Award
Cody Schoepke, City of Fond du Lac, WI



George W. Burke, Jr. Facility Safety Award
Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District,
Madison, WI



Arthur Sidney Bedell Award
Alan Grooms



Laboratory Excellence Award
Deb Paulson, City of Hutchinson, MN, Not Pictured

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THE 2025 NATIONAL WATER WEEK FLY-IN

A MULTI-ORGANIZATION ADVOCACY EFFORT FOR THE WATER AND WASTEWATER IN AN UNCERTAIN FEDERAL ENVIRONMENT

By Brandon Koltz, Chris Tippery, Lisa Twarog, Mark Enochs, Tracy Ekola, Mark Eddington, Brian Perkovich, Brian Johnson, Rishab Mahajan and Eric Johnson

Water Environment Federation (WEF), in conjunction with other professional water and wastewater associations, gathers in Washington, DC each spring for the Water Week Fly-In. The goal for the Fly-In is to receive updates from the US Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA), other federal agencies, and Congressional leaders and staff regarding upcoming agency changes and initiatives, as well as legislative actions and funding plans. It is also an opportunity to visit state congressional offices to advocate for continued federal funding and select legislative action.

This year, the Fly-In was held April 7-9. Member associations are encouraged to send

delegations to visit Capitol Hill and CSWEA's Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Illinois Sections – as well as the Illinois Water Environment Association (IWEA) – all sent representatives. We were joined by colleagues from American Water Works Association (AWWA) and the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA), so a unified “One Water” message could be provided for our congressional meetings.

With the new administration, there is a significant change in agency direction and overall priorities. However, funding needs and regulatory clarity continue to be necessities for our local state member associations and

the national membership. WEF assembled a summary of requests for Congress that included full funding for the Clean Water programs (The State Revolving Fund [SRF]; Combined Sewer Overflow [CSO] program; and *Reuse, Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act*, etc.), Stormwater Programs, and Water Research Programs. Policy requests were also made for PFAS (exemption for utilities as principal responsible parties under CERCLA), wipes legislation, low-income household water assistance programs, and Tax-Free Municipal Bonds (deter proposals made to eliminate tax free status). A multiorganization request sheet

was also assembled mirroring the WEF summary. A Wisconsin-specific summary document endorsed by eight other Wisconsin organizations (summarized Wisconsin utilization of and continued need for federal SRF capitalization support, need for workforce development and public education, and specific criteria issues for Wisconsin. Copies of briefing documents can be accessed on the CSWEA website.

WATER WEEK POLICY BRIEFING

The Water Week Policy briefing was held April 9 with updates from US EPA, other Agency representatives and Congressional leaders.

US EPA Updates

Andrew Sawyer, Director of the Office of Wastewater Management stated that US EPA is focused on **five major pillars**:

- "Clean Air, Land, and Water for Every American"
- "Restore American Energy Dominance"
- "Permitting Reform, Cooperative Federalism, and Cross-Agency Partnership"
- "Make the United States the Artificial Intelligence Capital of the World"
- "Protecting and Bringing Back American Auto Jobs"

Further comments included:

- US EPA is responding to executive orders including a declaration of a national energy emergency.
- An effort is being made to increase affordability by using existing programs to reduce household costs – 12.5 million households currently have unaffordable costs (water bills greater than 4.5% of the household income).
- There are challenges facing overall SRF funding because congressionally directed funds reduce capitalization. It currently funds more than \$9 billion dollars in project costs annually. Additionally, as of April 2025, the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) has provided nearly \$50 billion in loans. The Office of Wastewater Management intends to continue technical assistance.
- The recent Supreme Court decision of San Francisco vs. US EPA determined that making a Wisconsin Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (WPDES) permittee responsible for the end result water quality in the body of water to which they discharge is an overstep of US EPA authority. His office is assessing the impacts of this ruling.

Jennifer McClain, Director of Office of Groundwater and Drinking Water

also addressed the five pillars. Additionally, she noted:

- 50 years of progress toward safe drinking water since the *Safe Drinking Water Act* passed in 1974.
- There is a need for \$650 billion for drinking water infrastructure investment needed over the next 20 years. This will be accomplished through cooperative federalism.
- Sustainability and resilience are needed for threats. Smaller communities need resources for cybersecurity and drinking water systems need emergency response plans.
- PFAS mitigation must be considered in affordability analyses. Timelines for lead and copper rule should also address affordability.
- The EPA is available to provide technical assistance for water systems, specifically regarding lead, PFAS, and engineering support.

Tanya Hodge Mottley, Acting Deputy Director at the Office of Science and Technology also addressed the five pillars.

Activities for this office include:

- Reconsideration of the 2024 Steam and Electric Rule.
- Revise the rules for produced water for reuse (oil industry).
- The Water Reuse Program started five years ago and has been pursuing opportunities for water reuse including in the chip manufacturing and data center cooling industries.
- The draft biosolids PFOA/PFAS risk assessment has been pulled back and will include assessment of biosolids risk with respect to food crops and risk associated with incineration.
- Draft effluent guidance for pesticides that are also subject to *Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act* (FIFRA) regulations.
- Two additional PFAS compounds will have criteria, now 40 total.
- Examination of bioavailability for copper, lead, zinc and cobalt.
- Working with eight metal groups' cooperative research and development agreement (CRADA) to update aquatic life criteria for copper, lead, nickel, and zinc.
- Development of a five-year water reuse plan.
- Office of Science and Technology is looking for innovations for permitting and overall solutions
- **NOTE:** Subsequent to the Fly-in meeting, Administrator Zeldin announced a 55% cut in EPA's budget and elimination of the Office of Science and Technology and

the Office of Research and Development. It is unclear how EPA will manage these functions. Congress must address these cuts and reorganization in the next budget or with separate legislation.

Brian Frazer/Director Office of Wetlands, Oceans and Watersheds

provided an update, also referring to the five Pillars:

- His office has responsibilities for ecosystem protection and requirements and statutory activities conducted under 312, 319, 320 and 404.
- Coastal Zone, nonpoint programs, the Gulf Hypoxia programs, require coordination among states and tribes as well as EPA.
- The definition of wetlands is unclear as it relates to Waters of the United States (WOTUS). They are managing eight ocean sites, a toxic/hypoxic condition in the State of Washington. They are working on distributing previously appropriated funds.

Jessica Knowles/US EPA

Senior Advisor to the Assistant Administrator Office of Water is from

Central Wisconsin. She provided broad comments regarding the Office of Water:

- The goal is clean water for all. The Office of Water will strive to meet these goals with flexibility, cut red tape, expertise of existing staff, and streamline funding for SRF and WIFIA. Compliance should be the focus of funding.
- **They would like to hear from us – where do we need help? Technical Assistance programs?**
- A course for compliance should be developed for PFAS and Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs) with the resources to do so. Water Reuse will be an area of emphasis. WOTUS will be redefined consistent with the Sockett decision, they would like to put an end to the swings in definition.
- There are scheduled listening sessions to clarify the WOTUS redefinition. The final listening session of the initial phase occurred on May 19, 2025. There is a Second Listening Session for the Public TBA.

Noller Herbert from the United States Department of Agriculture and the Science & Technology Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) spoke about the agency's

programming for water. Source water protection is a priority, as is seeking innovation with fairness for farmers and ranchers. He stressed working with County NRCS agents as partners. NRCS can assist in water quality

trading programs with conservation planning, leading to informed decision-making. He discussed conservation innovation grants.

Arizona Senator Mark Kelly stressed that water is a bipartisan issue. No matter where you live, you deserve clean water. He noted the progress made with the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill and stated that Congress would be working on the next Infrastructure Bill after the current authorizations run out in 2026. A long-term funding bill is needed and he noted there are challenges with the current permitting system. He suggested that Congress should re-examine the current laws to bring efficiency to project delivery. The next area for innovation is Water Reuse. He is concerned that small communities need better access and should not be left behind. He is concerned about the reductions in agency resources at the federal level.

Drew Griffin from the Invariant Corporation discussed the current situation. He noted projects are stalled when there is a lack of appropriations. Our water sector needs to be strong advocates for the next infrastructure bill, and it needs to be bipartisan. He also noted that there are opportunities despite the current uncertainties. He suggested that it might be time for consideration of a risk sharing agenda.

Jared Huffman, Representative of the 2nd District in California also noted that water, unlike other issues, is a bipartisan issue. He spoke about Tribal priorities (\$2.5 billion in tribal claims), the need for the Corps of Engineers to prioritize water supply and resilience (\$4 billion for drought resilience). We need to hang on to good politicians, and we need to complete investments.

STORMWATER POLICY MEETING

Urban Stormwater Management has been historically underfunded. Yet urban stormwater has been shown to be a significant pollutant source. And flood events, exacerbated by occurrence of extreme events cause increasing damage. WEF and the National Municipal Stormwater Alliance (NMSA) host a stormwater policy meeting during Water Week. A separate informational document regarding stormwater issues and needs was updated for congressional visits and is available to our membership.

The Keynote Speaker, Joseph Kane from the Brookings Institute noted the need for increased investment in stormwater infrastructure: 256% increase in flood losses compared to 20 years ago, a decline in federal funding, and a funding gap increase. Stormwater management

is complicated in that it doesn't respect state or municipal boundaries, rather it must be considered on a watershed basis. He said there is a need for workforce development specific to stormwater management and maintenance.

A Congressional Update was provided by Tim Petty/staff member for the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. He noted that they are supportive of the Stormwater Centers of Excellence, renewal of the *Water Resources Development Act (WRDA)* [Corps of Engineers funding and some stormwater management is included in WRDA], and PFAS issues are a priority. Stormwater agencies need to work with the states to see that stormwater projects are ranked on the SRF priority list. It was noted that the *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)* authorization expires in 2026; bipartisan support is needed to renew this funding. He urged contacting congressmen to support reauthorization and to bring other issues to their attention.

“URBAN STORMWATER MANAGEMENT HAS BEEN HISTORICALLY UNDERFUNDED. YET URBAN STORMWATER HAS BEEN SHOWN TO BE A SIGNIFICANT POLLUTANT SOURCE.”

A legal panel (**Fred Andes, Partner at Barnes & Thornburg; Amanda Aspatore, General Counsel for NACWA; Becky Hammer, Senior Attorney at NRDC; and Sean Roland, Deputy Director of the Association of Clean Water Administrators**) discussed recent issues. Discussion included:

- The Chevron Doctrine reversal with the Looper decision. Deference is not given to agency analysis; factual information should still predominate decision-making; previous regulations would need to go through the regulatory process to be modified.
- Stormwater permits with Maximum Extent Practicable (MEP) requirements are fuzzy and compliance is not well defined.
- The impact of CSOs after long-term control plan implementation is not well understood and further requirements are ill defined.
- (RDA) for specific pollutants in stormwater permits often results in permits being immediately out of compliance for constituents not controllable by the permittee. Permittees should be aware of these risks. RDAs make permittees

vulnerable to 3rd part lawsuits.

- A legislative CERCLA exemption for MS4 permittees for PFAS is needed.

The Federal and State Update was provided by **Chris Kloss, US EPA Director of Permits Office of Water; Michael Dean, Clean Water Revolving Fund US EPA; and Zach Shafer, Assistant Secretary of Policy/ Maryland Department of the Environment.**

Chris Kloss noted that two grants were out and three in progress for the Stormwater Centers of Excellence. Chris noted wastewater needs total \$630 billion and stormwater needs are \$115 billion. He advocated Integrated Planning to incorporate stormwater into overall priorities. He noted the need to identify sources of PFAS when found in stormwater. Market-based approaches (trading, etc.) may be used in permitting approaches and green infrastructure. Electronic reporting should make permitting and compliance more efficient. Recent stormwater permitting has required

more strategically located sampling to better define the permit requirements.

Michael Dean discussed Congressionally directed spending (earmarks) versus undesignated SRF funding, noting that some earmarks are essentially flood control projects. Earmarks have reduced the undesignated SRF appropriation. SRF funding is needed to make projects affordable; stormwater utilities also need a dependable fee structure. Public education is needed with respect to the stormwater management needs and the related financial requirements.

Zach Shafer stated Maryland is a “water state” – Chesapeake Bay is essential to the economy and to most of the population. Green infrastructure is being implemented to protect the bay. A large challenge is that much of the watershed lies outside the state and Total maximum daily loads (TMDLs) require pollutant reductions outside Maryland. Market-based solutions on a watershed basis are being pursued across state lines. Water quality is related to water quantity; pollutant transport during high flow events is a challenge – especially for nutrients and debris.



CONGRESSIONAL MEETINGS

Wisconsin

The Wisconsin coalition of Curt Czarnecki, General Manager of the Kenosha Water Utility; Andrea Hey, Communications Director for the Green Bay Water Utility; Brandon Koltz of Brandon Koltz Water and Environmental Consulting LLC; Lisa Twarog of Town & Country Engineering, Inc.; and Chris Tippery of CDM Smith met with the offices of our Senators, Ron Johnson and Tammy Baldwin, along with House Representatives from the following Districts: Bryan Steil from District 1, Mark Pocan from District 2, and Tony Wied from District 8. We also met with staffers from the offices of Gwen Moore from District 4 and Scott Fitzgerald from District 5. We presented a unified "One Water" message focusing on pertinent issues to Wisconsin of continued funding and non-degradation of the State Revolving Funds by earmarks, workforce development, PFOA/PFAS removal from drinking water and contained within biosolids, other emerging contaminants and cyber security. We appreciated the Representative's and their staffer's time and attention to our concerns.

An item that was addressed during the National Government Affairs WEF meeting was potentially redrafting the *Clean Water Act*, from 1972. This Law hasn't had significant changes since its original version, and we discussed the consideration of "One Water" legislation that addresses drinking water,

stormwater, groundwater and wastewater or even "One Environment" legislation to also include air, vegetation, and wildlife. It is potentially time to holistically address these environmental concerns.

With a new federal administration and Congress, it is pertinent that we continue to advocate for our water and wastewater industry. For far too long, we've allowed ourselves to be viewed as a commodity and failed to get our message out to the general public about the unique and talented people who work in water and wastewater.

One significant impact from our 2025 Congressional visits was Representative Tony Wied (Wisconsin 8th District) co-sponsoring the *Water Systems PFAS Liability Protection Act*. The bill would exempt public water systems, wastewater treatment facilities, municipalities, state political subdivisions, and their contractors from liability under the *Comprehensive*

Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) for PFAS releases, provided they handle these substances in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations. Specifically, the exemption covers activities such as water treatment, biosolids management, effluent discharge, and water storage, as long as these actions are conducted according to existing federal and state water management guidelines. This legislation aims to provide clarity and protection for water system operators dealing with these potentially harmful chemicals while maintaining accountability for egregious mishandling, which was recommended by our Wisconsin coalition.

If there are pending and pertinent issues to your community, please let Brandon, Chris, Lisa, or the Wisconsin Section Government Affairs Committee know, so that we can address those concerns with our elected representatives in 2026.



Illinois

The Illinois coalition consisted of Mark Eddington, Brian Perkovich, Brian Johnson, Eric Johnson, and a contingent from Fox River Water Reclamation District, represented CSWEA, IWEA, NACWA, and IAWA. Meetings with Senator Durbin, Senator Duckworth, Representative Underwood, Representative LaHood, Representative Foster, and others to advocate for continued funding of the Pollution Control SRF Programs as well as individual regionalization and WWTP projects.

The representatives agreed to look into streamlining Build America, Buy America (BABA) waivers, particularly for disadvantaged communities. They also concurred that the wastewater industry should not bear the cost of PFAS treatment, emphasizing the importance of controlling PFAS at the source. They appreciated hearing about the commendable work being done by the US EPA Municipal Ombudswoman in connecting communities with the US EPA. This feedback will be passed onto the US EPA to ensure that the position is maintained. Lizzy Olsen from Senator Duckworth office suggested submitting a request for additional funding for Illinois via Senator Duckworth's website to create a paper trail. Congressman Foster commented that CSWEA and IWEA joint letter was well laid out.

**"THE REPRESENTATIVES
AGREED TO LOOK
INTO STREAMLINING
BUILD AMERICA, BUY
AMERICA (BABA)
WAIVERS, PARTICULARLY
FOR DISADVANTAGED
COMMUNITIES."**



Minnesota

Minnesota's coalition consisted of Mark Enochs and Tracy Ekola representing CSWEA/WEF, Ursinio Puga and Michelle Stockness representing AWWA-MN, Sam Paske representing NACWA, as well as Uma Vempati, Michael Looft, T.J. Stroebel, and Toni Amerndrud. Visits were made to the offices of Senator Amy Klobuchar and Senator Tina Smith. We were able to set up Congressional visits to House of Representative offices including Tom Emmer, Michelle Fischbach,

Pete Stauber, Betty McCollum, Kelly Morrison, Angie Craig, and Brad Finstad. Ilhan Omar's office was not available to meet. While each visit was unique focusing on key projects and issues specific to their District, our coalition stressed the need to continue current levels for SRF funding. This support needs to be sustained to ensure our goal of achieving resilient, affordable, and secure infrastructure. Local water management is a national security and national health priority. We asked Congress to fund both the Drinking Water



State Revolving Fund and Clean Water State Revolving Fund at \$3.25 billion each and fund congressionally directed spending (CDS) through other funds so as not to reduce the SRF fund levels. Additionally, we asked to protect tax-exempt municipal bonds which are a key funding mechanism for meeting our local utility infrastructure needs.

We are asked for support of H.R. 1267, the *Water Systems PFAS Liability Protection Act* so that public and private drinking water, wastewater, stormwater and water reuse systems will be protected from CERCLA liability. This liability protection to utilities is needed to maintain our ability to provide affordable and reliable services. We fully support public sector/passive receiver testing, monitoring and information sharing to support better regulation and more progress.

Two additional topics included cybersecurity needs and impacts on water infrastructure relating to data center development. While discussing these topics we reiterated that local water management is a national security and national health priority. Federal funding for water infrastructure is critical to meet these needs.

CONTINUING ADVOCACY – LET YOUR VOICE BE HEARD

We have seen that communication with our legislative leaders regarding the regulatory and financial challenges and needs for the water and wastewater industry has been effective. But once-a-year visits must be supplemented by additional advocacy, which is simply educating our legislative representatives of the effects of different actions at the federal level.

With the change of federal administration and changes to the Office of EPA, your voice is critical. WEF routinely prepares example letters on topics of concern through the Water Advocacy program that can be sent to our representatives. The letters can be edited to make it specific to a particular District. And experience has shown that these communications are most effective when from constituents of that district. This year it will be more important than ever to keep our legislative representatives informed. [CS](#)



Learn more about WEF's Water Advocates Program by scanning this QR Code.

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MAKING WAVES:

CHARTING THE FUTURE OF THE WATER SECTOR

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE AWWA/WEF YP SUMMIT

By Matt Wingen, Al Robertsen, Kaitlyn Hague, Elizabeth Heise, Emma Forthaus, and Carly Amstadt

In February 2025, 250 young professionals from across the country in the water sector met in Dallas, TX to attend the Young Professionals (YP) Summit, which was sponsored by WEF and the American Water Works Association (AWWA). Each year, CSWEA sponsors a group of YPs from Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Illinois to attend the YP Summit and share their experience when returning home. This year, CSWEA sponsored five attendees.

One of the pre-summit activities that took place was a tour of the Bachman Water

Treatment Plant. This tour was interesting because the scale of operations was so large, yet they are only one of the few drinking water facilities in the city. The plant staff was welcoming and willing to answer attendees' questions. They gave a thorough tour of all of the processes at the plant. It was an excellent warm-up to the summit.

During the first day of the summit, attendees participated in either the AWWA YP Leader Training Workshop or the WEF Emerging Young Professionals Leadership (EYPL) Workshop. The EYPL Workshop attendees consisted of a mix of

consultants, equipment suppliers, operators, and utility and government employees ranging from 0 to 10 years of experience.

The theme of the 2025 EYPL Workshop was "Emerging from Turbulent Waters." The workshop kicked off by covering Member Association (MA) Engagement, which introduced participants to the role of WEF MAs and their impact on professional development. Through interactive polling, spotlight presentations from various MAs, and a collaborative group activity, attendees explored strategies for outreach, partnership

“THE YP SUMMIT WAS
AN ENRICHING
EXPERIENCE FOR THOSE
NEW TO CAREERS IN
THE WATER SECTOR.
ATTENDEES DEVELOPED
SKILLS TO IDENTIFY
AND ACHIEVE THEIR
PROFESSIONAL GOALS AND
WERE ABLE TO NETWORK
WITH OTHER YPS FROM
ACROSS THE COUNTRY.”



CSWEA's YP Summit Attendees (L-R): Matt Wingen, Al Robertsen, Kaitlyn Hague, Elizabeth Heise, Emma Forthaus, and Carly Amstadt.

building, and succession planning within their local MAs. The session emphasized the importance of shared leadership, communication, and long-term engagement.

The next module addressed negotiation skills. Mike Chandler, from the Ash Creek Special Service District, gave an engaging presentation on negotiation tips and tricks along with personal anecdotes. Attendees then had the opportunity to put what they had heard into practice by running through simulations of negotiation scenarios at their tables.

The last module taught attendees how to overcome the fear of failure through practical exercises and personal reflections that encouraged YPs to embrace discomfort, build confidence, and support one another. The workshop concluded with inspiring stories from seasoned professionals, reinforcing the value of persistence, adaptability, and community in navigating the early stages of a water sector career.

The second day consisted of the joint WEF-AWWA YP Summit. The theme of the YP Summit was “The Future of Our Water.” All YPs from WEF and AWWA attended presentations by professionals in the water industry, each with a unique perspective and lessons for YPs who wish to take ownership in the development of the water sector. The speakers included a panel of professionals that entered leadership positions as a young professional. This experience was eye-opening, especially to see what challenges the professionals faced

and the steps they took to feel comfortable in their current positions.

Attendees also took part in an operations challenge. This involved having several stations set up around the conference hall. Each station homed in on a different skill or task relevant to the water sector. Stations ranged from career mapping, to GPS/GIS skills, to assembling a pump. Additionally, one station had a computer program where YPs needed to trouble shoot issues occurring in a virtual wastewater treatment plant. The ops challenge was a great opportunity for YPs to work as a team to solve a variety of problems.

The YP Summit was an enriching experience for those new to careers in the water sector. Attendees developed skills to identify and achieve their professional goals and were able to network with other YPs from across the country. This conference taught valuable lessons in leadership and teamwork, which can be shared with and applied within CSWEA to better the organization. Events such as these offer valuable networking opportunities with YPs in different job functions and provide renewed motivation for YPs by providing a larger perspective on their role in the water sector. Further, attending on behalf of CSWEA naturally brought CSWEA YPs from different states together. CSWEA attendees formed meaningful connections with each other that will last a lifetime. We would like to thank CSWEA for providing support for YPs to attend such events. [CS](#)



Celebrating 30 Years of Learning: CSWEA Seminar Champions Preliminary and Primary Treatment as Keys to Progress

The Central States Water Environment Association (CSWEA) hosted its 30th Annual Education Seminar on April 22, 2025, at the Monona Terrace Community and Convention Center in Madison, Wisconsin. This milestone event brought together water professionals from across Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota to explore innovations, share practical knowledge, and build regional collaboration in the field of wastewater management.

The 2025 seminar theme centers on the often-overlooked part of our water resource recovery facilities (WRRFs) – Starting Strong: Preliminary and Primary Treatment as the Key to Resource Recovery. The day opened with a keynote presentation by Dr. Glen Daigger that outlined why preliminary and primary treatment are such key aspects to enable ultimate resource recovery. Following the keynote, case studies related to resource recovery from preliminary and primary byproducts (Matt Magruder, Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District), the importance of screenings for struvite harvesting (Tim Gualandri, Fox River Water

Reclamation District), the importance of influent characteristics on nutrient harvesting (Nathan Qualls, Joe Watson, NEW Water) provided real-world case studies and lessons learned from full-scale implementation.

As the seminar transitioned to the afternoon, and extended conversation related to food waste programs to generate energy was facilitated by presentations from midwestern facilities (David Henderson, West LaFayette; Shanna Czeck, St. Cloud; Mark Eddington, Kishwaukee Water Reclamation District). A panel discussion provided the audience to discuss and debate how to best manage food wastewater, fats, oils, greases, and other food industry products. A healthy debate on the role and responsibility of WRRFs to manage grease that is regulated to be removed from the collection system occurred in the afternoon, and many attendees opined that despite the challenges of fats, oils, and grease at our WRRFs, it is important to have reliable means to receive these products to prevent a negative impact on the environment.

The day ended with two industry icons (Dr. Glen Daigger and Dr. Sudhir Murthy)

digging into the details of influent wastewater characteristics and the ability to achieve enhanced primary treatment for both energy savings and process intensification. The closing panel featured these two speakers answering questions that ranged from technology development to the role of innovation in solving our most challenging problems at WRRFs.

In its 30th year, the CSWEA Education Seminar continues to embody the values of collaboration, innovation, and education. Often, resource recovery technologies are focused on concepts such as energy production, natural gas recovery via RIN programs, nutrient harvesting, biosolids beneficial reuse, and water reuse. This addition was able to focus on recent innovations in preliminary and primary treatment, and how these innovations are enabling and even accelerating the adoption and impact of resource recovery solutions in our industry. The 2025 program reflected a dynamic and challenging era for water professionals – and offered a critical platform for charting a collective path forward. [CS](#)

“The 2025 program reflected a dynamic and challenging era for water professionals – and offered a critical platform for charting a collective path forward.”



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Water & Wastewater

City of Red Wing WWTP

By Kelsey Prall, Deputy Director of Public Works – Utilities



The City of Red Wing owns and operates a Class A Major 4 MGD design wastewater treatment facility, located along the Mississippi River, that treats domestic and industrial wastewater generated by residents and businesses. The facility treats an average of 2 million gallons per day.

Facility staff include a Deputy Director of Public Works – Utilities, a Chief Plant Operator, four Operators, and a Field and Lab Technician.

Facility Growth

The original treatment facility was constructed in 1960-1961 as a fixed-film biological treatment system with trickling filters. The initial construction included the main lift station, grit and screening removal facilities, primary settling tanks, trickling filters, final settling tanks, chlorine contact tank, pumping facilities, outfall, anaerobic digesters, and sludge drying beds.

Between 1978 and 1980, the facility was expanded and renovated, including construction of the intermediate clarifiers, secondary lift

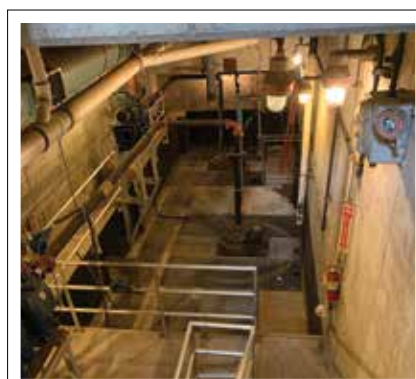
station and sludge pumping, rotating biological contactors (RBCs), blower building, diversion structure, expansion of the tunnel system, excess flow piping system, polymer and aluminum sulfate feed systems, digester pump and piping modifications, modification of the existing sludge drying beds, and new sludge loadout.

In the late 1990s, the existing digester received rehabilitation. The primary digester was also cleaned to remove excess sand and grit accumulation.

Additional miscellaneous improvements and rehabilitation upgraded the facility's buildings, mechanical, and electrical systems in the early 2000s. This included improvements to the existing main lift station between 2003 and 2004. The lab/office building located at the eastern end of the site was constructed in 2004-2005, and the existing sludge drying beds were modified.

Treatment Process

The facility utilizes a combination of physical, chemical, and biological treatment processes to produce treated effluent and biosolids that



“The City of Red Wing entered into a facility plan in 2024 with engineering consultants Bolton & Menk, Inc. The facility plan is expected to be completed in 2025 and will guide the future improvements at the plant.”



comply with all requirements specified by their NPDES discharge permit. The facility utilizes fixed-film biological treatment technologies as the foundation of the liquid stream treatment process.

Main Lift Station and Preliminary Treatment

The main lift station along the Mississippi River levee was constructed as part of the original 1960-1961 wastewater project. Access to the lift station is provided in two directions; however, roadways become inundated during major flood events, which can prevent vehicle access and limit access to walking only.

Raw wastewater enters at the basement level of the main lift station via two interceptor sewers and flows through a channel-mounted manual aluminum bar screen and then a mechanical bar screen. The screening equipment removes debris, such as sticks, that enter through the collection system. The screened wastewater flows into one of two vortex grit chambers where dense solids, such as sand, are removed. Washed grit is stored for disposal, while the separated liquid is returned to the influent channel. The screening and grit removal equipment aims to remove inorganic solid

material that may negatively impact downstream processing and pumping units.

The wastewater then flows to one of two wet-well structures before being pumped to the wastewater treatment facility site. The force main includes a “pigging” station at both ends for accessing and cleaning the force main piping if needed.

Primary Treatment

The force main terminates at the primary influent channel where the flow is split evenly and metered before entering the primary clarifiers. Less dense suspended solids settle, and the sludge is scraped, diverted to a central sump, and pumped to the anaerobic digestion system. Floating solids, such as oil and grease, are removed at the surface and collected at the scum pits, which are periodically emptied by sludge pumps. Primary clarifiers aim to remove between 25%-50% of influent organics and suspended solids, which reduces the loading to the biological treatment process and helps minimize issues with solids accumulation in the trickling filters.

The clarified liquid overflows the central weir troughs and is conveyed by gravity

to the trickling filter process. An aluminum skirt extends around the entire periphery to deflect the influent downward and minimize short-circuiting. The original clarifier structures include overflow weirs to prevent surcharging and direct excess flow to the chlorine contact tank. Overflow weirs also exist at the effluent structures to direct flow to the excess flow pipe network in lieu of the trickling filters to prevent overloading the downstream processes.

Secondary Treatment

The secondary treatment system focuses on achieving biological treatment of wastewater.

Clarified effluent from the primary clarifiers flows to the respective trickling filters. Trickling filters use internal media to support the growth of microorganisms that form a biofilm on the media surface. The microorganisms metabolize the organics and nutrients in the wastewater as it “trickles” downward through the filter media. Natural circulation of air provides a sufficient supply of oxygen for the bacteria, which makes the trickling filter process highly energy efficient process with minimal external energy required. Based on the existing sizing and loading criteria, Red Wing’s trickling filters fall within the



carbon oxidizing criteria and are not able to consistently achieve nitrification of ammonia.

The trickling filter effluent moves to the intermediate clarifiers. There, suspended solids and sloughed biological film from the trickling filters settle before being removed from the liquid-stream process and transported to the anaerobic digestion process.

The clarified effluent flows to a wet-well structure and is then pumped to the RBC units, which provide further biological treatment and polishing of the wastewater. The RBCs are strictly used for effluent polishing and have historically been underloaded following the trickling filter process. The operating costs are also relatively high due to the reliance of the blowers to drive the contactor shafts.

Effluent from the RBC units is collected and then gravitates through the diversion structure and final clarifiers. The diversion structure allows staff to control and isolate the flow of wastewater from the trickling filters directly to the final clarifiers, if needed, while bypassing the intermediate clarifiers and RBC units. In the final clarifiers, any residual suspended solids and sloughed biological film settle and are removed from the treated effluent before discharging. Settled sludge and scum are pumped to the anaerobic digestion process.

Disinfection

The disinfection system consists of a chlorine contact tank with concrete baffles to promote contact between the treated effluent and disinfection chemicals. Disinfection is provided through chlorination with chlorine gas to effectively kill residual pathogens and achieve NPDES permit limits for fecal coliform, followed by dichlorination with sulfur dioxide gas to remove total residual chlorine prior to discharging.

Biosolids Processing

Nutrient-rich biosolids, largely consisting of settled sludge collected in the clarifiers, are a beneficial byproduct of the wastewater treatment process.

In the primary and secondary anaerobic digesters, organic material in the wastewater sludge is further processed by microorganisms in the absence of oxygen and with the addition of heat. Recirculation pumps and heat exchangers are used to recycle and heat the contents of the digesters to maintain optimal conditions. In effect, anaerobic digestion provides a method to meet pathogen reduction requirements while producing a beneficial byproduct (methane) that is reused to heat the contents of the reactors. Excess gas beyond boiler requirements is vented or spent using a waste gas burner. The final product is Class B biosolids that serve as an effective and inexpensive agricultural fertilizer.

Sand drying beds are available if additional biosolids storage is required due to insufficient storage capacity in the secondary digester and/or inclement weather conditions not conducive to land application in the spring and fall. The drying beds are seldom used for their original intended purpose and biosolids are typically land applied as liquid.

Industrial Pretreatment Facility

The City of Red Wing also owns and operates an industrial pretreatment facility that treats 250,000 gallons per day of wastewater from a leather tanning operation. This facility consists of screening, chemical coagulation and flocculation, and settling basins. The pretreated wastewater is then discharged into the sanitary sewer collection system. The solids generated in the treatment process are dewatered in a rotary sludge press and landfilled due to the high chromium content.

Facility Planning

The City of Red Wing entered into a facility plan in 2024 with engineering consultants Bolton & Menk, Inc. The facility plan is expected to be completed in 2025 and will guide the future improvements at the plant. With most of the infrastructure reaching ages of > 50 years, the City has some big decisions ahead to determine the future of the treatment plant. The current NPDES permit expired in February 2025, and the city is anticipating new limits for nitrogen and sulfate. To meet these new limits, a complete facility upgrade will be required with initial estimates of \$120 million. [CS](#)





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GWS

Update

AguaFest Festivals at Horquetas de Sarapiquí and La Fortuna de San Carlos

Over the course of two days on April 9-10, 2025, GWS volunteers returned to Costa Rica to host two AguaFest festivals focused on WASH education for the local communities. For those who are not familiar with the event, AguaFest is an all-day fair for students between grade three and grade seven, where GWS partners with the local ASADA to provide a variety of educational activities for the students. This year, GWS planned two AguaFest events for the communities of Horquetas de Sarapiquí and La Fortuna de San Carlos. On Wednesday, April 9, GWS volunteers returned to La Fortuna to host the 4th Annual AguaFest for this community. The following day, GWS volunteers travelled to Horquetas to host their first community AguaFest fair. This year, over 800 students attended the two events and there were more than 12 different educational activities, which were led by GWS volunteers and ASADA personnel. This marks our biggest, and most successful, AguaFest event(s) to date!

Brandon Friedland, the current GWS Public Education and Outreach Chair, was the organizer and lead for the 2025 AguaFest events. Brandon spearheaded this initiative in 2022 and both the results and impact have been phenomenal. This year, Brandon also had some rockstar volunteers join his team, including Liz Schrandt, Paulo Rodriguez, Mike Pepin, and Mohammed Haque, who made these events flow smoothly. We will continue to look to



bring AguaFest to other communities in future years with the goal of rotating to a different community every year, in addition to also hosting the event in La Fortuna.

THE MIDWEST STUDENT DESIGN COMPETITION

The 6th Annual Midwest Student Design Competition (MSDC) was held on April 22 at the Monona Terrace in Madison, WI. One of the three categories that is offered at the MSDC is the Global Water Stewardship (GWS) Category, which tasks collegiate design teams to design a centralized wastewater treatment facility and accompanying collection system for a Costa Rica community. A total of three university teams competed in the GWS category in person, in addition to four university teams who competed in the GWS category Internationally. The design team from the University of Wisconsin – Platteville took home first place and design team members will accompany GWS professionals to Costa Rica on our upcoming Service Trip in August. The UWP design team consisted of Lauren Lodico, Jacob Yach, Elliot Hill, and Alex Clarksen.



University of Washington Teams



University of Wisconsin – Platteville Team

GWS SILENT AUCTIONS

The CSWEA 94th Annual Meeting was held on May 28-30 in Madison, WI. As is typical at the annual meeting, GWS held a silent auction to raise funds for our organization. As is also always typical, CSWEA members showcased an incredible amount of support. This year, we were able to raise \$4,050 for our organization! A huge shoutout to all those who donated items for the auction, for those who submitted bids, and to Autumn Fisher for her efforts as the Silent Auction Chair on the LAC. This year, we are happy to report that the Water Environment Association of Utah (WEAU) generously offered to host a GWS silent auction at their Annual Meeting and their organization was able to raise an additional \$2,300. We would like to thank Sarah Guzman, GWS Co-Chair, Steve Myers, GWS Board Member/WEAU President, and the WEAU Young Professionals group for spearheading this effort! **CS**



The Silent Auction held at the Water Environment Association of Utah's (WEAU's) Annual Conference.

MINNESOTA'S 2025 STOCKHOLM JUNIOR WATER PRIZE (SJWP) WINNER

On June 19-22, 2025, John travelled to the Washington University in St. Louis, MO, for the 2025 SJWP national competition. Congratulations John, and thanks for making Minnesota proud.



John Liu

Grade 11
Mounds View High School
Arden Hills, MN

TITLE

Developing a Solar-Enhanced Biomass-based Filtration System for Removing Microplastics and Heavy Metals from Water

ABSTRACT

Microplastics (MPs) are a growing environmental concern due to their high-risk nature as contaminants that have infiltrated nearly every ecosystem, including our food and body tissues. Their irregular size, complex composition, and inherent hydrophobicity present significant removal challenges, prompting ongoing research into advanced, sustainable, and clean energy-based removal techniques. This research introduces a novel biomass-based filtration system powered by green energy (solar heat), demonstrating effective removal of MPs and heavy metal contaminants from water. The system uses polyacrylonitrile-based carbon fiber felt (PAN-CFF) as the base filter, treated with chitosan, plant-derived tannic acid, and natural beeswax (all naturally sourced biomass-based materials) to create pattern-coated hydrophilic and hydrophobic (oleophilic) zones. The hydrophilic zones absorb water soluble pollutants such as heavy metal ions, while the oleophilic zones target contaminants like MPs, pesticides, and spilled oil. A key innovation of this study is the application of natural beeswax in the form of an emulsion to the surface of carbon fibers.

Under solar heating, the beeswax melts into a viscous liquid coating, capturing oleophilic microplastic particles. The beeswax then solidifies, immobilizing the microplastic particles for further recycling. The filtration system's performance was evaluated in both laboratory and real-world conditions, successfully removing 90.4% of lead and 92.8% of MPs. The new filtration system was further tested by removing lead and MPs from Mississippi River water. This research offers a biomass-based, sustainable, green energy-driven, and reusable solution for removing microplastic and heavy metal contamination from water.

BIOGRAPHY

Hello, my name is John Liu, and I am a rising senior at Mounds View High School in MN. Growing up in a state known for its abundant lakes and thriving freshwater ecosystems, I developed a deep passion for water conservation and environmental protection. Water, in its simple yet essential chemical composition, is the foundation of all life, but it remains incredibly vulnerable to pollution. Since middle school, I have been dedicated to advancing scientific innovation in water purification and environmental sustainability, striving to develop eco-friendly solutions that preserve and protect our natural resources. Looking ahead, I plan to pursue a degree in environmental engineering, where I can continue researching and implementing innovative technologies for water conservation. My goal is to design sustainable systems that ensure clean water access for communities while safeguarding Minnesota's freshwater ecosystems.

Beyond research, I am actively involved in school and community leadership. As President of the Minnesota Junior Academy of Science, I lead initiatives that promote STEM education and research among middle and high school students. I am especially passionate about helping under-resourced communities gain access to STEM opportunities, offering mentorship and support to young scientists. Additionally, over the past several years, I have accumulated more than 100 volunteer hours with Special Olympics Minnesota. I've helped plan events, led warm-up and skill-building exercises, and provided one-on-one guidance throughout the competition. This experience has not only validated my leadership and communication skills but also, the athletes' determination and joy has been inspiring. I am also a proud member of the Minneapolis Youth Congress, where I work directly with elected MN officials on youth-focused policies. One of my key projects involved collaborating to improve water quality in Minnesota schools, ensuring a healthier learning environment for students.

Winning the Stockholm Junior Water Prize Minnesota State Award, sponsored by CSWEA, has further strengthened my commitment to scientific innovation and environmental sustainability. I hope my research inspires new advancements in water purification while promoting Minnesota's leadership in protecting global water resources. **CS**





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Inside and Out, New AD Mixing System at Sparta Makes All The Difference

A wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) in Wisconsin has increased the biogas yield at its AD plant by 25%, thanks to the installation of a new digester mixing system.

Instead of capacity decreasing because of rags, grit and debris steadily accumulating at the bottom of two digesters (334,000 gallons (1,264m³) and 183,000 gallons (693m³) respectively), the tanks' contents at the city of Sparta (situated between Milwaukee and Minneapolis) are now comprehensively mixed by Landia's GasMix system.

A simple, yet highly effective design, comprising the proven Landia Chopper Pump (invented by Landia in 1950), and strategically-angled venturi nozzles, all mechanical equipment can be accessed on the outside of the digesters for easy maintenance.

Sparta's Wastewater Treatment Plant Manager, Ed Hanson, commented: "Our old, basic mixing system just blew air upwards in the digesters, which wasn't very efficient. Also, we couldn't get to it to carry out maintenance or make repairs without draining the tanks down. This can take you offline for a long time, which nobody wants when trying to produce biogas.

"Eventually, the old mixing system was failing; just providing some minor recirculation, with very little actual mixing taking place. When it became time to drain down the first digester and install the Landia GasMix, we found a huge amount of debris inside."

Built in the 1950s, Sparta's wastewater treatment plant serves 10,000 people in what is known as the 'Bicycling Capital of America'. In addition to domestic wastewater, the WWTP also receives effluent from a large food processing plant, a major dairy, plus leachate from the county's landfill, and septage brought in from hauliers. Although the WWTP has some screening, there is very little pre-treatment in place before it reaches the inlet.

"The Landia GasMix installation went very well," continued Sparta's Ed Hanson. "Landia were here to help every step of the way, especially as this was a tight and tricky challenge with very limited space for the new mixing set-up. We had to move some of our recirculation pumps.

'Grabbing the gas'

"At the start-up of the new system, we could see immediately that the Landia GasMix created plenty of turbulence and did a great job grabbing the gas from the top of the digester. Everything went smoothly, so six months later, we went ahead with installing another Landia GasMix for our second digester. Although it was a challenge with the space restrictions we have on this part of the plant; everything slotted into place, and the new mixing system has been working just fine, with no issues at all."

Heat produced from the AD process is now utilized for heating the digesters to their optimum temperatures, with the Landia GasMix ensuring that sludge is mixed comprehensively to significantly enhance the destruction of volatile solids and boost biogas yields.



'Far more methane is being produced'

"We've certainly seen that our gas bills are not as much as they were the year before, and we're much more eco-friendly now," added Ed Hanson. "We have long cold winters here, so with the old mixing system, you could see everything drop back down to nothing as temperatures dropped, but since our upgrade, the gas holds much, much longer. We can see that far more methane is being produced, and faster."

Unlike the previous mixing system where all mixing components were trapped inside the digesters, Ed and his team of four colleagues can now carry out visual and audio checks on the externally-mounted pumps, making any adjustments as necessary.

'Good digestate product'

"Maintenance is easy, and we also have a good digestate product at the end of the process," continued Ed. "This provides very useful nitrogen for farms in the county as a fertilizer, and saves them money, which is always a positive thing. We're now looking at how we can improve consistency, so that there's less water and more product. We're working on getting the compaction levels just right so that it is easier for farmers to apply to land.

"The new mixing system was a long time coming, but it has been well worth the wait. We're now producing biogas as we should be, because the digester sludge is being mixed comprehensively by the Landia GasMix."

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