Robust agenda planned for AMWA’s 2021 executive management meeting

July 15, 2021 at 2:30 PM

After going virtual last year, AMWA’s 2021 Executive Management Conference (EMC) will be held in-person in scenic Denver, Colo., from October 3 to 6.

As the water sector’s premier utility management event, AMWA’s EMC provides a unique forum for water executives to share their expertise and gain insights from both water sector experts and colleagues. This peer-to-peer exchange fosters an environment that allows leaders to address the most pressing utility management issues.

The 2021 EMC preliminary agenda is based on feedback from members and subscribers and includes top-of-mind issues deemed most relevant by utility leaders. The schedule will include sessions examining how utility leaders are navigating organizational challenges, such as workforce recruitment and retention, diversity, equity, and inclusion, and succession planning. Utility innovation best practices, PFAS regulations, and policy issues will also be addressed.

Conference attendees will also hear from Boston Water and Sewer Commission Chief Information Officer Peter Hunt, who will present a case study of a ransomware attack at the utility, share his insights, and provide the utility’s plan for future preparedness and response. Following, a panel will discuss the specific steps that general managers can take to build cybersecurity resilience and protect their utilities from malicious threat actors.

In addition to the sessions, the schedule provides time for networking and celebration.

On the last morning of the conference, the staff at Denver Water (https://www.denverwater.org/) will also showcase the utility’s state-of-the-art Operations Complex and the under-construction Northwater Treatment Plan during a site visit.

Register (https://www.amwa.net/2021EMC) today and make hotel reservations for AMWA’s 2021 EMC.

Fitch Ratings report shows financial strength of water systems

July 15, 2021 at 2:30 PM

According to Fitch Ratings’ report “U.S. Water and Sewer: Peer Review,” water systems in the United States are emerging more financially stable than originally projected at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. The report analyzes the recent financial data of water and sewer systems in Fitch’s committee process and can be used for market participants to make their own comparisons. The report further asserts that the revenue of most utilities grew despite the performance of the economy overall.

Director Julie Seebach stated, “Water utilities have proven quite battle-tested between weathering the great recession, natural disasters, and now the coronavirus pandemic. Increased residential water consumption helped to offset lower revenues from commercial customers while most utilities reacted quickly and scaled back discretionary costs as the pandemic took hold.”


New resilience strategies to be offered at in-person forum

July 15, 2021 at 2:30 PM

The last year demonstrated the many risks utilities face. From extreme weather events to aging infrastructure and cybersecurity threats, water utility resilience has been stressed and tested.

AMWA and the National Association of Clean Water Agencies, in collaboration with WaterISAC and The Water Research Foundation, will host the 2021 Water Utility Resilience Virtual Forum in Miami, Fla., from December 13 to 15. The conference will provide an opportunity for water utility executives to engage with and learn from water sector leaders and peers as they explore recent challenges to utility resilience through case studies, facilitated sessions, and panel sessions.

Day one will open with sessions highlighting efforts to build community-based resilience by forming multi-sector agency partnerships. Utility managers and local leaders will explore how emergency preparedness is essential to community resilience.

Among the many topics for discussion on day two will be a session highlighting the need for utility financial resilience. Experts will discuss financial risk management, examine resilience from a management perspective, review bonds and insurance, and provide sources of funding.

The forum’s last day will provide discussions on new opportunities for water workforce resilience.

Visit the forum website (https://www.waterresilienceforum.org/) to view the full program agenda, find hotel information, see a list of sponsors, and register for the event.
New report offers perspectives on a collaborative approach to equity

July 15, 2021 at 2:30 PM

Last month, the US Water Alliance released a report titled “Water Equity Taskforce: Insights for the Water Sector.” The report discusses principles for building cross-sector collaborations and features accomplishments and lessons learned from the Water Equity Taskforce. It also presents key insights for a shared approach to water equity and examines how each of the seven participating cities advocated for policies and programs that promote equitable outcomes for utilities and the communities they serve.

CIFA fact sheet details Drinking Water SRFs spending on green projects

July 15, 2021 at 2:30 PM

The Council of Infrastructure Financing Authorities (CIFA) released the first in a series of new fact sheets about the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds (SRFs) in late May. The fact sheet clarifies common myths pertaining to the SRFs and outlines the following key points:

- The Drinking Water SRFs have spent more than $1.9 billion in green projects or 14 percent of total federal funding since 2009 without a mandate and with fewer eligible projects;
- Based on cumulative appropriations between 2009 and 2020, every Clean Water SRF has exceeded the federal mandate to spend 10 percent of federal funding on green projects, also known as the Green Project Reserve with some SRFs exceeding the mandate by more than 100 percent; and
- The Clean Water SRFs have spent more than $8.6 billion in green projects or 40 percent of total federal funding since the establishment of green project mandate in 2009.

EPA webinar on utilities building, maintaining workforce partnerships

July 15, 2021 at 2:30 PM

Facing a myriad of workforce challenges, the water sector must build a resilient, sustainable, and diverse workforce, including addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace.

The Creating the Water Workforce of the Future webinar series began in October 2019, with AMWA joining EPA, the American Water Works Association, the National Association of Clean Water Agencies, the Water Environment Federation, and the Water Research Foundation, to address workforce challenges.

The latest installment of the series, Developing and Maintaining Workforce and Equity Partnerships, will be held September 15 from 12:00 to 1:30 p.m. ET. Candi Jones, the Deputy Commissioner of Human Resources at Philadelphia Water, will discuss ways the utility partnered with PowerCorps Philadelphia, a program designed to support workforce development priorities, to recruit men and women from disadvantaged communities into water careers. Andy Kricun, Managing Director of Moonshot Missions and the former Director of the Camden County Municipal Authority, will join her to discuss his experience partnering with agencies and organizations across New Jersey to develop a state-wide water workforce program.

Register to attend for free.

Utilities invited to participate in Imagine a Day Without Water

July 15, 2021 at 2:30 PM

Imagine a Day Without Water (https://imagineadaywithoutwater.org/about), the national education campaign to spotlight reliable water services, will be October 21. The Value of Water Campaign (http://thevalueofwater.org/) (VOW), of which AMWA is a member, established the annual day of action seven years ago. AMWA encourages water utilities to sign up and participate in the event to raise awareness about the necessity of water and water infrastructure investment.

Diverse stakeholders from across the country will employ a series of events, resolutions, student contests, and social media engagement, to educate consumers and community leaders about the importance of water and its treatment and delivery systems – and the challenges facing the sector.

VOW invites water utility executives, leaders of local municipalities, school personnel, and others to participate and share their water stories.