



WEFMAX in Alexandria, VA April 10-12, 2024

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF WEFMAX

WEFMAX kicked off with a video highlighting the past 10 years of WEFMAX memories. The video was produced by Lance Manabe, a past WEF Delegate. Thank you, Lance!

WEF MESSAGE

Presenter: Janet Hurley Cann

My Water Story

- Originally from Lancaster, SC, now reside in Spartanburg, SC
- Second generation water professional, WEASC/WEF member and WEASC/WEF Leader
- (Life) Member of the Water Environment Association of South Carolina, WEASC Secretary, WEASC President, WEASC Delegate
- WEF Member since 1987, WEF Speaker of the House, WEF Committee Leadership Council Chair, WEF Trustee
- Career included being a regulator, utility engineer/project manager, consultant, 37 of 40 years was public service, still writing the story, not done yet!
- Clemson Graduate, BS Civil Engineering
- Licensed Professional Engineer, Biological Wastewater Operator Trainee
- Favorite hobbies: Jam and Jelly making, Gardening both vegetables and flowers

WEF Mission

- Our Mission Statement is "Inspiring the water community in pursuit of human and environmental well-being."
- It taps into the deep passion and sense of purpose that motivates water professionals every day, as we work for people and the planet. It builds on WEF's role as a water sector convener, educator, and leader and expands our horizons to position us as THE community that water professionals come to for inspiration, connection, and solutions.

WEF Vision Statement

- WEF's Vision Statement is "Life free of water challenges"
- Our vision elevates our focus. It gives WEF the freedom to address the full spectrum of future water challenges as they evolve. It also allows us to increase our impact and influence in and on behalf of the water sector, continue to protect public health and the environment, and enhance the quality of life in our local communities and around the world. Water Challenges are varied, water challenges are local, the challenges you face are not the same as your neighboring utility, neighboring state or neighboring region.

- As an operator your challenges may be x, as a utility supervisor it may be where are you going to find the next employee, as a utility leader it may be how can you afford the new pump station or treatment plant upgrade or etc.

WEF Core Values

- **Collaborate for Collective Impact.** This value recognizes that WEF cannot be the best at “everything water,” and that collaboration is key to our ability to have positive, lasting impact. So, let’s transform what partnership can mean.
- **Focus on Customers Through Empathy and Service.** This value reminds us to keep customers at the heart of everything we do and recognize that we must continue to evolve to keep pace with and meet their changing needs. Let’s try new things, keep our customers' perspective in mind, and listen, communicate, and serve with empathy. **At WEF our customers are our members but also those people who consume our products such as publications, conferences, webinars, training materials, etc.**
- **Lead Boldly with Purpose and Agility.** The pace of change and the enormity of the challenges facing us mean that we must think bigger and more boldly and be able to pivot faster and try something new and different. To achieve our vision of life free of water challenges, each and every one of us must help lead WEF down this bolder path.
- **Integrate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in All that We Do.** Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion are not external add-ons to existing efforts, they are core ways we must execute everything we do. At every juncture, we must make sure we have diverse voices in the room, all sharing an equitable experience and contributing new perspectives and new solutions to water challenges.

WEF Strategic Goals

- Attract and develop a diverse and passionate water workforce
 - Raise public awareness about the importance of water and the water workforce
 - Reduce barriers to workforce entry and retention
 - Provide extraordinary opportunities for connection, growth, and education
 - Cultivate strategic partnerships
- Cultivate a purpose-driven community to sustainably solve water challenges for all.”
 - WEF will cultivate this purpose-driven community by driving connection and collaboration for the development of innovative solutions, delivering *best-in-class* member experiences, and creatively developing and delivering content and programming.
- Lead the transformation to the Circular Water Economy
 - WEF will not have all the answers or address every issue relating to the circular water economy. Instead, we will lead the transformation to the Circular Water Economy by convening stakeholders to craft WEF’s Circular Water Economy framework and best practices, proliferating the framework and best practices, and championing and eliminating barriers to Circular Water Economy adoption.

WEFTEC

- WEFTEC is the world’s largest water quality event and is THE place where the water community comes together.
- In 2023, WEFTEC welcomed more than 21,000 registrants to be the world’s largest water quality event!
- WEFTEC 2023 included 870 exhibitors, 136 technical sessions, more than 20 community-focused group meetings, and countless other networking and educational opportunities.
- WEFTEC 2024, Oct 5-9, in New Orleans, LA

MEMBER ASSOCIATION SHARING SESSION

In this session, Nebraska WEA, Illinois WEA, AZ Water, Ohio WEA and Michigan WEA presented.

Moderator: Kathy Rabalais

Nebraska WEA – Brittni Stephens & Lucas

- Membership decline is their biggest struggle.
 - Why the decline?
 - Non-engaged members dropped off mostly. We started looking at engagement rather than quantitative membership numbers so the numbers are down, but engagement is up.
 - We have had trouble partnering with rural water, how did you start that relationship?
 - Started having conversations regarding partnering with rural water, it's early on now, but they did invite us to come to their events and paid for our membership to attend.
- What works well
 - NWEA Board and Committee leadership
 - NWEA newsletter – The Effluent
 - NWEA website
 - NWEA Scholarship Endowment Fund
 - Four conferences held yearly
 - Awards and scholarships
 - Annual retreat
- What does not work well
 - NWEA did a SWOT analysis
 - Strengths
 - High level board involvement
 - Good fiscal management
 - Weakness
 - Improve valuable content
 - Measurement local impact
 - Not proactive in recruitment efforts
 - Efficient use of communication platforms
 - Opportunities
 - Increase awareness of resources
 - Expansion of existing programs
 - Improve use of communication platforms
 - Threats
 - Time available for volunteers
 - Sponsorships
 - Know your Audience
- What is NWEA doing?
 - Unlocking the power of WE

- Using the 7 steps to engagement shared by WEF Staff at a former WEFMAX
- Looking at the ideal member experience take-aways
- What NWEA wants to do
 - NWOD to NWEA Transition and Growth
 - Transition of operator growth has been slow or declining
 - Develop tangible objectives that are achievable to the transition of previous NWOD members as well as growing operator memberships
- Overview
 - The best conversations happen not when we try to talk, but when we try to listen as well.

Illinois WEA – Lynn Kohlhaas & Lou Storino

IWEA – IAWPCO Collaboration

- Location challenges in the state are their biggest challenge.
- 2011 IWEA combined their conference with IL AWWA. What led IWEA to that realization/
 - We wanted to add the Operators Challenge and wastewater focused experiences that AWWA did not want to allow. Any ideas for changes were dismissed as ridiculous.
- 2015 IWEA went back to their own conference
- 2017 IWEA combined their conference with the state operator association IAWPCO.
- Conference location selection is a challenge as the state is large and want to look at a site that offers the best for people to travel to
- Both organizations have an equal partnership in the planning, programing and number of volunteers dedicated to the conference.
- The conference offers 2 operator exam review classes
 - How did IWEA tack that?
 - An MA shared they are looking at doing something similar due to the same problems with low passing rates
 - Ohio shared EPA went to the ABC test. Started using the WEF manuals to create their own pilot class and roll it out full scale.
 - Nebraska is having the same issue with the pass rate which is not good as well.
- There is a MOU of understanding that is reviewed

AZ Water – Nashita Naureen and Lisa Melton

Recognition – the pathway to collaborative engagement

- Engaging volunteers through encouragement
 - 5S
 - Feature Members through...
 - Newsletter
 - Social Platforms

- Website
- Make a Difference
 - Challenge coin
 - Website
- Conference
 - Held a learning exchange at the conference
- Letter to supervisor

Ohio WEA - Mary Ann Driscoll

History and success of joint One Water Conference

- History
 - 2014 was first joint conference with OAWWA
 - 2018 was the second joint conference with OAWWA
 - 2019 entered a MOU for 6 years to hold a joint conference with OAWWA
 - 2021 was the kickoff for the 6 years joint conference rotating the conference between 4 locations
- Created at Joint Conference Task Force
 - This has been key working through challenges and the growth of the conference
- Task Force
 - Association Staff
 - Conference Co-Chairs
- Division of Duties
 - OWEA is the fiscal agent and does the website, registration, food and beverage
 - OAWWA handles abstracts, contact hours, AV and the On Demand
- History of Attendees
 - Attendance has grown with a joint conference
- Success
 - Higher combined attendance than each organization had on their own.
 - Dual licensed operators can get CHs easily.
 - Dual vendors can see all clients at a reduced cost.
 - Specialized programming for engineers.
 - Sense of all being on one team.
 - Each organization still maintains their own identity, specifically through awards.
 - Each organization nets more profit than we did on our own.
 - We have more buying power and have solved the issue of being too big for a hotel but not quite big enough for a convention center.
- Challenges
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Michigan WEA – Cheryl Vosburg
PFAS

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Driving Workforce Development Through Collaboration and Engagement

Presenters: Christina Perez, Dorissa-Pitts and Mackenzie Rickard

Facilitator: Ryan Hendrix

- Workforce Develop Initiatives
 - Hampton Roads Public Works Academy
 - Regional coalition promoting public works and public utility cooperative training in Southeastern Virginia
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 - Educates area high school students to develop pre-trained public works/utility employees
 - Provides networking opportunities to member organizations
 - Two-year, hands-on program geared toward high school students participating in Vocational and Technical Center Programs
 - Cadets take 32 courses in major areas of work within Public Works and Utilities
 - Selection process begins with an application, teacher recommendations, followed by interviews with HRPWA member organizations
 - Complete a paid summer internship with a member organization
 - a paid summer internship with a member organization is required in order for cadets to complete the program
 - HRSD Internship Success
 - Over 97% have successfully completed internship
 - Twelve have returned for a second summer
 - Five have been hired part-time
 - Fifteen have been hired full-time
 - Eight have been promoted
 - Five have utilized continuing education benefits
 - Youth Summer Intensive (YSI)
 - This is a partnership between HRSD and Hampton Roads Workforce Council
 - 9-week program
 - Includes 4 apprenticeship courses
 - On-the Job Training in wastewater operations
 - Employee development to bridge school-to-work transition
 - Real experience in an industrial professional setting
 - InFlow

- The WEF InFlow programs aims to enhance diversity and inclusion in the water workforce
 - VWEA introduces future leaders to opportunities in water
 - Statewide apprentice program
- Role of organized labor around these types of programs. Effort for funding?
 - No funding, but HRSD and InFLOW have supported the program.
- Advertising for Inflow?
 - Relationships with professors as a starting point, word of mouth is key.

WEF UPDATE ON WORKFORCE STRATEGY EFFORTS

Presenter: John Ikeda

- Plan to do a better job of leaving these conferences and engaging with our communities, universities, etc.
- Provide online leadership training for MAs
- Draft curriculums for different training programs (HS, interns, etc.)
- WEF is working on 3 areas of the WEF Strategic plan: Workforce, A Purpose Driven Community and Circular Water Economy with a global lens for these areas.
- Late summer is the target date to launch strategies
- We have not solved the water challenges
- Value of water is under valued
- WEF has partnered with Brave Blue World Studios on a second documentary “Our Brave World”. The film premieres Tuesday, April 22nd (Earth Day) in New York and will be entered in several international film festivals throughout the year.

WEFMAX DAY 2

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF WEF LEADERSHIP

WEFMAX Day 2 kicked off showing the past 50 years of WEF Presidents and the leadership from the House of Delegates since it began in 2008. Thank you, Leigh Thomas, for putting this together.

WEF HOD MESSAGE

Presenter: Alexie Kindrick

What is the House of Delegates (HOD)

- It is the deliberative and representational body of the Water Environment Federation.
- Comprised of delegates from member associations and unrepresented constituencies (delegates-at-large)
- Number of delegates are based on the size of MA membership
- 12 delegates-at-large
- 7 standing committees: steering, budget, DE&I, nominating, water advocacy, communications, WEFMAX

- Work groups: change annually
- Responsible for confirming Trustees, BOT leadership, by-law changes
- Advise the BOT on strategic direction and policy development
- The Delegates are asked to be curious but not judgmental
- Do this by...
 - **Humility**
 - Humility isn't denying your strengths; It's being honest about your weaknesses
 - **Hustle**
 - To have the courage, confidence, self-belief, and self-determination to go out there and work it out until you find the opportunities you want in life.
 - **Heart**
 - By living and working with heart, we create a deeper bond and impact with the people and the work we're committed to.
- WHY?
 - To better serve
 - MAs
 - Be more transparent
 - Be more forward-facing
 - Focus on important issues
 - Be true resource
 - WEF
 - Help implement the strategic plan
 - Be a voice for the Federation
 - Ourselves
- TAKING on a CHALLENGE is like riding a HORSE, ISN'T IT? If you are COMFORTABLE while you're DOING it, probably DOING IT WRONG ~ Theodore, "Ted" Lasso

WEFMAX VIRGINIA YP HOST SHARING SESSION

Driving YP Engagement: Leadership Academy, Mentorship Program and YP Leadership Opportunities

Presenters: Andrew Frietas, Matt Wisniewski and Dana Hargrove

Leadership Academy

- Initiated in 2019
- Inaugural Class in 2021
- Kick off and graduation is held at WaterJam, Virginia WEA's joint conference with AWWA
- There are 4 in-person all day trainings
- Four hybrid half day training
- Goal to have 30 candidates go through this program annually
- Selection has 2 rounds of reviews to determine acceptance
 - There is a waitlist, and the selection is mostly blind with the exception that you can not review someone you know
- The academy is open to non-members however they must be a member to graduate

- Cost and how much do you charge?
 - \$825 per person. That includes two WaterJAM conferences and the training with instructors. They are still responsible for covering their hotel and travel.
 - It is profitable to us, but also requiring committee involvement has been super beneficial. This program being structured is what really made this one stick and be successful.
- Constituency, are you seeing non-engineer participation?
 - We do see consultants, utility members, and vendors. They are required to be in our industry for at least one year, but otherwise it is open. We did have to start diversifying the acceptances by only accepting a certain number from each company as they were sending multiple.
 - We have had a huge increase in interest, last year we had to decline 50% of the applicants we received.
- Best approach to get YPs involved and stay involved?
 - Connection, especially if you have staff that are isolated or working remotely.
 - Activities, if you give people a purpose to get together that will drive engagement.
 - Put the right person on the right committee early on. Make sure it aligns with their interests and gives them a meaningful role with duties, not just a meeting to attend.

Mentorship

- The VWEA Mentorship committee felt there was a need for mentorship and professional development
- Pilot Testing Program
- “If we only get 10 people (5 pairs), this will be a win.”
- Sent 2 email blasts
- via existing VWEA / VA AWWA listserv channels
- Participant survey data results would dictate program significantly
- Program Execution
 - Survey says . . . !?
 - Define mentors & mentees
 - Criteria used to pair people
 - 6 weeks of convo prompts
 - Emailed every Monday morning
 - Let convo unfold organically
 - Pairs met weekly for at least 30 min in-person or virtually
 - Creativity encouraged
 - Mentees scheduled meetings
 - Midway point HH or other fun event
 - 1 “floater” week
 - Conclusion at WaterJAM
- Feed Back
 - People LOVED it & want more
 - Mutually fulfilling for both
 - Legitimize finale at WaterJAM

- Some requested elongation
- Next Steps
 - 2024 is well on its way.
 - Team is making modifications per survey feedback
 - Understand mentorship is worth it

Leadership Opportunities

- Friendship and Networking
- Explore the Industry
- Proof of Leadership Abilities
- Grow within the Industry in a Meaningful, Mutually Beneficial Way

DC FLY-IN INSIGHTS – FUTURE PLANNING

Learn about the most recent DC Fly-In, shared stories and experiences.

Presenters: Peter Garvey and Lou Storino

- The WEF Fly-In brings together water professionals from across the U.S to meet with lawmakers in the nation’s capital, share their water stories, and advocate on behalf of clean water.
- It offers the opportunity to ‘walk the halls of Congress’ and be heard. The DC Fly-In is organized by the [Water Environment Federation](#) (WEF), [National Association of Clean Water Agencies](#) (NACWA) and [WaterReuse Association](#) (WRA) and is part of WEF’s water advocacy program.
- Attendees team up with fellow MA colleagues, they schedule meetings, prepare for meetings, sign up for the Fly-In, meet with legislators, share their stories, and will follow-up with those they met with.
- Three Hundred and Sixty-Three registered, represented by 41 states + Washington DC
- 18 Young professionals attended who were supported by WEF.
- We are pleased to share we have one thousand advocates! Thank you WEFMAX attendees in Alexandria for signing up and bringing us to 1K advocates for water!

CLOSING WORDS

Engagement and Collaboration is worth it. Over these past few days, we hope you each met the goals shared at the start of this WEFMAX.

- Learn something new
- Make new friends
- Create new memories
- Have some fun

As a result, you all are part of our WEF family. Hope to see you at a WEFMAX in 2025 held in California, Oklahoma, and New England. Site selection and dates are coming soon!