INSIDE

'BEYOND THE SURFACE' WEBINAR SERIES

CAPACITY, COST, AND COMMITMENT: PROTECTING UTILITIES AND RATEPAYERS WHEN DATA CENTERS ARRIVE

SECTION LEADERS CONNECT WITH LEGISLATORS

PIPELINE

SUMMER 2026



2026 AWWA NJ ANNUAL CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS AND GALLERY

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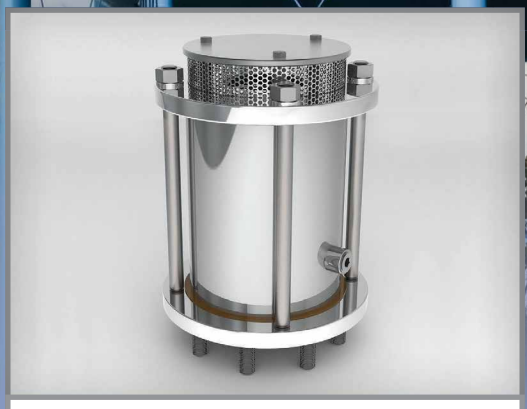
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NEW JERSEY SECTION
American Water Works Association

About New Jersey Section AWWA
50 E. Ridgewood Ave, # 183 Ridgewood, NJ 07450
Toll free: 1-866-436-1120
Email: *info@njawwa.org*

AWWA NJ is made up of more than 1,100 members united in a mission to provide safe drinking water to the people of New Jersey. Our members include most of New Jersey's public and investor-owned water utilities along with engineering and environmental professionals and allied industry businesses.

As part of the American Water Works Association, the New Jersey Section joins over 50,000 water professionals and vendors worldwide in a dynamic organization dedicated to a better world through better water.

We invite you to browse our publication and get to know our members and learn more about our activities.

Pipeline is an informative, educational tool; therefore, the AWWA NJ reserves the right to select and publish content for this publication.

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Nicole Brown
AWWA NJ Section Chair

Building Community, Strengthening Connections

Community and connections have shaped my journey to this role as Chair of the New Jersey Section. I'd like to share a bit about my journey, because along the way I experienced firsthand the power of being welcomed into a community and the difference that meaningful connections can make.

Earlier in my career, I was an energetic engineer eager to get involved in AWWA to do good in an industry that gave me so much. But I struggled to find my way in. I couldn't figure out how to volunteer locally, and when I reached out, I was told there wasn't a need.

So, I looked for a different door. I applied to serve on AWWA's national Diversity and Member Inclusion Committee – an opportunity that would ultimately shape my path more than I could have imagined. Through that experience, I connected with leaders who helped me understand how I could grow within AWWA, including a simple but powerful reminder that New Jersey was not far away – and that I would be welcomed.

That encouragement led me to attend my first AWWA NJ conference as a volunteer. Walking into that room, not knowing anyone, I quickly found something special: a community of dedicated professionals who were passionate about water and committed to one another. Many of those individuals are still part of my journey today.

Since then, I have had the privilege of serving in a variety of roles within the Section – from committee member to chair positions, from launching what is now our standalone DEI Committee to serving on the Board. Each step reinforced something I now hold deeply: leadership within AWWA should not feel like a mystery or a closed door. It should feel like an open invitation.

> We must create clear and accessible pathways for involvement and leadership so that members can see where they fit and how they can grow.

As I begin my term as Chair, I am grounding my focus in four key principles:

Communication. We must create clear and accessible pathways for involvement and leadership so that members can see where they fit and how they can grow.

Community. Our strength comes from our people. We should continue to welcome those who are new, support those who are engaged, and create spaces where everyone feels valued.

Connection. Once someone enters this organization, we have an opportunity – and a responsibility – to help them find their place, their people, and their purpose.

Collaboration. This will be a particular focus of my time as Chair. I believe we can achieve more when we work together – across committees, across disciplines, and across organizations.

The challenges facing the water sector are too complex for any one group to solve alone. By collaborating within our Section and building partnerships with other water-focused organizations throughout New Jersey, we can extend our impact while strengthening our shared voice. This will require intentional outreach, open dialogue, and a willingness to explore new ways of working together.

There is a quote I often return to that speaks to purpose and service: the idea that our work is part of something larger than ourselves, and that it is our privilege to contribute to the communities we serve. This resonates deeply within AWWA, where so many volunteers give their time, energy, and expertise to advance our mission.

As I step into this role, I do so with gratitude – for the leaders who came before me, for the colleagues who walk alongside me, and for the community that continues to inspire me. It is an honor to carry this 'torch' forward, and my goal is to keep it burning brightly by fostering a spirit of engagement, inclusion, and collaboration.

Thank you for the trust you have placed in me. I look forward to working with each of you in the year ahead.



MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Mona Cavalcoli
AWWA NJ Section Executive Director

Did You Ever Know that You're My Hero?

Recently, I attended ACE26 in Washington, DC, along with many other NJ Section members. Over 10,000 people attended the annual event, which is AWWA's largest. It's always amazing to me to see the size and scope of the conference. The vastness of the exhibit hall, the number of sessions and activities going on at any given time, and the opportunity to see so many old friends and meet new ones. And each year, AWWA NJ joins up with the NY Section and sometimes other Sections, to host a reception where everyone is welcome and gets to meet and make friends with AWWA 'neighbors.'

This year, we had over 200 people from New York and New Jersey, plus Minnesota and Iowa come together at a local restaurant/bar called 'Calico' on the Sunday evening of ACE. And during that evening, something happened that ended up giving me some inspiration for this article.

I wiped out while wearing a superhero cape.

Yes. You read that correctly. Each year, during the ACE Opening General Session, Sections are encouraged to sit 'by Section' and to potentially all wear something to distinguish them. With the theme of ACE26 being 'Water Heroes,' we (NJ) decided to wear customized superhero capes. So, during Sunday night's Joint Section Reception, I was showing off our new AWWA NJ capes and attempting to demonstrate how NJ Section members would 'fly' in to the Monday morning Opening General Session and make an impression on all the other Section as to how cool we are.

Suffice to say, in my attempt to demonstrate how a superhero 'flies,' I made an impression alright – *an impression on the pavement!* My flip-flop got caught somehow, and I splatted right down on the ground. Not exactly the graceful action I was aiming for. Thankfully, a nice man named Thad Daniels, who I had just met that evening, was there to offer a hand and help me up.



NJ 'heroes' ready to make an entrance to the ACE26 Opening General Session.

But it made me think about how superheroes are never perfect, they always get up when they fall, and how they have friends that help them. Superman had kryptonite, but he also had Jimmy Olson. Batman had Alfred. The Green Lantern had Kato. Peter Parker had Uncle Ben and Aunt May. Buffy had Willow and Xander. Call them mentors, sidekicks, or friends – superheroes, while often working in isolation, are not entirely alone.

'Water Heroes' as the theme of ACE26 is a clear and true message: water professionals are heroes. We protect public health daily. We are dedicated. We are strong. We go above and beyond. We do the right thing and make sure our communities are vibrant and thriving by providing safe water under all conditions. We work long hours, we are essential now, and essential always. But we also have our own heroes, sidekicks, mentors, and friends – the people that teach us, the people that encourage us, the people that lend us a hand and lift us up.

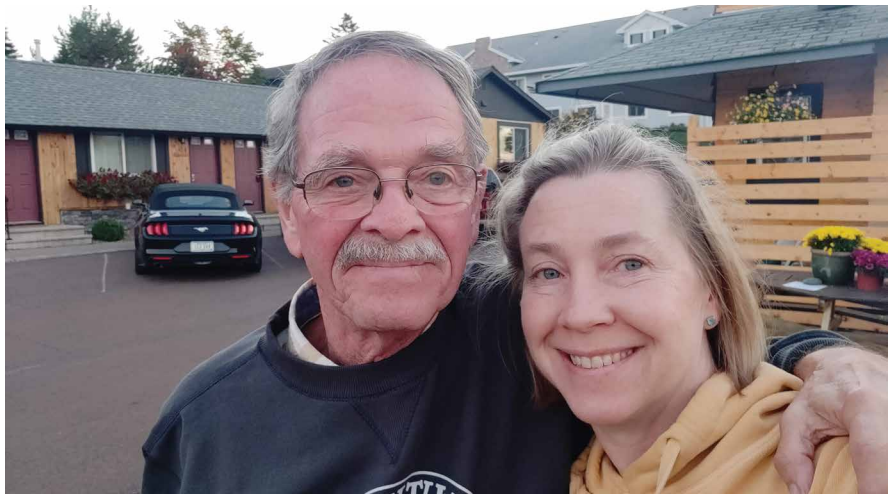
I have a few heroes. First and foremost is my Dad. He's always been a strong and caring man that has given me guidance, wisdom, and support no matter what, throughout my entire life. As I've grown older, and have been through life's challenges, my dad has become my best friend in addition to my hero.

One of my other heroes is Carol Walcyzk. Carol, *did you ever know that you're my hero?* (yes, you can hum the song from 'Beaches' as you read that). I met Carol when I first started to get involved in AWWA, and as someone close to my own age, she was the example I followed through many stages of my life. She is smart and funny, accomplished and diplomatic, and a person I have always counted on and looked up to as a professional inspiration. We've continued to be both colleagues and friends, et j'ai la bonne chance, Carol, t'appeller mon amie! J'espere visiter toi encore a Paris bientôt!

I'm going to shout out a few other names of those who I count in my superhero circle: Brian, my partner of 25 years; my brother, and my grandmother are among my heroes. Mrs. Gavin (my fifth-grade teacher) was one of my heroes. Nancy Sullivan, Stacy Cacallori, Pat Connelly, Jon Eaton, Alex Wells and Pat Cole – you are among my heroes – would you ever have guessed that? If you are surprised to see your name in my list, it's probably because I've never told you that you inspired or guided me in some way that made a lasting impact on me. Maybe we should all take a moment to thank those who have been our heroes.

Who are YOUR heroes? Is there someone that you look up to? Someone who always answers your bat-signal when you need help? Your superheroes can be older, younger, from work, or in your personal life. They may still be with you, but they can be people from your past who taught you lessons or showed you a path and encouraged you, and you are honoring their legacy by keeping those lessons alive and teaching them to others. Take a minute to think about it and maybe tell one of your heroes about the impact they have had on you.

Just take a bit of advice from me and Edna Mode from *The Incredibles:* ***NO CAPES!***



My number one hero, my dad, Mark.



Carol Walczyk, another of my heroes.

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GP Jager Marks 30 Years Supporting the Water and Wastewater Industry

For the professionals who design, build, and operate water infrastructure, dependable partners matter. Equipment needs to perform, systems must run reliably, and when challenges arise, it helps to have experienced people who understand the work and can help find practical solutions.

For the past 30 years, GP Jager, a UFT company, has worked alongside municipalities, consulting engineers, and contractors to support water and wastewater systems throughout the region. Through strong manufacturer partnerships and a hands-on approach to technical support, the company has built long-standing relationships with the professionals responsible for keeping critical infrastructure operating.

As GP Jager celebrates this milestone anniversary, the focus remains the same as it was when the company first began – supporting the people who keep water systems running every day.

Working Alongside Engineers, Contractors, and Operators

GP Jager represents a range of manufacturers that provide pumps, valves, controls, and other specialized equipment used in municipal and industrial water and wastewater systems. While the equipment itself is essential, much of the company's value comes from the support provided throughout the life of a project.

The GP Jager team works closely with consulting engineers during the design phase to help ensure the right equipment is specified for each application. Contractors often rely on the team during installation and startup to help coordinate equipment delivery and ensure systems are integrated properly. Once a facility is operational, plant operators know they can reach out with questions or for technical guidance.

That level of involvement has helped the company develop strong, long-term relationships across the region. In many cases, customers who worked with GP Jager on one project return again for future work, creating partnerships that continue over many years.

Strength Through the UFT Network

GP Jager is part of UFT, a network of companies focused on supporting water and wastewater infrastructure across several regions.

Being part of the UFT family allows GP Jager to collaborate with a broader team of industry professionals while maintaining the strong local presence customers rely on. Through this network, the company can share technical knowledge, coordinate closely with manufacturers, and provide additional resources when projects require specialized expertise.

For municipalities, consulting engineers, and contractors, this combination of local service and broader industry support helps ensure projects move forward efficiently and successfully.

Responding to an Evolving Industry

Like many areas of the water and wastewater sector, technology continues to evolve. One area where GP Jager has seen growing interest is in controls and automation.

Many utilities are incorporating monitoring systems that provide operators with greater visibility into how their facilities are performing. These systems allow plant personnel to monitor equipment, identify potential issues earlier, and make adjustments that improve overall system efficiency.

By working with manufacturers specializing in process control and instrumentation, GP Jager helps utilities implement technologies that fit their operational needs. For operators responsible for keeping treatment plants and pump stations running smoothly, these advancements can make day-to-day operations easier while improving long-term reliability.

Supporting Infrastructure That Serves Communities

Behind every water or wastewater project is a shared goal – protecting public health and ensuring communities have reliable infrastructure.

One recent project involved supporting a municipal pump station upgrade where aging equipment was being replaced as part of a broader system improvement effort. GP Jager worked with the consulting engineers to help identify equipment that would meet the station's operational requirements while improving long-term reliability.

During installation, the team coordinated closely with the contractor and manufacturer to ensure equipment arrived on schedule and was integrated properly into the system. Once the station was operational, GP Jager remained available to assist with startup support and any technical questions that arose.

Projects like these reflect the collaborative nature of the industry, where engineers, contractors, manufacturers, and operators work together to deliver successful infrastructure improvements.

Looking Ahead

The water and wastewater industry continues to face important challenges, including aging infrastructure, increased system demands, and evolving regulatory requirements. Addressing these challenges will require both innovative technology and strong industry partnerships.

After three decades in the field, GP Jager remains committed to supporting municipalities, engineers, and contractors by providing dependable equipment and experienced technical support.

As the company looks ahead, its mission remains simple: to support the professionals who keep water systems running and help ensure communities continue to receive safe, reliable water services for years to come.


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CAREER ZONE:

Why Good Employees Leave Water Utilities — And How to Make Them Stay

By Jennifer Persike

Source: AWWA Connections

You've done the hard work of hiring someone. They've completed onboarding, learned your systems, toured the facilities, and met the team. Now comes the question that should keep every utility leader up at night: What's going to make them stay?

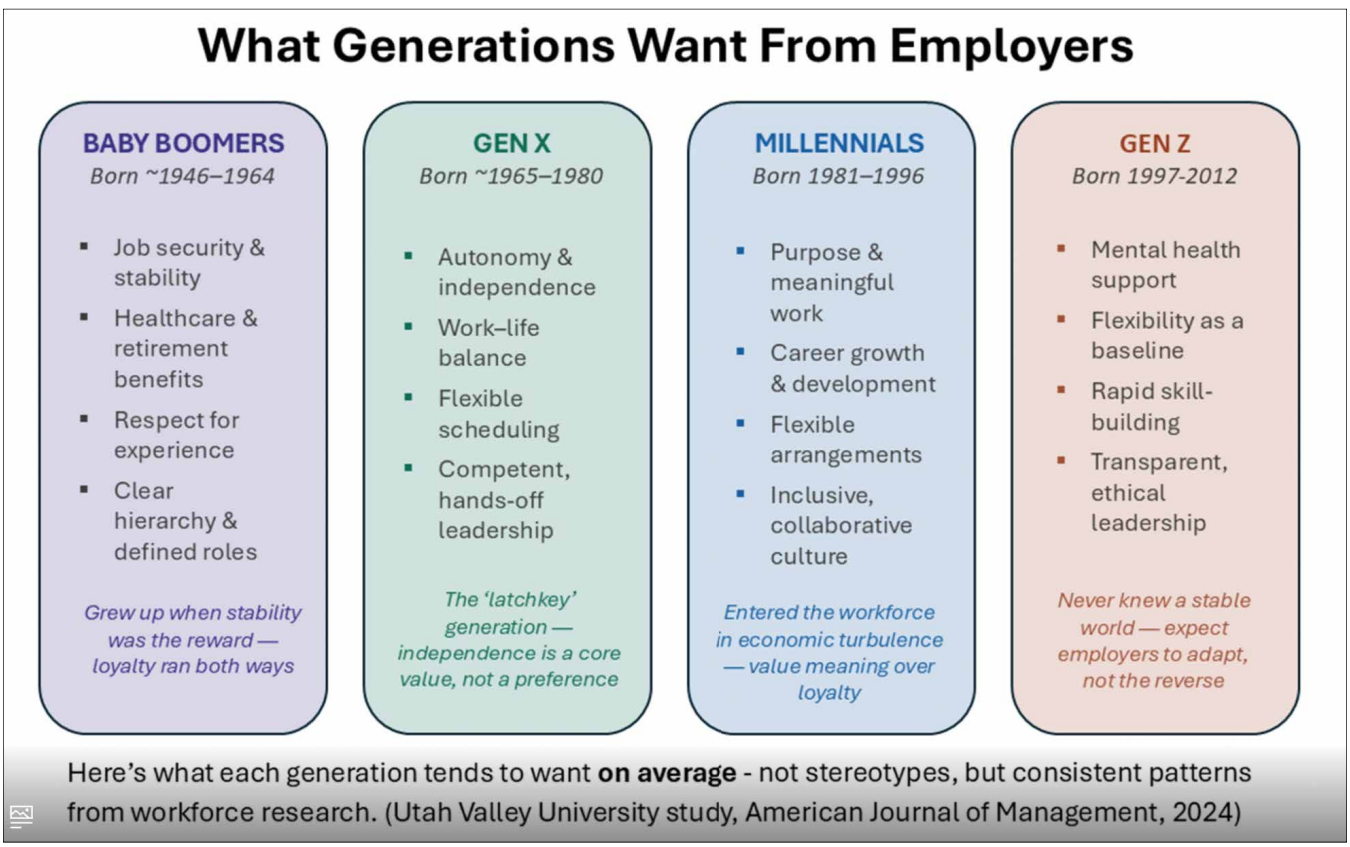
People rarely leave for more money. They leave because nobody noticed their work. They leave because they feelstuck. They leave because the culture grounds them down until they stopped caring.

Fix those things, and you don't just reduce turnover – you build the kind of organization people actively choose to stay in. What follows are strategies to help you build exactly that.

They need to feel seen.

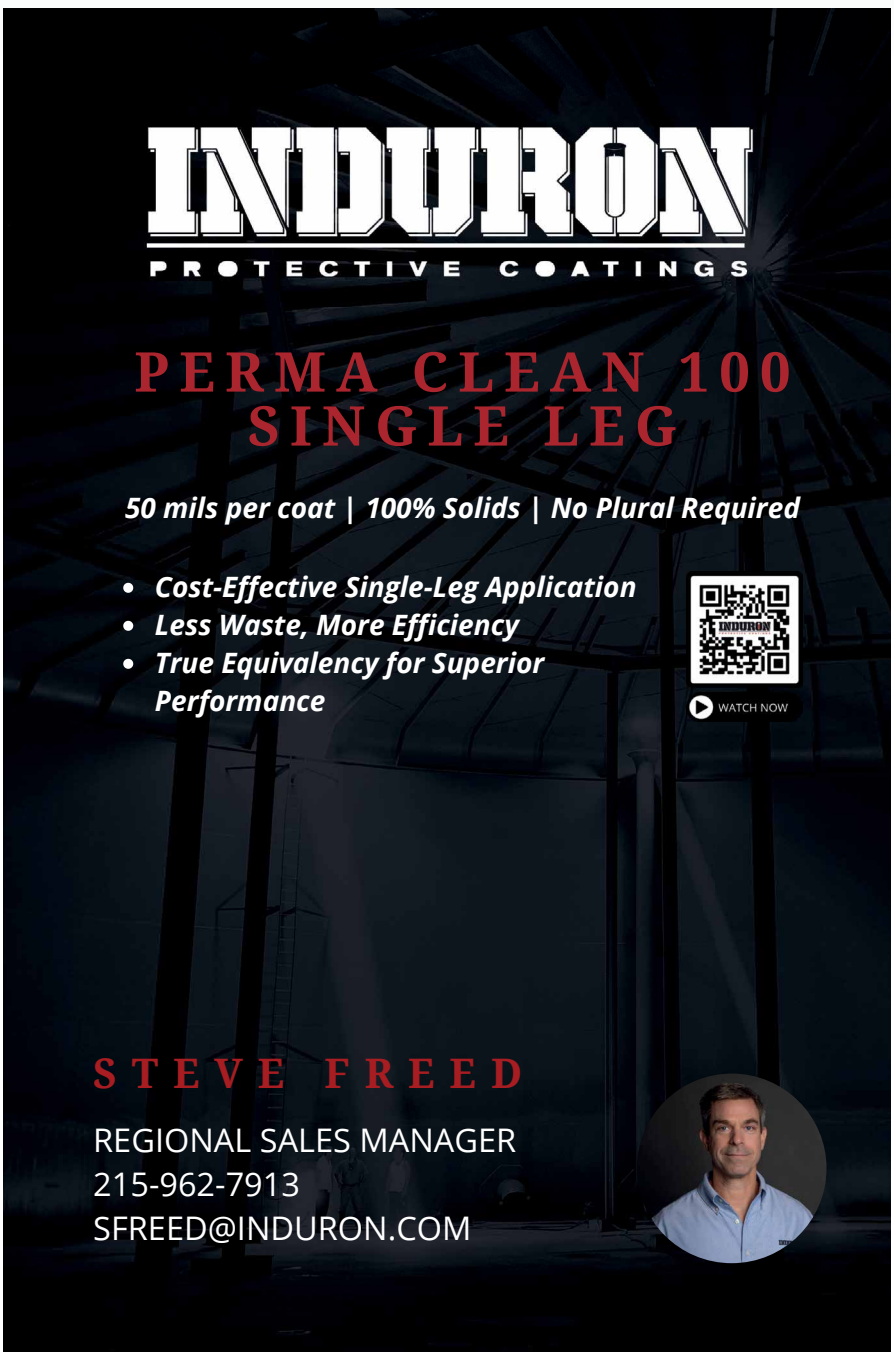
Water agencies run on a 'no news is good news' culture: If nothing went wrong and the water flowed, it was a good day. But employees – especially those earlier in their careers – need to know their work is noticed.

That doesn't mean elaborate award ceremonies. It means a supervisor who watches an employee handle a difficult situation well and says so, specifically, in front of others. (Example: A manager calls out in a team meeting a major pipe break repair that was handled in record time.) It also means leadership that connects the daily grind to the bigger picture: clean, safe water delivered, a community protected, infrastructure that will outlast all of us. Your people are doing genuinely important work. Tell them that – specifically, often, and in settings where others can hear it.



They need to see a future.
One of the most common reasons mid-career employees leave utilities is the feeling of being stuck. Water utilities have a structural advantage here: operator certification ladders, supervisory tracks, cross-training opportunities, project leadership roles. The problem is these pathways exist on paper but rarely come up in conversation. Opportunities may not be clear or transparent.

Managers need to be actively talking with employees about where they want to go and how to get there – and then helping remove the barriers along the way. Career development isn't an HR formality; it's one of the most direct retention tools a manager has. If someone can see a future at your utility, they stay.



They need a culture that doesn't burn them out.
Operators and field crews face long shifts and middle-of-the-night calls. Customer service staff absorb complaints all day. Middle managers are pulled simultaneously by leadership above and teams below. In every role, the pressure can compound – and a culture that normalizes that grind without acknowledgment isn't resilient; it's fragile.

The utilities that keep their best people create space to raise concerns, distribute on-call burdens fairly, and invest in technology and processes that eliminate unnecessary drudgery. When people feel the organization is working to make their jobs sustainable, they notice.

They need you to know them as individuals.
It's tempting to manage by generational label – millennials want this, boomers want that. While there are some useful indicators in research, you need to learn more about your individual people. Your workforce isn't monolithic, and assumptions based on age may lead you astray.

A 29-year-old engineer and a 54-year-old plant supervisor are in completely different life stages with different priorities. One may be hungry for fast skill development and schedule flexibility. The other may want their expertise formalized through mentorship and a clear, dignified path toward retirement. The only way to know what someone needs is to ask them – and then to listen.

Real retention conversations, held one-on-one, will do more than any organization-wide program or employee appreciation campaign.

The utilities losing good people aren't just losing them to higher salaries elsewhere. They're losing them to organizations that made people feel valued, challenged, and respected.

That part is entirely within your control.

Jennifer Persike, president/founder of Jennifer Persike & Company, is an innovative strategist and visionary leader with more than 30 years of experience with California water and energy utilities, statewide associations, non-profits and corporations.

2026 AWWA NJ
Annual Conference Highlights and Gallery

In March, AWWA New Jersey Section held its Annual Conference at the Borgata Hotel in Atlantic City and welcomed just over 1,200 attendees – a new record! Over the course of three days, attendees were able to earn continuing education credits toward water and wastewater, as well as professional engineering licenses. In addition, the Conference featured multiple networking events and opportunities for old friends to meet, talk, share their best practices, challenges, and lessons learned.

Each Conference, the Section strives to showcase top-notch presentations on the latest issues that affect New Jersey water professionals. The Technical Program Committee selects over 60 presentations to feature in concurrent technical tracks so that attendees have a wide range of topics to learn about.

Attendees also got to spend time with more than 100 of our exhibitors, sharing their latest products and services ranging from software and instrumentation, to equipment and tools, to products and services. New this year, the Exhibit Hall opened early and featured a series of short product demonstrations on an 'innovation stage.'

Throughout the Conference, attendees had fun earning points in the "Conference Monopoly Game," and using those points to get cool stuff in the Section Bookstore. Several of the AWWA NJ Section and Association awards were presented, giving attendees a chance to celebrate the accomplishments of friends and peers!

Awards Presented included:

- George Warren Fuller Award: presented to **Suzanne Chiavari**
- Hal Florence Meritorious Operator Award: presented to **Josh Engelking**
- Next Generation Award: presented to **Kevin Rodier**
- Tom Dawson Dedication Award: presented to **Mimi Heims**
- Diversity Award: presented to **Lindsey Holt** and **Kevin Rodier**
- Best Tasting Water Contest Winner: **Passaic Valley Water Commission**
- Fresh Ideas Winner: **RebieAnn Reyes**
- Employer Support Award: **Suburban Consulting Engineers**
- Research Award: Odera Umeh
- Technology Transfer Award: **Chima Eke**



Audience interaction means our presenters are getting attendees' attention.



Mackenzie App presents at the new Innovation Stage on Tuesday afternoon.



Tom Richardson showing St. Patrick's Day spirit on the Innovation Stage.



Getting a closer look at metering technology with Core and Main.



Top-notch technical sessions draw a packed house in the session room.

Annual Conference Highlights and Gallery



Our dedicated Section Volunteers know how to stand out and be recognized during the Committee Rush Party.



Julissa Coplin (City of Newark), Ameerah Palacios, (STV), Nicole Brown (GFT and AWWA Chairperson), and Adam Burger (Jacobs).



AWWA NJ Conference is the place to see old friends and make new ones!



The Conference 'monopoly' game challenged people to spell out 'A-W-W-A.'



Dedicated Leaders: AWWA NJ's Board of Trustees.



More 'A-W-W-A' Cheerleaders!



More than 100 exhibitors attend the AWWA NJ Conference, allowing attendees to learn about the latest in technologies, products and services.



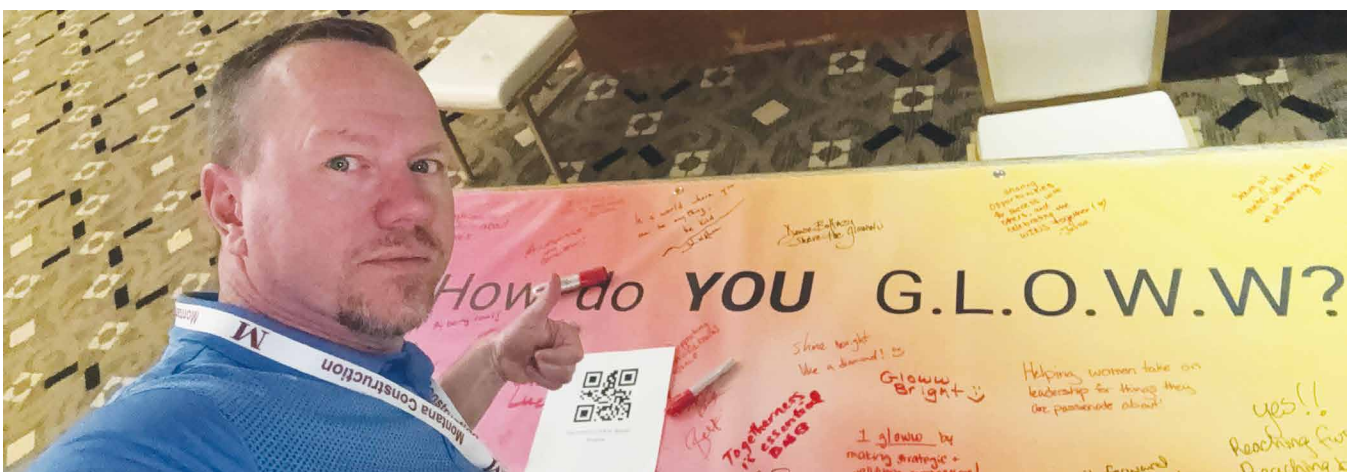
Section Director Alex Wells, Section Chair Gigi Diaz, and Executive Director Mona Cavalcoli with visiting AWWA Officer Andrew Chastian-Howley.



Section Committee leaders and volunteers Siying Wang, Laura Norkute, Russell Ford and Joe Bongiovanni.



Great connections are made at AWWA NJ Conferences! Just ask Cindy Brandecker and Shyam Marwala.



The Section's new women in water subcommittee asked attendees to share how they G.L.O.W.W... Gather, Lift, and Organize Women in Water.

Annual Conference Highlights and Gallery









This and following page: More fun with the Conference 'monopoly' game – attendees earn points getting selfie pictures with specific Section leaders (or T-rexes!).







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Beyond the Surface:

How a Webinar Series Inspired Diversity and Collaboration in the Water Industry

The *Beyond the Surface: Overcoming Barriers to Collaboration* webinar series was developed to facilitate discussion around key challenges facing the water industry. Through five engaging webinars held between January and November 2025, the series incorporated diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) concepts into broader conversations about collaboration and problem-solving, earning the 2026 AWWA New Jersey Section Diversity & Inclusion Award.

Planned and hosted by Kevin Rodier and Lindsey Holt, *Beyond the Surface* emphasized the need to improve industry collaboration by building meaningful relationships, and that DEI principles are core to achieving that goal. Rather than presenting DEI principles as standalone topics, Kevin and Lindsey integrated them into conversations around common industry topics. By framing the webinars around current challenges, such as workforce issues, service equity, cross-organizational collaboration, and public trust, the series showed how inclusive practices and diverse perspectives naturally strengthen outcomes.

Integrating DEI Into Industry Challenges

Each of the five webinar sessions focused on a specific issue facing water professionals and examined how differing perspectives, personal identities, and lived experiences influence both challenges and solutions. This approach demonstrated the power and practicality of embedding DEI into everyday industry conversations and collaborative efforts.

The program was structured as a five-part series, with topics selected in advance to reflect a range of operational, organizational, and workforce concerns. Planning began well before the first session, with the organizers identifying themes, potential speakers, and desired outcomes to ensure a cohesive progression across the series.

Session 1: Generational Divides explored the generational age gaps in the water industry; highlighting how communication styles, workplace norms, and expectations vary across age groups.

Session 2: Areas of Expertise examined how different functional roles – operators, engineers, contractors, communicators – interact and depend on one another despite silos that may exist.

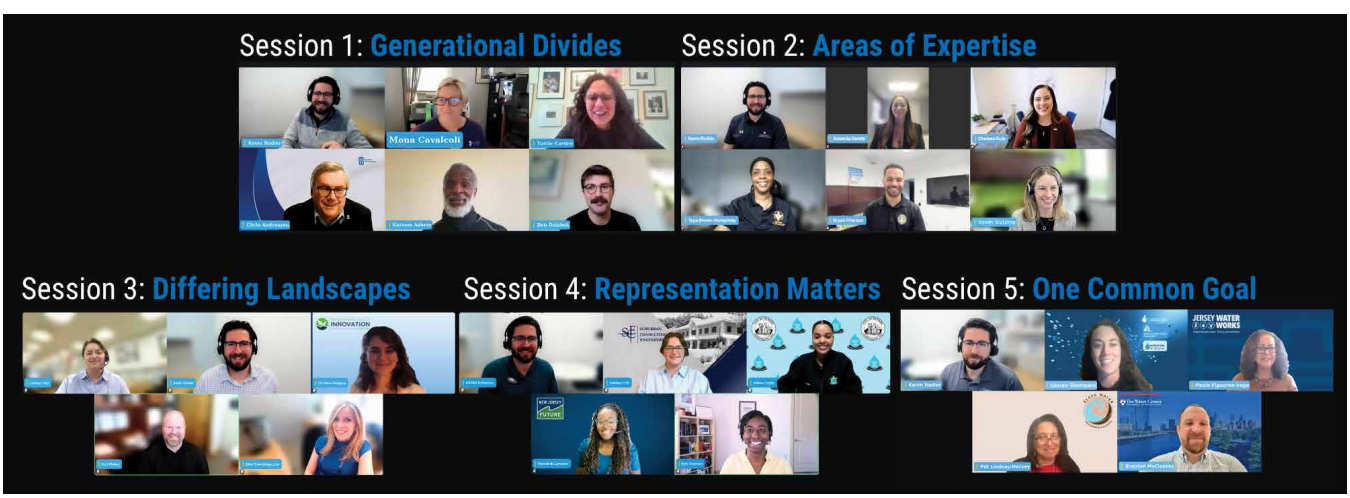
Session 3: Differing Landscapes focused on the role that utility size and customer demographics play in shaping operations, comparing the resources of small and large systems and recognizing the similar challenges we all face.

Session 4: Representation Matters explored the intersectionality between race and gender, highlighting how identity can shape professional experiences and opportunities in the water industry.

Session 5: One Common Goal highlighted leaders and organizations advancing DEI in the water sector, focusing on inclusive workforce development and equitable partnership. It underscored the themes of the series and the role that collaboration plays in driving our industry in meaningful change.

Expanding Representation and Dialogue

A key component of the series was its approach to speaker selection. Panels included participants from



a variety of organizations, including utilities of different sizes, consulting firms, non-profits, and other industry stakeholders. Care was also taken to include professionals at different stages of their careers, pairing established leaders with emerging voices.

This structure supported more balanced discussions and introduced perspectives that are not always reflected in our industry. The series emphasized candid, moderated dialogue. Topics that are often acknowledged but not explored in depth, particularly those considered difficult or uncomfortable, were examined directly. Panelists addressed these issues openly, offering both perspectives and recommendations for improvement.

Discussions reinforced that cultural, structural, or interpersonal barriers to collaboration are common and not always easy to address without intentional conversation. Several consistent themes emerged across the series, including:

- Mentorship and professional development
- Knowledge sharing and storytelling
- Communication gaps across roles and organizations
- Knowledge transfer within and between teams

Sessions remained focused on practical outcomes, with examples of strategies and programs that support stronger collaboration.

Industry Impact and Lasting Value

Beyond the Surface succeeded in attracting hundreds of attendees across multiple AWWA Sections, generating highly positive feedback, and fostering deeper connections within the New Jersey Section. Many participants identified ideas they could apply within their organizations, particularly related to communication, workforce engagement, and collaboration across roles and departments.

The program also generated interest from other AWWA Sections and water professionals outside New Jersey, with several expressing interest in developing similar programming. In addition, the series highlighted existing initiatives and organizations working to advance inclusive practices within the water sector, increasing awareness and providing examples for future efforts.

To extend its reach, each webinar was recorded and made available online alongside presentation materials, curated resources, and summarized takeaways, allowing continued access beyond the live events.

The recognition of *Beyond the Surface* with the 2026 AWWA New Jersey Section Diversity & Inclusion Award highlights its relevance to the industry. By focusing on practical challenges and incorporating a range of perspectives, the series demonstrates how inclusive approaches can support more effective collaboration and informed decision-making.

For more information about the series or to watch the recorded webinars, visit *www.njawwa.org/page/webinarseries*.

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Newark Welcomes G.L.O.W.W

for a Tour of the Pequannock Water Treatment Plant

By Julissa Coplin

The City of Newark's Water & Sewer Utility hosted 22 water professionals from G.L.O.W.W, a women-centered AWWA NJ committee, on a guided tour of the Pequannock Water Treatment Plant (PWTP) to showcase Newark's state-of-the-art upgrades and connect with women in New Jersey's water sector.

When Principal Engineer Marina Shenoda began her career with the City of Newark Water & Sewer Utility in 2021, she was struck by the fact that she was one of a few woman engineers in her office. "I remember going to conferences early in my career and just not seeing many women in the room. And the ones who were there, we were all kind of isolated from each other. I thought, someone should do something about that. So, I did."

Today, roughly 15% of the US water workforce is female – an improvement in the recent decade, but still a clear gender disparity. This is what motivated Ms. Shenoda to spearhead G.L.O.W.W. "Women in water deserve a space to find each other, share their experiences, and lift one another up," said Ms. Shenoda. "I started G.L.O.W.W. because I wanted women in water to know they have a community here in New Jersey, people who get it, who've been through it, and who want to see each other succeed."

G.L.O.W.W, which stands for Gathering, Lifting, and Organizing Women in Water, is a community where women in the water industry, at any stage in their career, can gather, connect, center their experiences, and encourage more women to consider a career in water. This initiative was founded by Ms. Shenoda with the support of Nicole Brown of GFT Inc. and Giselle Diaz of Boswell Engineering, both leaders within the American Water Works Association New Jersey Section (AWWA NJ). The group welcomes all allies of women regardless of gender identity. "I thank the AWWA NJ for their support in pioneering this initiative," said Ms. Shenoda. "It is very important that we recruit, hire, and support women in water so that they thrive; and in turn, our water systems thrive."



This Wednesday, G.L.O.W.W embarked on a tour of the Newark-Pequannock Water Treatment Plant (PWTP), guided by Principal Mechanical Engineer Erica Espiritusanto and PWTP Superintendent Kevin Greer. This visit marks one of many inaugural events for this women-centered cohort, creating opportunities for information-sharing and both personal and professional connections.

Just eight months ago, Newark completed a $20.5 million upgrade of the treatment plant, which equipped the plant with new GAC filter media, a filter air scouring system, a new Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system, and new valve and pump replacements. The upgrades were made possible by the support of Mayor Ras J. Baraka's administration and low-interest loans from the New Jersey Infrastructure Bank.









"Our forefathers gave us two of everything. If something breaks, we have a backup on hand," noted Mr. Greer. This is a reflection of all the thought, foresight, and ingenuity that went into designing our system, and it certainly gives Newark a unique edge."

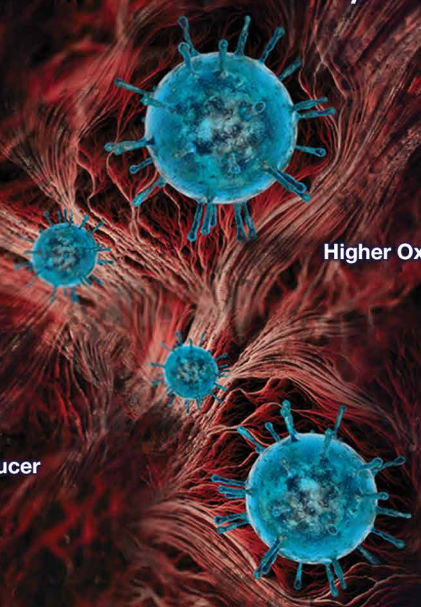
Erica Espiritusanto, who led the tour along with Mr. Greer, stepped out of her comfort zone and gave a well-rounded overview of Newark's water treatment process. "I was a bit nervous about presenting Newark's entire water treatment process to seasoned water professionals," said Ms. Espiritusanto. "But once I started, I found my rhythm. I was proud to take on the challenge and present to other fellow women in water." The tour was attended by 22 water professionals from STV Inc., Gannett Fleming (GFT), Middlesex Water Company, Boswell, HDR, Inc., Carollo Engineers, American Water, North Jersey District Water Supply (NJDWS), Envirolutions, Passaic Valley Water Commission, CP Engineers, and Structural Technologies. "We are not in competition; we are collaborators," Mr. Greer continued. "We are all in this mission together of providing clean drinking water to the residents of New Jersey."

At the end of the tour, Mr. Greer reflected on the importance of embracing diversity for a stronger water workforce. "Diversity might be a bad word to some, but it is not here," said PWTP Plant Superintendent Kevin Greer. "This is what Newark is all about. We have talented individuals from every ethnicity and every background who add tremendous value to our water system." The tour was followed by a networking dinner to further connect, share, and discuss future plans for G.L.O.W.W. "We are just getting started. Coming up this year, G.L.O.W.W. has a professional development webinar series, launching in the fall, more events throughout the year, and exciting cross-organization collaborations in the works. But honestly, what excites me most is watching this community grow. Every event, more women show up, and that's the whole point," said Ms. Shenoda.

Interested in getting involved in G.L.O.W.W? Email *shenodam@ci.newark.nj.us*, connect with the committee through AWWA NJ, or see more on page 36 of this magazine!



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American Water Works Association – New Jersey Section, Water Utility Council

Comments on *The Legionnaires' Disease Prevention Act Bill A2714*



The American Water Works Association, New Jersey Section represents more than 1,300 water professionals committed to protecting public health through the delivery of safe and reliable drinking water. We appreciate the opportunity to provide constructive input on this legislation and look forward to continued collaboration on this important public health initiative.

AWWA NJ fully supports Assembly Bill A2714 and urges the Legislature to advance this bill to strengthen drinking water quality and enhance public health protections related to Legionnaires' disease prevention.

AWWA NJ strongly supports the establishment of the Legionnaires' Disease Prevention Grant Program within the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). This program is thoughtfully designed to maximize public health benefits while ensuring responsible stewardship of public funds, and we view it as a meaningful and necessary improvement to existing legislation. AWWA NJ would strongly request that additional funding sources are explored in order to provide adequate and additional funding in future years.

Additionally, the legislation appropriately strengthens Best Management Practices by reinforcing the requirement that the DEP develop and publish comprehensive guidance for public community water systems to discourage the growth and spread of Legionella bacteria. These practices address a wide range of system risk factors, including but not limited to:

- Identification of aging infrastructure, dead ends, and components prone to biofilm formation
- Flushing protocols and maintenance of disinfectant residuals
- Storage tank maintenance and water age management
- Monitoring, testing, and stagnation prevention

By codifying these best practices and requiring water systems to develop and implement distribution system maintenance plans, the legislation promotes a proactive, prevention-focused approach rather than reactive crisis management. The inclusion of annual certification requirements further ensures ongoing accountability and compliance.

Finally, AWWA NJ strongly supports amending P.L.2024, c.66 to eliminate the previously mandated minimum chlorine and chloramine residual requirements for public community water systems. While this change may initially appear to lessen public health protections, it should be evaluated within the broader framework of the legislation.

Rather than relying on rigid, one-size-fits-all numerical thresholds, the amended statute directs the DEP to establish comprehensive best management practices and requires utilities to develop tailored distribution system maintenance plans based on their unique infrastructure and risk profiles. This flexible, risk-based approach aligns with modern water safety science, which recognizes that effective Legionella control depends on system-specific conditions rather than compliance with a single numerical standard.

Importantly, the elimination of prescriptive residual requirements does not remove the obligation to provide safe drinking water. Instead, it replaces a narrow statutory mandate with a more sophisticated, outcomes-based framework that better reflects the complexity of real-world water systems. Continued reporting requirements and annual certifications ensure that this flexibility is balanced with appropriate oversight and accountability.

In conclusion, AWWA NJ is fully supportive of the progression and adoption of this Bill.

Nicole Brown
Chair – AWWA New Jersey Section

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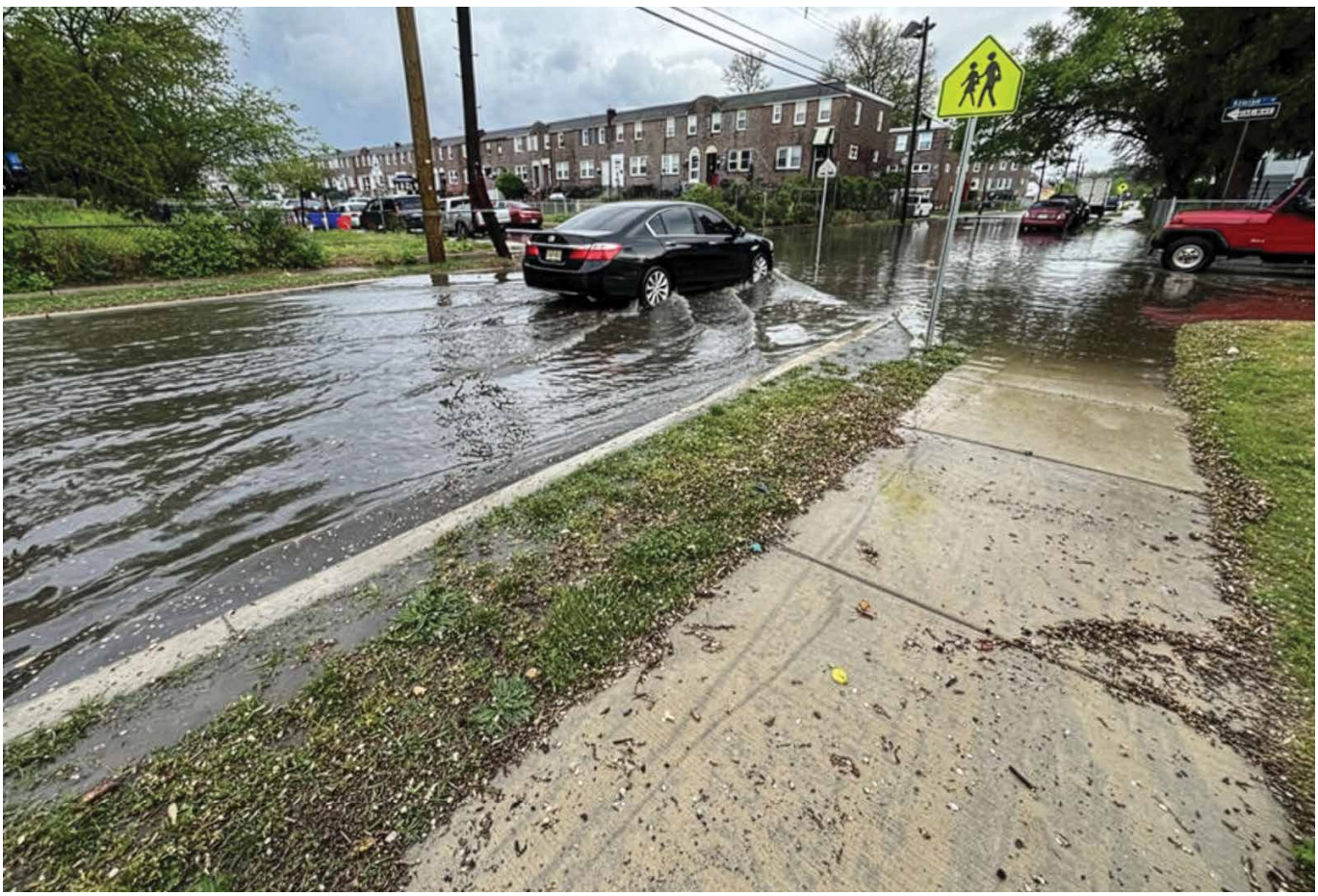
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A Plan to Limit Flooding in N.J. Is Hampered by Evaporating Federal Funds

A local non-profit spent years preparing a flood-resilience plan. All that is now at risk

Source: *www.nature.org*



Water woes Camden's Marlton neighborhood suffers both from stormwater flooding and tidal flooding. © Jon Compton

Shirley Irizarry, a lifelong resident of Camden, N.J., moved to the city's Marlton neighborhood for the breathing room. There's space, shade trees and plenty of shops within walking distance.

It's all peace and quiet – until a heavy rain. Her neighbors' basements and garages flood. Sewage bubbles up from storm drains. Flooded cars, streets and schools spell delays and closures. "It really shuts down business for people in ways you couldn't imagine," Irizarry says.

At the beginning of 2025, when Irizarry, an experienced community advocate, heard about an opportunity to use her organizing skills to support an ambitious flood-reduction project, she jumped at the chance.

This project, the Camden Coastal Resilience Plan, aims to use restored wetlands, playing fields that double as reservoirs and other types of 'green infrastructure' to redirect and absorb Marlton's floodwater.

A Plan to Limit Flooding in N.J. Is Hampered by Evaporating Federal Funds

Irizarry was glad to be part of an effort that would save money, improve public health, beautify the neighborhood and make the area more attractive to business. But this vision for the future is now on uncertain ground. The project's coordinators had been hoping for a second round of funding through a federal program but did not receive it.

Across the country, demand for federal conservation dollars has long outstripped supply. This gap is now growing wider. As the federal government slashes conservation funding, programs and staff, communities hoping for help are increasingly being left high and dry – or, in Marlton's case, low and wet.

A FEDERAL FLOOD RESILIENCE GRANT BRINGS HOPE TO MARLTON

In Camden, flooding comes from both sky and sea. Much of the city sits on a floodplain defined by two tidal rivers, the Delaware and Cooper. These rivers, being directly connected to the Atlantic Ocean, often experience storm surges, high tides and sea-level rise. At the same time, increasingly heavy rainfall routinely swamps the city's century-old sewer system.

In 2022, a local non-profit, the Center for Environmental Transformation, applied for a federal grant through the National Coastal Resilience Fund. This program, which is administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, had recently received an infusion of funding from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the Inflation Reduction Act. It invests in projects that use natural elements – wetlands, oyster reefs, forests and dunes – to protect coastal communities from flooding, storms and other hazards.

In 2023, CFET was awarded a $500,000 grant to cover the research and planning phase of the project. The organization worked with engineers, hydrologists, Camden's planning and sewage authorities and other partners to create a flood-risk map of the city and model future flooding scenarios. The goal of this work was to find potential project sites offering the "most bang for your buck," says Jon Compton, CFET's executive director.

This effort narrowed in on Marlton. The neighborhood has Camden's highest concentration of residents living below the poverty line and the highest concentration of households that have filed three or more flood claims in the last decade. It's also one of the city's few neighborhoods that directly suffers from storm surges and high tides.

At the beginning of 2025, CFET hired Irizarry as a community outreach coordinator. She managed a team of organizers who spoke to hundreds of residents about the area's flooding history and what the community hoped to gain from flood reduction efforts.

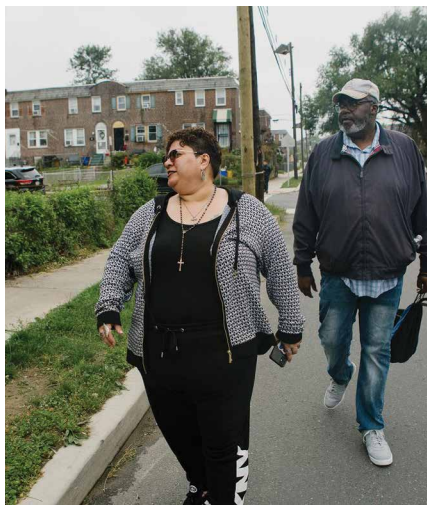
Through this process, CFET learned of past plans to tackle Marlton's flooding problem, which had gone nowhere due to lack of funding. "It's very demotivating for communities to put in the effort to participate in a planning process and then have it not go anywhere," Compton says. "We tried to be sensitive to that."

A PLAN COMES INTO FOCUS – AS FUNDING GROWS SCARCE

Near the end of 2025, after two years of research and discussion, CFET unveiled a new report that lays out 11 projects that would work in concert to channel floodwater away from residences and businesses and safely store it in revived natural areas.

In the underdeveloped 25-acre Gateway Park, which hugs the Cooper River, an elevated hiking trail would act as a berm to control coastal flooding, beyond which a shoreline of native plants would buffer storm surges and offer habitat. Playing fields and grassy gathering areas would do double duty as temporary lakes during heavy rainfall.

Elsewhere in the neighborhood, sunken rain gardens would capture precipitation along busy roads. The unused land inside of a highway cloverleaf would be turned into a wetland to absorb and filter runoff.



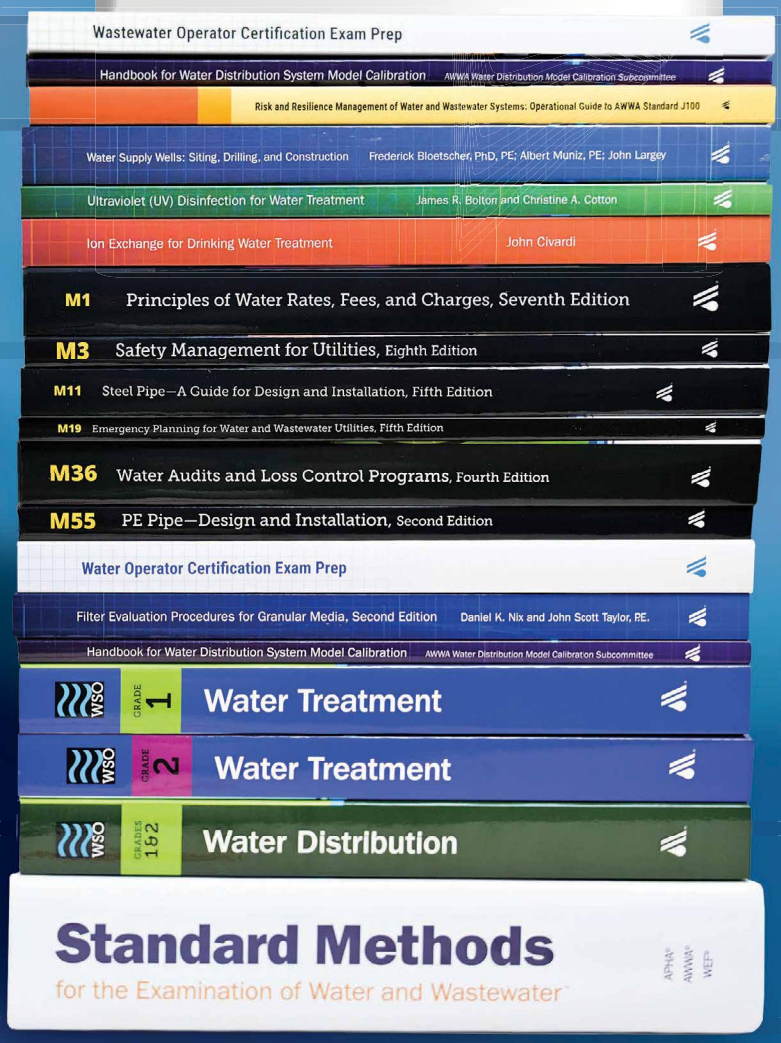
Fighting for their community Shirley Irizarry and her friend Kevin Barfield, both community activists, have been active in efforts to alleviate flooding in Marlton. © Michelle Gustafson

CFET applied for a second round of funding through the National Coastal Resilience Fund but did not receive it. This speaks not to the quality of the project – it had been praised by multiple partners at the city and state level – but to the mounting budgetary limitations that face the federal agencies charged with administering this and similar grants.

CFET is now looking for alternative means of funding, both through federal and private sources. While the organization has secured additional grants, these have not been as comprehensive as the National Coastal Resilience Fund, which allowed CFET to cover salaries, consultants and community outreach.

Irizarry knows that this type of funding would be transformative for her neighborhood. Camden residents, she says, have been made to feel like "we're supposed to just take the scraps that we're given." This project, if realized, would help foster a sense of local pride and self-worth. "We want Camden to be as beautiful as we know it can be," she says.

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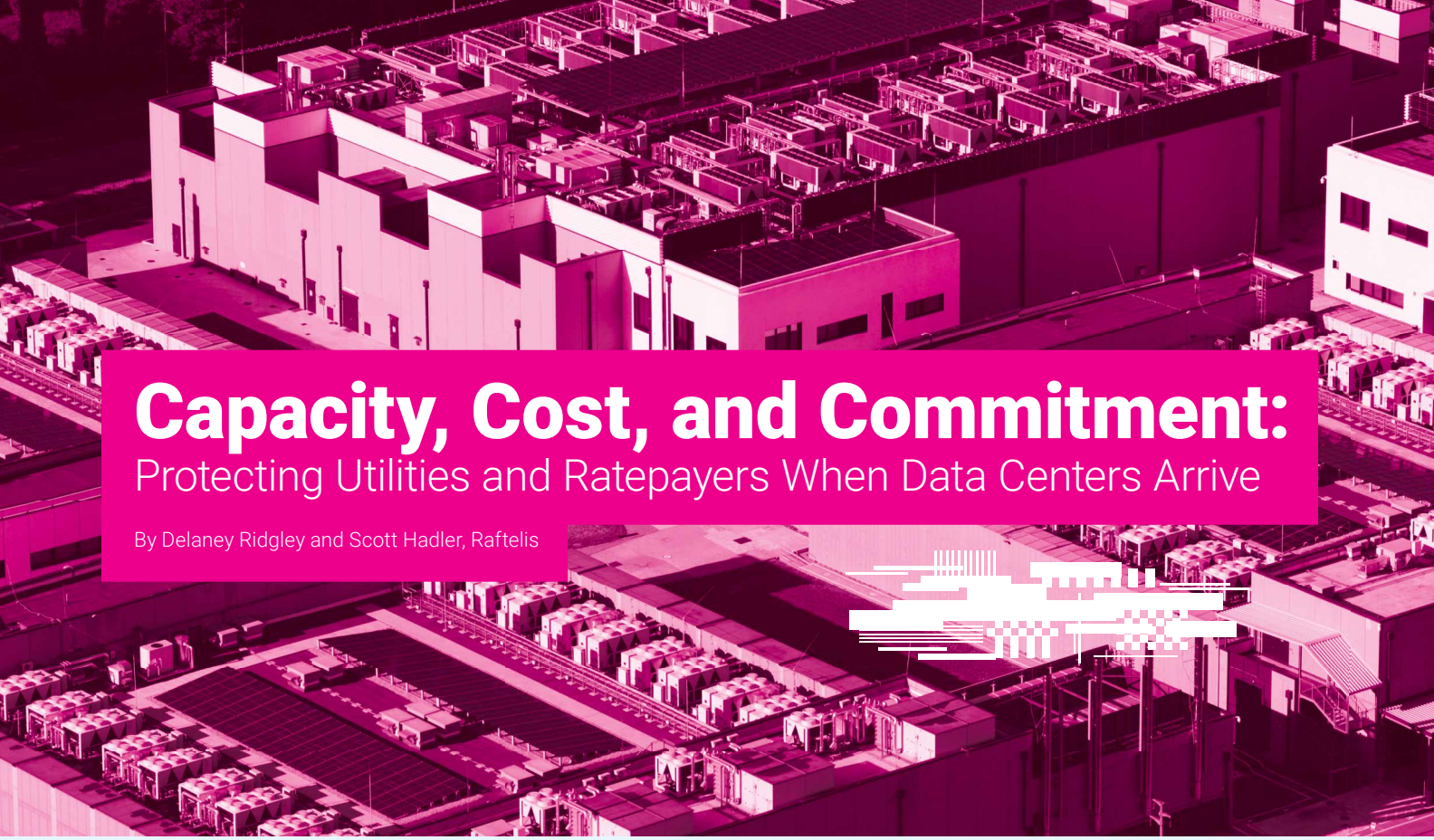
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Capacity, Cost, and Commitment:

Protecting Utilities and Ratepayers When Data Centers Arrive

By Delaney Ridgley and Scott Hadler, Raftelis

The rapid growth of large-scale water users, particularly data centers, presents water utilities with a defining financial and operational challenge. Data centers can be exceptionally water-intensive, with a single facility capable of consuming one to five million gallons per day, equivalent to the daily use of a town of 10,000 to 50,000 people. As utilities confront potential new large users of this scale, standard rate and fee approaches may no longer be adequate. Moving to sophisticated, purpose-built rate strategies is both financially necessary and can help protect the broader ratepayer base and promote system equity.

THE CHALLENGE

Water utilities face the critical challenge of balancing the economic benefits of large-scale users with potential resource strain, emphasizing cost recovery, equitable pricing, sustainability, and proactive capacity planning. Data centers and similar significant users do not arrive gradually. They can appear on a utility's horizon as a single large contract negotiation and, once operational, immediately reshape the demand curve the entire system must serve.

On the infrastructure side, large users typically force the acceleration of capital projects, requiring immediate investments in upsized transmission mains, high-capacity pump stations, and increased treatment plant throughput. These are not discretionary improvements. They are often prerequisites to serving the customer at all, and their costs can run into the tens of millions of dollars before a single bill is issued. Without dedicated financial tools, those costs fall on the existing rate base, asking today's ratepayers to subsidize infrastructure built for a single new arrival.

Demand volatility compounds the problem. While some large water-using facilities have relatively uniform water usage, others exhibit significant peaking factors, with consumption tending to spike during warmer months as cooling demands intensify. A data center's peak flow can reach 500% or more of its average daily demand, requiring the utility to maintain reserved capacity year-round for events that may be seasonal or intermittent. That reserved capacity is not free. It requires staffing, maintenance, debt service, and operational readiness whether or not the customer draws on it in any given month. Utilities must weigh the economic benefits data centers can bring, such as expanded tax revenue and job creation, against the potential strain on water resources and long-term system integrity.

FIVE FINANCIAL PROTECTION TOOLS

Utilities have several mechanisms available, and the strongest approach typically combines more than one, layering protections that address different dimensions of cost and risk.

System Development Fees (SDFs). System development fees are one-time fees paid by new or expanding customers to recover a fair share of capacity costs in existing or planned facilities. They are typically based on a customer's expected peak demand and are designed to ensure that growth helps pay for the infrastructure required to support it. For large users, standard meter-based SDFs routinely understate actual demand. Utilities should charge SDFs on a price-per-gallon basis, scaled to the estimated peak day or peak hour usage of the facility. Even when customers fund 100% of site-specific infrastructure, they often benefit from broader shared system capacity, including water treatment, regional transmission,

and storage. An SDF charge remains appropriate in those circumstances, reflecting the customer's proportionate claim on the collective system.

Stand-By Charges. Also known as reservation fees, these monthly charges recover the fixed costs of infrastructure built to meet a user's committed peak demand, regardless of actual consumption in any given period. They stabilize utility cash flow and ensure the burden of maintaining dedicated capacity rests with the user whose requirements created that need, not with the general ratepayer population.

Capital Recovery Surcharges. For large-scale infrastructure investments directly caused by a specific customer, a capital recovery surcharge prevents project costs from burdening the general rate base. It can be structured as a fixed periodic charge or built into a volumetric rate, providing a reliable revenue stream tied to the utility's debt service obligations on that investment.

Take-or-Pay Provisions. This contractual mechanism requires the customer to purchase a defined minimum volume annually, or pay the financial equivalent if actual usage falls short. It guarantees the utility a revenue floor sufficient to cover fixed costs and debt service incurred on the customer's behalf, shifting underutilization risk back to where it belongs. Take-or-pay provisions are particularly valuable for utilities that have committed to infrastructure before a facility reaches full operational capacity.

High-Use Tiers. A distinct, elevated rate activating above a high consumption threshold captures the true marginal cost of serving very large users, including higher pumping costs, greater chemical inputs, and strained peak capacity. This improves cost allocation without disrupting the rate structure for other customer classes.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Unlike typical residential or commercial customers, data centers can expand rapidly, scale back operations, or change their demand profile significantly over time, creating sustained risk for utilities trying to match infrastructure investment with future revenue. A single large customer that reduces operations or departs entirely can leave a utility holding debt and stranded capacity with no corresponding revenue stream.

The right response is a flexible, layered approach: upfront capital recovery through SDFs, demand-based reservation through stand-by charges, contractual revenue protection through take-or-pay provisions, and marginal cost recovery through high-use tiers. No single mechanism addresses all dimensions of the problem. Applied in combination and calibrated to a specific user's demand profile and infrastructure footprint, these tools allow utilities to accommodate large-scale growth while protecting long-term financial stability and keeping costs equitable for all existing ratepayers. Proactive rate strategy, established before a large user comes online, is far easier to negotiate and defend than reactive adjustments made after infrastructure commitments are already in place.

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AWWA Calls for Strong
Federal Investment in Water Infrastructure

Source: AWWA Connections

The American Water Works Association joined 26 other organizations last month to call for sustained and reliable federal investment in water infrastructure.

In a letter sent to appropriations committees in the U.S. House and Senate, the coalition of organizations emphasized that water infrastructure underpins nearly every sector of the U.S. economy – from energy and manufacturing to public health and technology – and warned that growing demands make continued investment essential.

"Economic growth and competitiveness depend on ensuring sufficient supplies of water, fit for purpose for our companies and for the communities where we operate, protecting their quality of life. As water demands grow, reliable water service and smart, modern, resilient infrastructure are even more important," says the letter, signed by organizations representing the water industry, state and local governments, manufacturers, and environmental groups.

The coalition outlined six key priorities for policymakers, including sustained funding for the Drinking Water and Clean Water State Revolving Funds (SRFs) and the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA); targeted investments to address the removal of PFAS and lead; and increased support for cybersecurity, resilience, and disaster preparedness. The letter also called for supporting water reuse efforts and expanding assistance for underserved communities.

> The message to policymakers is clear: Modern, resilient water systems are essential to economic competitiveness and quality of life, and they require sustained federal commitment.

AWWA's signature on the letter reflects its ongoing advocacy on behalf of more than 50,000 member utilities and professionals nationwide, said Nate Norris, AWWA's director of legislative affairs. "Water utilities are on the front lines of economic growth, public health, and resilience," Norris said. "AWWA is working every day to ensure federal policies and funding decisions reflect the real-world needs of our members and the communities they serve."

The coalition letter builds on AWWA's Keep Funds Flowing campaign, which focuses on protecting and strengthening federal water infrastructure programs like SRFs and WIFIA. Through meetings with lawmakers, coalition building, and advocacy, AWWA continues to push for sustained investments that allow utilities to plan, finance, and deliver critical projects.

That advocacy is informed in part by AWWA's new report, Beyond the Replacement Era, which shows the growing demands – and costs – of sourcing, treating, and delivering safe drinking water. The message to policymakers is clear: Modern, resilient water systems are essential to economic competitiveness and quality of life, and they require sustained federal commitment.

AWWA will continue working with congressional offices and partner organizations as budget discussions advance. If your utility has benefitted from WIFIA or SRF support and you would like to share the impact, please contact AWWA by filling out this form at *tinyurl.com/yvnw3zzv.*



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Education & Professional Development Committee Hosts 'Back to Basics' Licensed Operator Training

The Education and Professional Development Committee (EPDC), led by Chair Maddie Spinner (American Water) and Vice Chair Mark Whittaker (City of Newark), hosted the inaugural *Back to Basics Licensed Operator Training* at Middlesex Water Company in early February. The training was intended to strengthen Licensed Operator's foundational knowledge and support both new and experienced utility professionals.

Licensed Operators from across the state gathered for a day of learning that concluded with a treatment plant tour. The curriculum, offering 5 training contact hours (TCHs), aligned with the AWWA-ABC standards and NJDEP testing format to prepare attendees for the licensing exams and refresh their knowledge on operational basics.

The training featured a series of focused sessions led by experienced instructors. Mike Furrey (ILM Services) kicked off the day with chemistry,



helping attendees better understand the principles behind water quality and treatment. Janice DeFalco (CDM Smith) refreshed attendees on mathematics, reviewing the calculations, conversions and formulas necessary for both day-to-day operations and exam readiness. Mark Whittaker presented on exam preparation and equipment fundamentals to set attendees up for success. NJDEP's Section Chief of Planning and Program Coordination for the Bureau of Water Systems Engineering, Joseph duRocher, provided an overview of the new online exam application and TCH submission process and answered questions on the new procedures.

The day concluded with a guided tour of Middlesex Water Company's Carl J. Olsen Treatment Plant, led by Section Trustee Mark Theiler. This hands-on component gave participants valuable insight into real-world operations, bridging the gap between classroom instruction and field application. The EPDC plans to host training courses of this type more regularly to support Section members with licenses.

NEW THIS YEAR
Golf lessons offered after lunch!

Mark Your Calendars for the
2026 Howard J. Woods Jr. Fall Meeting & Golf Outing



The 2026 Howard Woods Jr. Fall Meeting is set for Tuesday, October 13, so reserve the date. We're pleased to return once again to Forsgate Country Club in Monroe, NJ. Program details are virtually finalized, and attendees can look forward to a top-notch morning technical session featuring a legislative update from NJDEP, insightful presentations on asset planning beyond PFAS, and a Contractor Oriented Session and Roundtable covering topics from safety to procurement. In the afternoon, enjoy a full round of golf. We will also be offering an option to sign up for professional golf lesson – great for golfers or anyone looking to sharpen their skills!

Visit the AWWA NJ website (*www.njawwa.org)* for more information.

G.L.O.W.W. is Here – and Just Getting Started
By the G.L.O.W.W. Subcommittee, AWWA NJ



When we looked around the room at industry events and conferences, we kept noticing the same thing, women scattered across different organizations, often the only one or one of a few in their office, with no real space to find each other. We wanted to change that.

G.L.O.W.W. – Gathering, Lifting, and Organizing Women in Water, launched officially in March 2026 at the AWWA NJ Annual Conference in Atlantic City. Founded by Principal Engineer Marina Shenoda of the City of Newark Water & Sewer Utility, with the support of Nicole Brown of GFT, Inc. and Giselle Diaz of Boswell Engineering, G.L.O.W.W. is a subcommittee of AWWA NJ dedicated to empowering women in the water industry through mentorship, allyship, and advocacy. We welcome all allies of women regardless of gender identity.

Our conference launch set the tone for everything we hope to build. The morning began with a panel discussion, 'Hindsight as a Superpower: Wisdom We'd Share with Our Younger Selves' where five women leaders from across the industry shared candid, practical advice on early career confidence, leadership, and navigating the water sector as a woman. The energy in the room that morning reminded us exactly why this community is needed.

Since the conference, G.L.O.W.W. has hit the ground running. On May 20, we hosted our first site visit at the City of Newark's Pequannock Water Treatment Plant. Twenty-five water professionals from firms across New Jersey joined us for an inside look at Newark's recently completed $20.5 million plant upgrade and the conversations that followed at our networking happy hour were just as energizing as the tour itself.

We are just getting started. Coming up this year, G.L.O.W.W. has a professional development webinar series launching in the fall, more events throughout the year, and exciting cross-organization collaborations in the works. Our goal is simple: to make sure every woman in New Jersey's water industry knows she has a community her people who get it, who have been through it, and who want to see each other succeed.

If you are interested in getting involved, we would love to hear from you. Reach out to us at *shenodam@ci.newark.nj.us* or connect with us through AWWA NJ.

Seasoned Voices, Strong Advocacy:
Water Utility Council Fly-In to Trenton

The halls of the State House saw a different kind of energy this week – one driven not by politics alone, but by purpose. A seasoned group of seven water professionals and section members from across New Jersey gathered in Trenton for the Water Utility Council Fly-In, bringing with them decades of experience, a deep understanding of the industry, and a shared commitment to protecting one of our most critical resources.

Armed with facts, real-world examples, and a clear message, the group spent the day meeting with State Assembly-Members and Senators, engaging in thoughtful, candid conversations about the realities of delivering safe, reliable water service across the state. The discussions weren't just theoretical – they were grounded in the daily challenges of running complex utility systems and the long-term investments needed to sustain them.

There was a sense of camaraderie throughout the day. Colleagues who spend most of their time in the field or behind the scenes found themselves side by side in legislative offices, sharing stories, comparing notes, and reinforcing each other's points. It was a reminder that while utilities may operate in different regions, the core mission – and the challenges – are very much shared.

And while the setting was formal, the approach was refreshingly practical.

No fluff, no unnecessary posturing, just straightforward conversations about infrastructure, funding, regulatory balance, and the importance of long-term planning. The group made it clear: water professionals are not just stakeholders, they are essential partners in shaping smart, sustainable policy. This was further reinforced by the support of staff from the sections policy team at PPAG, including the section lead Sam Weinstein, pictured below with the group.

By the end of the Fly-In, one thing was clear: this group showed up ready to engage, and they made an impact. They ensured that the voice of the water industry was heard – clearly, professionally, and with credibility that only years of experience can bring.

Trenton may have been the destination, but advocacy was the mission – and this team delivered.



AWWA NJ Section representatives Rich Calbi, Mark Theiler, Nicole Brown and Alissa Vanim held meetings with legislators to deliver the message about how essential water professionals are in New Jersey and in the U.S., and to talk about critical water industry issues.

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SAFETY WHERE CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATIONS INTERSECT

By Jeremiah Stratton, Assoc. DBIA
Business Development Manager, Bowen Engineering Corporation

With an ever-expanding book of construction projects taking place at water and wastewater treatment facilities here in Ohio, it is imperative that we take a look at safety during these active projects to not only protect the legacy of the projects being built, but most importantly, protect the people that are involved on and off site every day. This is where Safety, Construction, and Operations Intersect. Whether you are an owner, operator, designer, contractor, or visitor to a project site; we are all in it together to ensure that every person returns home to their family and friends at the end the day.



Managing Risk at Active Water and Wastewater Treatment Facilities

Construction at water and wastewater treatment facilities presents a unique set of safety challenges. Unlike traditional construction sites, these projects are often executed within fully operational plants where treatment processes must remain uninterrupted and plant personnel remain on site. In these environments, safety must be approached holistically protecting construction teams, plant staff, critical infrastructure, and public health simultaneously.

Successfully managing this complexity requires more than standard jobsite safety programs. It demands early planning, close coordination, and continuous communication between construction teams and plant operations.

Safety as the Foundation

At active treatment facilities, safety must be built into the project from the earliest stages. Effective risk management begins with deliberate planning that identifies hazards before work starts and establishes clear expectations for how activities will be executed.

Construction frequently occurs near live process piping, chemical feed systems, energized electrical equipment, confined spaces, and operating personnel. When these conditions are not addressed upfront, uncertainty increases – and uncertainty is one of the greatest contributors to incidents in complex facilities. Proactive safety planning reduces that uncertainty and creates predictable work environments.

Protecting Plant Personnel

One of the defining characteristics of water and wastewater construction is the continued presence of operations and maintenance staff. These individuals may not be part of the construction scope, yet their safety can be affected by changing access routes, temporary systems, and evolving work zones.

Protecting onsite staff starts with collaboration. Plant personnel bring critical knowledge of facility operations, system constraints, and operational priorities. Incorporating this knowledge into construction planning helps ensure work activities align with plant needs and minimize risk.

Clear separation of construction areas, controlled access points, and consistent daily communication further reduce the potential for unplanned interaction between plant staff and construction hazards – while maintaining operational continuity.

Planning for Facility-Specific Hazards

Water and wastewater treatment facilities introduce hazards that are not typically found on other construction projects. These can include chemical exposure risks, biological hazards, confined space entry, complex electrical systems, and the potential for process disruptions that could affect compliance or public health.

Addressing these risks requires task-level planning and thoughtful sequencing. Each activity should be evaluated not only for how it will be performed, but for how it may affect surrounding systems and personnel. Integrating safety into work sequencing helps create stable, controlled conditions and reduces the likelihood of last-minute changes.

This level of planning is especially important during tie-ins, phased renovations, and construction adjacent to active treatment processes.

A Culture of Engagement

A strong safety culture depends on active involvement from everyone on site. Construction professionals, supervisors, engineers, and plant personnel each play a role in identifying and managing risk.

At active treatment facilities, plant operators often have deep insight into system behavior and warning signs. Encouraging open communication allows potential issues to surface early, when they can be addressed collaboratively rather than after an incident occurs.

When safety concerns are raised and resolved in real time, overall project risk is reduced for all parties.

Planning Tools That Support Safety

Structured planning tools – such as detailed work plans, weekly coordination meetings, daily huddles, and end-of-shift reviews – serve as effective safety controls in operating facilities. These tools promote clarity, confirm readiness, and help align construction activities with plant operations.

Predictable workflows reduce last-minute decisions, which are a common source of safety incidents in complex environments. When work is well planned and communicated, both safety performance and operational reliability improve.

The Bottom Line

Construction within active water and wastewater treatment facilities demands a disciplined, collaborative approach to safety. Protecting people, infrastructure, and ongoing operations requires early planning, continuous communication, and shared responsibility.



By integrating safety into every phase of project execution and recognizing the critical role of plant personnel, construction teams can successfully deliver projects while maintaining safe operations in facilities essential to public health and environmental protection.

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Section Members Attend and Present at AWWA/WEF 2026 YP Summit in The Queen City

The NJ Section had strong representation at the AWWA/WEF 2026 YP Summit in Charlotte, NC, alongside almost 400 other attendees. The Summit offered two days of programming, with Maddie Spinner (American Water) serving as Planning Vice Chair for the conference, and Lindsey Holt (Suburban Consulting Engineers) and Kevin Rodier (New Jersey American Water) serving on the programming and sponsorship committees, respectively.

This year's theme was 'The Next Wave: Navigating Water Sector Currents' and focused on equipping emerging leaders with skills and connections to navigate a rapidly evolving water industry. Bringing the theme to life, YP Summit Day focused on navigating the 'currents' of the water sector through hands-on, experiential learning. The Water Circuit challenge was a standout, inspired by WEF's Operations Challenge. This interactive experience gave participants the rare opportunity to engage directly with water system equipment, including pumps and hydrants.

The YP Summit program also featured a diverse lineup of sessions designed to equip attendees with both strategic insight and practical skills. Discussions with AWWA and WEF senior leadership explored the future of the water sector, while sessions like *Leading Through a Time of Change* with Kishia Powell (GM/CO at WSSC Water) and *Being… Ready* with Dr. Art Umble (Retired) offered candid leadership perspectives and career lessons. A panel of experts offered insight into the role of AI in the water industry and the unique challenges that come with it, and participants also had the opportunity to build tangible skills through an interactive *Presenting for Impact* workshop led by Chelsea Boozer (Executive Director at Rogue Water Lab).

Our very own Section Chair, Nicole Brown (GFT), spoke on a panel with other prominent water leaders, including Mariana Anguiano (Trinity River Authority), Donnell Duncan (Arcadis), and Brianna Huber (City of East Moline). The discussion was moderated and curated by NJ DEI Committee Chair Lindsey Holt. The panel, titled *Resilience Through Inclusivity*, explored how to promote belonging in the water industry by creating opportunities for mentorship, leadership, and community building, and considered how inclusive workplaces positively benefit our communities as providers of an essential service. Attendees were able to engage directly with panelists, who are prominent water professionals from across the industry, having applied and lived experiences in advancing inclusion and belonging at local, regional, and national levels.



NJ YPs at YP Summit
Left to Right: Maddie Spinner (American Water), Kevin Rodier (New Jersey American Water), Maddie Gallager (American Water), Lindey Holt (Suburban Consulting Engineers)



Section Chair Nicole Brown speaking on the Resilience through Inclusivity Panel, moderated by Lindsey Holt.
Left to Right: Mariana Anguiano (Trinity River Authority), Nicole Brown (GFT), Brianna Huber (City of East Moline), Donnell Duncan (Arcadis), Lindsey Holt (Suburban Consulting Engineers)



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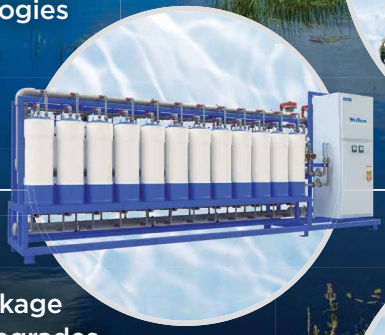




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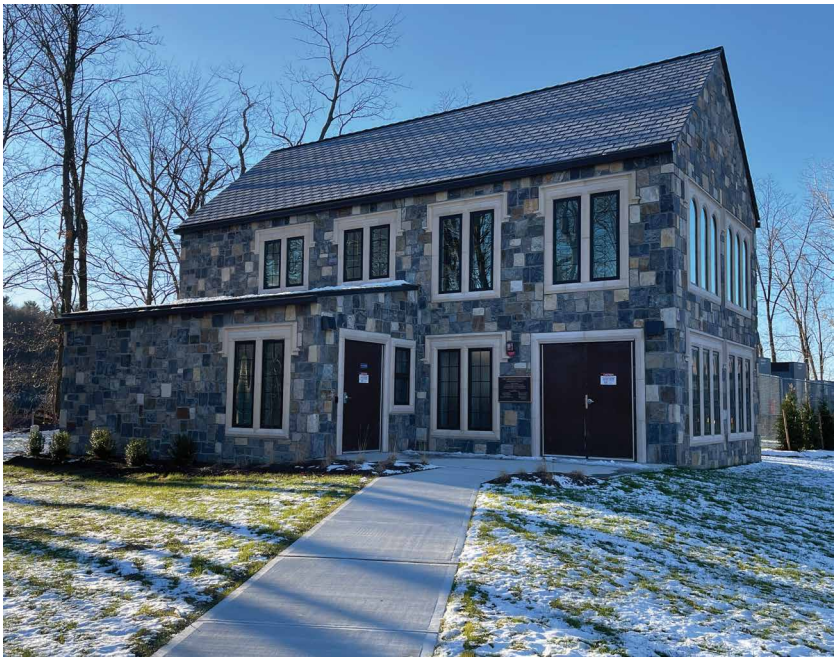
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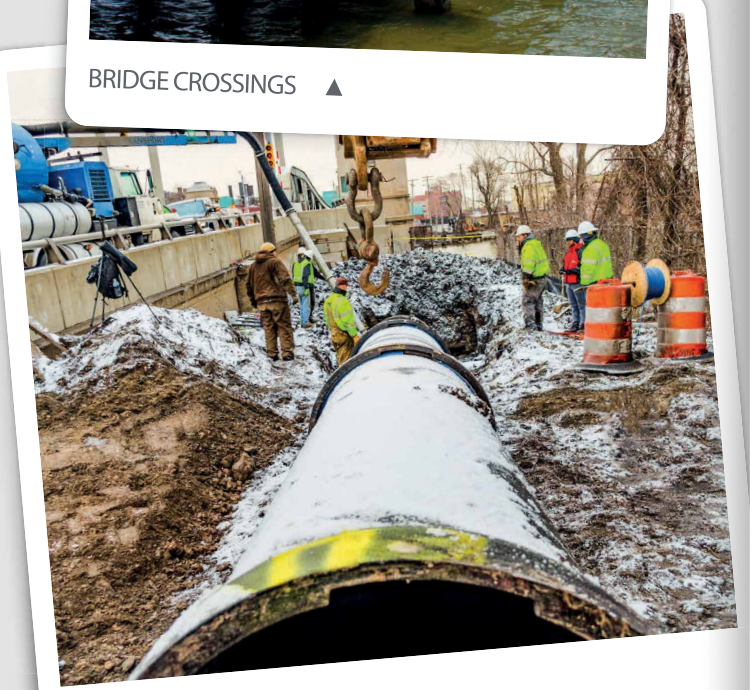
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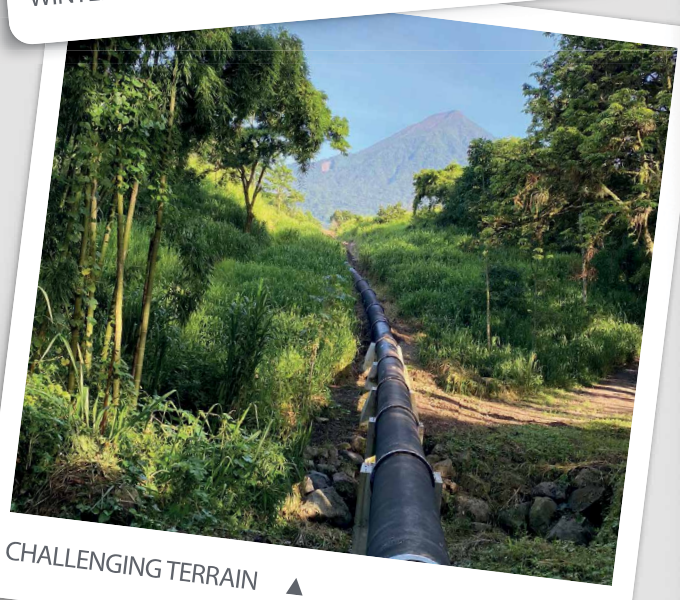
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