

Solution **H₂O**

SUMMER 2021



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*Providing resources and a network for Kansas
to responsibly manage water*

EPA Highlights WaterOne's Sustainable Career Development Program

by Jerry Koukol, WaterOne

WaterOne's Distribution Technician Program has been featured in a collection of water sector case studies published by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The publication, titled "Making Water a Career of Choice," highlights innovative solutions to recruit, train, and retain employees for jobs in the water utility sector.

Careers in the water sector are critical to the safety and well-being of our communities, and maintaining a stable, skilled workforce is an essential part of long-term utility sustainability. Water providers like WaterOne are continually challenged to recruit and retain a highly trained, well-equipped workforce to support the needs of their customers. The case

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News from the Chair

by Durward Johnson, KsAWWA Chair

As I write this column and reflect on how thankful I am about how our country is finally opening up following the pandemic, I am keenly aware that a possible Delta variant may be lurking around the corner, potentially taking us back to more isolation and more masks. However, at this point, I am choosing to focus on how refreshing it is to see peoples' faces (and smiles) again and to be able to meet in person and plan to travel and attend events. Optimism is the word I choose to hang on to. Not only am I optimistic about our nation getting through this pandemic, but I am optimistic about our future as water professionals and as a section chapter of AWWA.

First, I would like to invite you to join me, in person, for our 2021 KWEA/KsAWWA Joint Conference in Topeka, Aug. 31 – Sept. 2. Vice Chair Katie Miller and Section Manager Hank Boyer, along with the program committee, have put together a great program of presentations that I am sure you will find informative. Come out to see exhibitors' equipment and network with your peers whom you've not been able to see face-to-face for a while.

"Water for a resilient Kansas" is the new vision statement for KsAWWA. With guidance from Ashley Bruchis, AWWA section relationship manager, KsAWWA now has a new, revised strategic plan that aligns with the national association and will take us through 2025. Ashley worked regularly with our Strategic Planning Committee, chaired by Katie Miller,

until the new plan was finished back in May.

We owe a great deal of thanks to them and the other members of that team who were involved with its development: Lester Estelle, John Gilroy, Tonya Bronleewe, Paul Garrett, Leah Morris,

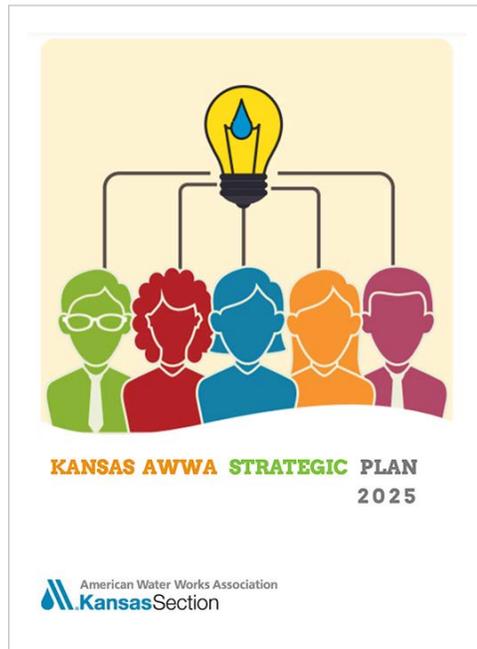


and, of course, Hank Boyer. Highlights of the plan include four major sections: Member Engagement and Development, Organizational Sustainability, Knowledge Transfer, and Water Policy & Leadership. Please visit <https://www.ksawwa.org> to view the entire strategic plan. After it was adopted at our last board meeting, I asked the committee chairs to review the new plan with their committees and to establish revised goals and budgets for the remainder of 2021 as well as consider new ones for 2022 that will help KsAWWA support and promote our strategic plan.

Although AWWA as a whole had realized a drop in membership over the past year due most likely to COVID-19, that trend has slowed down and memberships are beginning to pick up again. For KsAWWA, we have been working on contacting individuals whose memberships lapsed in 2020 or early 2021 to get them to rejoin. Although there were about 60 individuals on that list this past year,

KsAWWA was the recipient of the Club VII Membership Award for Division V. This award recognizes membership recruitment efforts of sections that achieve certain goals set by AWWA. There are seven divisions based on size. The award is pictured here, but please look for it at the annual conference; congratulations to the Membership Committee for their diligent work. Derek Patrick is the current chair of the Membership Committee and initiated monthly committee Zoom meetings this year. His committee has worked in partnership with the Young Professionals Committee, the Diversity in the Workplace Committee, and the Veteran's Workforce Committee in an attempt to focus on recruiting new, young members who could also be involved with those other committees.

Cybersecurity threats are among the top concerns of many water professionals across the country. In 2021, it seemed that there were many more threats posed nationwide and several in the water industry. In February 2021, a hacker tried to poison a Florida city's water supply. In March and June 2021, there were two separate cybersecurity breach concerns at water utilities in Kansas. Further, there were the ransomware incidents in May of this year that involved the Colonial Pipeline and JBS meatpacking plants. With those cybersecurity concerns becoming even more prevalent, I have suggested that KsAWWA consider a cybersecurity committee or perhaps a technology committee that would be separate from



our Safety Committee or our WARN Committee. I see this as an opportunity to involve more IT, SCADA, and GIS-related individuals already in the water industry to become involved with AWWA and this to be an avenue for those individuals to get together and collaborate on technologies used by water utilities that need protection from cyber-related threats.

The OTC Committee has also been working hard this past year. With training requirements needed to retain operator certification, the committee has been meeting with Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) and Kansas Municipal Utilities (KMU) to provide online training that is acceptable and approved by KDHE. Further, KDHE is working on new, separate requirements for distribution system operator certification. While those requirements are not yet in place, the OTC Committee has been working with KDHE to determine what will be needed to obtain and retain certification and licensing for distribution system operators. Brad Ebinger is chair of the KsAWWA OTC Committee.

The revised Lead and Copper Rule and per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) seemed to be the two main topics in the 2021 regulatory arena. Congress has also been trying to get an Infrastructure bill passed that will help stimulate our economy as well as improve the country's aging roadways and water and sewer pipelines. AWWA has been engaged with congressional leaders to help ensure there is proper funding in the bill to help water utilities and the water industry as a whole. Darci Meese, Water Utility Council chair for KsAWWA, has been staying on top of these important legislative issues. Darci arranged four meetings with four U.S. congressional leaders' offices to discuss the AWWA issues during the 2021 fly-in activities. Darci, Mike Armstrong, Alex Beck, and I participated in those online fly-in meetings. The three main action items requested were:

1. Reauthorize and boost funding for the Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Fund (SRF) program and the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA).
2. Provide assistance for utilities to assess and remove lead service lines (private and utility-owned) and treat for per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS).
3. Restore tax-exempt benefits of advanced refunding of municipal bonds.

Although the pandemic has limited our ability to meet face-to-face this past year, AWWA has been able to utilize online applications to communicate effectively and conduct necessary business. The KsAWWA board members and committee chairs had to meet virtually for business meetings and other activities as well, but it didn't deter our determination to make progress. I've only hit on a few of the

activities of this past year, yet there are many other accomplishments not mentioned in this article.

I would like to express my appreciation for the other work that the board members, chairs, and committees put in—thank you. Finally, let me say thank you, too, to all of those utility operators, lab staff, and supervisors who have been on the front line throughout this pandemic. Thank you for going into work during this past year to keep your water systems operating and flowing to provide safe, high-quality drinking water for your customers and community. I know it hasn't been easy showing up to work while being concerned about your safety and your families' safety during the COVID-19 pandemic; but again, thank you for your service!

As I mentioned in my last article, please stay engaged or get even more involved with KsAWWA and in your community, particularly in water-related matters. Our industry needs each of you to be a strong advocate promoting the importance of community drinking water to everyone around you. ☂

Durward "DJ" Johnson, KsAWWA Chair
djohnson@bpu.com
(913) 645-1670

Section Manager's Report

by Hank Corcoran Boyer, KsAWWA Section Manager

It is always fun to look back at what I wrote last year at this time, but as most of you know last year was almost a non-existent year especially for many of the activities we hold this time of year. It is my prayer all of you came through the pandemic unscathed and you didn't lose any loved ones to the pandemic. We are still being very careful, and the new variants that seem to be cropping up have started to raise the numbers in some areas. But, with that being said, I was able to enjoy a few days in Colorado recently, and it was a much enjoyed and relaxing vacation.

Many things were put on hold a year ago and some were completely canceled. KsAWWA held a virtual annual meeting and bestowed some awards to our outstanding members. The OTC Committee was able to work with KDHE and develop an agreeable method of holding online training for our operators and all our board meetings were held virtually. It was decided early on that KsAWWA would hold an in-person conference in 2021. The program committee worked hard to get enough papers submitted and put together an excellent program for the attendees.

As many of you remember, the exhibit hall in Topeka was being remodeled when we were there in 2019. That has been completed, and for the past few months, Stormont Vail has been using it as a large vaccination site. It was difficult for the program committee to get in to see what the new area looked like, but through the work of the employees

of Stormont Vail Events Center, we have had a couple of opportunities to see the new exhibit hall. I believe it is a great enhancement to the Topeka venue, and I believe the exhibitors and the attendees are going to enjoy the new



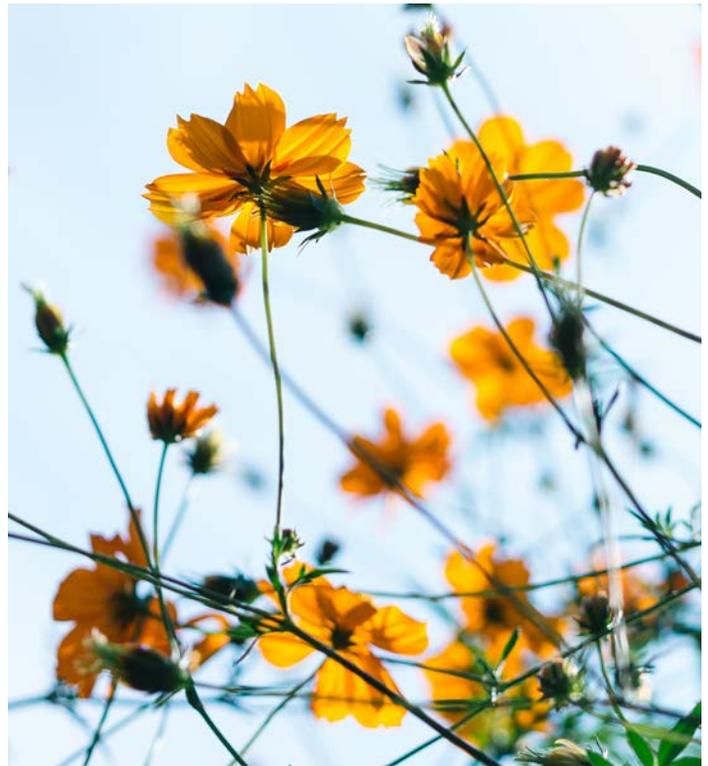
space and the opportunity to spend more time in the exhibit area with the many activities the program committee has put in this new space. The one big thing this year is the opening session will be held in the exhibit hall. This is something we were able to do in Wichita, but space didn't allow us to do it in Topeka until now.

The Topeka Capitol Plaza Hotel has been sold, and the new name is Hotel Topeka at City Center. As of this writing, I am not sure if they have a direct link open for anyone to register and receive the conference discount so I would encourage you to just call the hotel at (785) 431-7200 and use the code for our conference "KWE21" to receive our discounted rate.

I want to applaud the board of trustees for their work through the past year and for adapting to the new normal. It has been a challenging time for

everyone, but because we are professionals we have learned to adapt and work through those challenges. I am looking forward to seeing everyone in Topeka from Aug. 31 through Sept. 2, 2021, for the 12th annual joint conference with KWEA.

Everyone enjoy the rest of your summer, and we will see you in a few weeks. 🍂



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Director's Report

by Stephen Randtke, KsAWWA Director



My term as director officially ended June 16, and this is my final director's report. It has been both a great privilege and a very rewarding experience representing you on the association's board of directors for the past three years.

Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to serve in this capacity!

Please join me in giving a hearty welcome to our new director, Lester Estelle, who I am confident will do a great job representing our section (and will likely write much more succinct reports). As many of you know, Lester is a very talented, hard-working, and effective leader, and a great ambassador for our profession. He truly enjoys his work, so much so that on several occasions some of my students, after attending one of the plant tours he hosted at Olathe's water treatment plant (where he formerly served as plant superintendent), asked me, "How can I get a job like that? He has worked there almost 30 years and obviously loves what he does!" Please pitch in when Lester and other leaders at AWWA ask for your help "building a better world through better water."

AWWA and the Pandemic

Despite the pandemic, AWWA remains financially healthy and has carefully managed its budget, recalibrated its financial goals, and revised its business plan with an eye toward maintaining its reserves and gradually increasing revenue and expenditures back to pre-pandemic levels as in-person events resume. During the pandemic, membership dipped slightly (below 49,000), as expected; but AWWA has continued to offer its members great value and has launched new initiatives designed to increase membership to over 50,000 once again.

Recognizing there was no guarantee the San Diego Convention Center would be open in time for ACE21 (and it was not), AWWA wisely converted ACE21 from a hybrid event to ACE21 All-Virtual, held June 14-17. This event was a big success, exceeding expectations for attendance, sponsorships, and revenue. This year's DC Fly-In was held virtually; and future virtual events will include this year's YP Summit (Aug. 3) and AWWA's summer workshops.

Now that the pandemic appears to be winding down (though that is still in doubt due to the large number of people yet to be vaccinated and the emergence of highly contagious variants), both the association and sections are scheduling in-person events later this

year. This includes our section's joint conference; the [Utility Management Conference](#) (Aug. 3-6 in Atlanta, Georgia); and two regional meetings of Section officers (RMSOs) – one in the West (Aug. 20-21 in Midway, Utah) and one in the East (Nov. 16-17 in Annapolis, Maryland). AWWA Past-President Melissa Elliott will represent the association at our conference and attend through pre-recorded sessions.

Other Recent AWWA Activities

This year's Water Matters! Fly-In was held online, with a record 240 members from across the U.S. meeting with members of Congress and their staffs. After two preparatory webinars, fly-in delegates began meeting online with their congressional offices on April 19. In a May debriefing, delegates reported overwhelmingly favorable reactions from members of Congress to the [association's requests](#), and many were pleased with the flexibility of the online format. Sections had the opportunity to include more members, particularly young professionals, than is possible with an in-person fly-in. AWWA's Water Utility Council, host of the event, hopes to return to an in-person fly-in in 2022.

To take advantage of growing momentum on Capitol Hill, this year's fly-in focused primarily on water infrastructure investment. AWWA delegates advocated for: reauthorization of the Drinking Water and Wastewater State Revolving Fund programs and the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) program; funding for lead service line removal and per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) treatment; and restoration of tax-exempt advantages for [advanced refunding](#) of municipal bonds.

On June 10, 2021, AWWA's executive committee formally approved a revised Policy Statement on Diversity and Inclusion (available [here](#)), as recommended by the association's Diversity & Member Inclusion Committee (DMIC). This is an internal and external facing policy developed in alignment with AWWA's 2025 Strategic Plan, which includes advancing diversity and inclusion as a core principle.

In support of one of its top priorities for 2021 and the 2025 strategic plan, AWWA created a [Strengthen Public Trust Resource web page](#) to help water utilities become their community's trusted source on water information. The page features resources for varied topics, including Perceptions of Tap Water (Morning Consult survey), lead, and PFAS.

During 2020–2021, AWWA's Utility Enterprise Model Committee (UEMC) evaluated the pros and cons of adopting an enterprise model of utility membership, i.e., one that would consider all employees of a member utility to be members of AWWA. (Utility members pay dues based on utility size; and each size category carries a fixed number of individual memberships, with additional memberships available for purchase by the utility of individual employees). At the June meetings of AWWA's executive committee and board of directors, the UEMC presented the following conclusions and recommendations, which were accepted:

- » Although the Enterprise Model advances AWWA's mission and produces a better member experience, market demand for the model is not uniformly distributed among all utility sizes.

- » Two factors weigh against adoption of the Enterprise Model for all utilities. First, section variability makes the adoption of the enterprise model unlikely because consistent pricing and service are not possible under current parameters. Second, cost constraints (especially as a result of COVID-19) hamper utilities' ability to absorb the cost increase necessary to implement an Enterprise Model.
- » Although the committee cannot recommend wholesale adoption of the Enterprise Model, circumstances may exist to allow implementation on a limited and customized basis. Furthermore, the committee identified other potential improvements that could be made without changing to an enterprise model, e.g., streamlining of billing and administrative maintenance of utility membership accounts.

The Community Engineering Corps (CECorps) is recruiting AWWA members to join its Technical Review Committee (TRC). The TRC is a standing body of professionals who review project team products, including Work Plans and final design deliverables, and perform technical quality control. To learn more, download [this document](#). To sign up, review and apply on the [CECorps website](#). If you are interested in a project on Volunteer Village, apply here: <https://ewb-usa.force.com/VolunteerVillage/s/>. For more information on CECorps, visit <https://www.communityengineeringcorps.org/>.

AWWA's Government Affairs Office (GAO)

Our "Washington" office always works very hard on behalf of AWWA and its members, but this year has been especially busy due to the change in

administrations, the pandemic, and the introduction of numerous Senate and House bills with provisions directly relevant to water and wastewater. For example, pandemic relief bills include provisions for unpaid water bills; infrastructure spending bills include funds for water and wastewater treatment projects; and a number of bills are targeting PFAS.

Our Government Affairs Office (GAO) recently published a 45-page summary of their efforts addressing legislative and regulatory matters on our behalf as of April 16, 2021. Priorities included affordability; chemical contaminants (PFAS, cyanotoxins, disinfection byproducts, perchlorate, lithium, manganese, and fluoride); Legionella; revisions to the lead and copper rule (LCR); source



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water protection; infrastructure financing; and cybersecurity. Their efforts focused not only on the Safe Drinking Water Act, but also on water-related aspects of proposed changes to other laws, and proposed changes to regulations promulgated based on the authority of these laws. Examples include effluent guidelines for wastewater discharges containing PFAS (under the Clean Water Act) and risk management plans for chlorine (under the Clean Air Act). They also track selected legislative and regulatory activities in the states and in Canada. I have elaborated below on selected topics. If you would like additional details, Hank or I would be happy to send you a copy of the summary.

Tracy Mehan, executive director of AWWA's GAO, recently sent EPA a copy of AWWA's report on affordability, [Improving the Evaluation of Household-Level Affordability in SDWA Rulemaking: New Approaches](#), the final product of an expert-led panel on affordability and regulatory issues supported by AWWA. AWWA also joined with the Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies, the National Association of Water Companies and the National Rural Water Association in sending a letter to the U.S. House Committee on Energy and Commerce voicing concerns about 10 drinking water bills under consideration. If passed, many of these bills would place new regulatory burdens on water utilities, adding significant operation and maintenance costs while limiting means of collection from delinquent ratepayers. You can read the full letter [here](#).

In formal [comments](#) to EPA on its proposal to delay effective dates for the revised lead and copper rule, AWWA urged the agency to extend effective and compliance dates for the new rule commensurate

with the additional time being sought for more stakeholder input. These comments also noted that any substantive changes to the proposed lead and copper rule should be the subject of new public notice and comment processes.

On May 10, EPA's public comment period on the [Fifth Unregulated Contaminant Monitoring Rule](#) (UCMR 5) closed. The proposed UCMR 5, published on March 11, would require more than 10,000 water systems to monitor 29 PFAS compounds and lithium from 2023 to 2025. The proposal also requested input on inclusion of *Legionella*, haloacetonitriles, and total organofluorine. With the assistance of members and technical experts, AWWA prepared and submitted comments on the proposal, emphasizing opportunities to improve the proposal in a way that provides valuable data and balances UCMR objectives with the challenges.

Tracy Mehan's column (DC Beat) in the May 2021 issue of JAWWA, entitled "Water Utilities Should Not Be Strangers to WIFIA," highlighted the advantages of infrastructure financing and other benefits of the WIFIA (Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act) program, one of AWWA's major achievements. AWWA's GAO has been strongly promoting the WIFIA program by explaining it to our members, describing application procedures and selection criteria, announcing deadlines, and providing other advice and guidance. They have been doing the same for federal grants programs for source water protection (NRCS and USDA) and pandemic funds made available under the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021; and I expect they do the same for new infrastructure funding if / when a final bill is passed by Congress and signed by the president.

AWWA continues to play a leading role in encouraging water systems of all sizes to proactively integrate cybersecurity best practices into their operations; to conduct risk and resiliency assessments, to develop emergency response plans, and to comply with the requirements of the American Water Infrastructure Act (AWIA). AWWA has developed resources to support water systems with their compliance, including the [Utility Risk & Resilience Certificate Program](#) and related [guidance](#) for small systems. AWWA recently sent utilities a link (<https://us-cert.cisa.gov/ncas/alerts/aa21-131a>) to an FBI bulletin regarding best practices for disrupting ransomware attacks, such as the DarkSide attack on the Colonial Pipeline earlier this month. Questions can be directed to [Kevin Morley](#), AWWA's federal relations manager.

AWWA formally submitted comments to EPA regarding EPA's efforts to collect data in support of future rulemaking for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substance (PFAS) discharges under the Clean Water Act (CWA). AWWA encouraged EPA to utilize development of an effluent limitation guideline (ELG) to protect sources of drinking water supply more effectively by:

1. Collecting data necessary to inform establishing technology-based effluent guidelines for PFAS manufacturers, formulators, and major industrial users.
2. Collecting data now to inform ELG development beyond the point-source category with a focus on known major industrial users of PFAS.
3. More effectively coordinating data collection under the several environmental statutes EPA manages.

4. Utilizing EPA's CWA authority to require data submission to EPA, particularly PFAS chemical use and process descriptions that describe the mass-balance and fate of PFAS.
5. Collecting data now on PFAS use broadly so that as information becomes available on toxicology, EPA has the information necessary to move forward in a timely manner on that subset of PFAS, rather than collecting data only on those PFAS for which there are observed concentrations in wastewater effluent using available analytical methods.
6. Using new sources of data as they become available, particularly, Toxic Release Inventory (TRI) information on PFAS releases, monitoring data collected by the State of California at electroplating facilities, and updated PFAS production volumes collected by EPA under the Toxic Substances Control Act.
7. Continuing and expanding coordination with EPA's PFAS research program.

Speaking before the U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works on June 9, Tracy Mehan, said AWWA recognizes PFAS as a growing concern that merits swift and serious attention. He also said: "The Safe Drinking Water Act mandates a consistent, transparent and science-based process for considering new regulations ... AWWA supports following the steps outlined in the Safe Drinking Water Act to assure PFAS risks are effectively and efficiently reduced from our drinking water." One striking aspect of the [hearing](#) was the recognition that water utilities are victims of PFAS exposure, not the culprits. Senators and other witnesses pointed out that cleanup and treatment costs for PFAS will be too great a burden for local utilities and their customers to bear.

Tracy Mehan has also noted, regarding PFAS, that source water protection is the best way to keep drinking water safe for consumers, and AWWA believes the EPA should be making better use of the federal Toxic Substances Control Act to better understand and control PFAS exposure. Also, “Additional funding for research is needed to properly assess and address the human health effects of exposure to PFAS; identify analytical methods that quantify PFAS levels in source water, drinking water and wastewater; and further develop technologies to cost-effectively remove PFAS compounds to levels that do not pose a human health concern.”

Note that despite all the time and effort AWWA’s GAO devotes to our cause, Senators and members of Congress are generally more responsive to their own constituents. Therefore, it behooves all of us as KsAWWA members to share our thoughts with our own state and federal representatives, especially concerning key issues for which our DC office has already done most of the leg work.

Midwest AWWA’s EPA Region 7 Update

On March 29, I attended the 2021 EPA Region 7 update hosted virtually by the Midwest Section of the Air & Waste Management Association. Acting Region 7 Administrator Ed Chu described the new administration’s direction, highlighting three priorities: scientific integrity, climate change policy, and environmental justice. He and various division heads noted that an EPA office in the White House will coordinate national climate change policy; there will be a strong focus on protecting children from lead exposure; projects receiving infrastructure

funding will be expected to help address climate change; benefits to disadvantaged communities will be strongly considered in funding decisions; there will be a renewed emphasis on enforcement; and the priorities of the Land, Chemicals, and Redevelopment Division will include PFAS, Brownfield sites, and integrated pest management.

Closing Remarks

In May I served as AWWA’s representative to the Alaska Section for their annual business meeting, which was held virtually. Rats! I’ve always wanted to visit Alaska in person, so will have to look for another opportunity!

AWWA CEO David LaFrance recently announced his goals for the remainder of the year: a better world through better water, a future where water does not come in contact with lead, and seeing Aaron Rodgers in an orange and blue Broncos’ jersey. His goals may very well be met, but I don’t think the Chiefs fans in our Section need to be too concerned about his third goal. Even if “old man” Rodgers has another MVP season, that won’t help the Broncos nearly enough to beat the Chiefs this fall, with a rebuilt offensive line protecting Patrick Mahomes.

Having retired from AWWA’s board of directors and from KU (as of June 30 last year), I plan to spend more time with family and friends (including you!). I also plan to remain engaged in public service for the foreseeable future and to continue attending future KsAWWA and AWWA events. I am eagerly looking forward to our upcoming in-person KWEA/KsAWWA Joint Conference, and I hope to see all of you there! 🍷



helped address high turnover rates which were causing a loss of institutional knowledge, disrupting productivity, and impacting morale.

The Distribution Technician Program focuses on training, skill introduction and practice, and certification through license or exams within a set of six major competencies that cover skills needed for success in Distribution Technician roles. Employees are eligible for pay increases as they progress through the program, establishing an incentive for continuous learning and advancement as well as enhancing organizational sustainability. The career ladder developed for the Distribution Technician Program sets transparent qualifications for each step of advancement in skill and experience and corresponding compensation and responsibilities. Whether starting at the first step with limited experience or joining the organization mid-career (and mid-ladder) with demonstrated skills and experience, the program empowers Distribution Tech employees to pursue certifications, demonstrate competencies, and reach competency benchmarks for career advancement on their own schedule.

WaterOne's Distribution Technician Training Program was developed internally. WaterOne partnered with the University of Kansas initially for strategies on taking exams and study techniques. Since the program's implementation, WaterOne has seen reduced turnover and increased skillset. The program has also benefited WaterOne's recruitment efforts, drawing job applicants who are attracted by clearly defined opportunities for career advancement. Employees report satisfaction with the self-guided nature of the program, which empowers them to take charge of their own career trajectories.

continued from page 1

studies featured in the EPA publication showcase how careers in the water industry can offer attractive job stability, career growth, and opportunities to give back to the community in meaningful ways.

The Distribution Technician Program featured in the EPA case study was developed to enhance sustainability in WaterOne's workforce. The program restructured career progression in its distribution division, empowering employees ranging from entry level through milestones in their career to learn and advance at a self-determined pace. The program

“The requirements for advancement are very clearly laid out. By working through the program and picking up the skills, certifications, and experience you need, you have the ability to make more money in your role pretty quickly,” said Distribution Tech 1-5 Nick Hays, who has been at WaterOne for a year and a half. “I’ve never been at a job with a program like this before, but for me, it’s been working out really well.”

Read the case study online at <https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-water-infrastructure/water-utility-workforce-case-studies>. 



Making Water a Career of Choice

A Compendium of Water Workforce Case Studies from Across the Country

January 2021



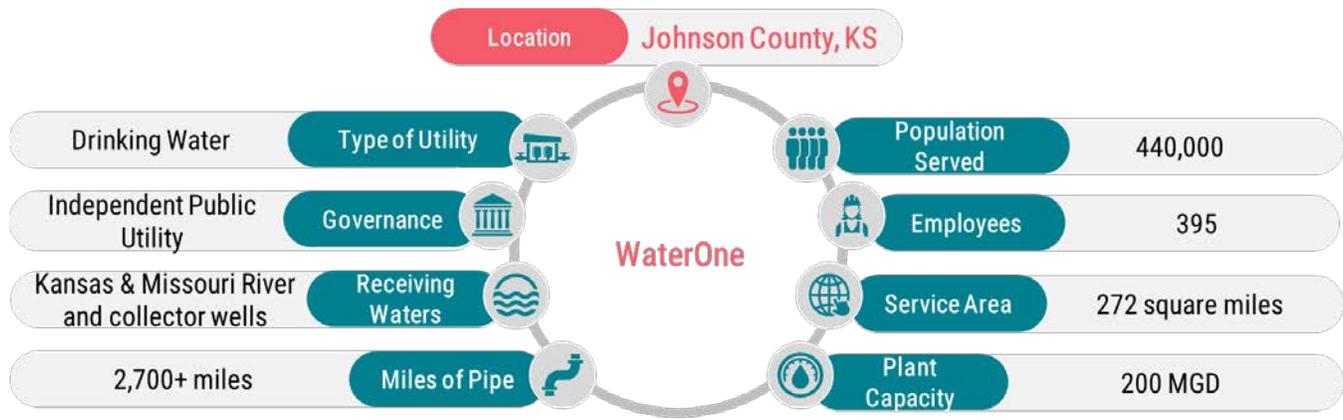
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From Career Pathways to Career Empowerment



Introduction

[WaterOne](#)²⁸ is committed to providing Johnson County, Kansas, a safe and reliable water supply with exceptional service and value. Every day, WaterOne relies on its employees to provide those high-quality services. To ensure their employees are supported and engaged, WaterOne developed a workforce program that trains and empowers staff to advance in their careers and not just their current job.

For WaterOne, developing a robust workforce program has been a journey that started in 2015. At that time, a lack of vacant upper-level positions and non-competitive salaries led many WaterOne Field employees to look for career development opportunities elsewhere. Facing turnover rates as high as 25% annually, WaterOne began to restructure its workforce program to develop a voluntary career pathway for Distribution Technicians.

Kansas City Board of Public Utilities: GIS Conversion Challenges & Implementation

by Kelly Bobki, Kansas City Board of Public Utilities



The Kansas City Board of Public Utilities (BPU) has provided safe, dependable water and

electric services across Kansas City, Kansas. As a non-profit public utility, we are fully committed to serving our customers and the community as a whole. It's more than simply providing a service. It's a commitment to a better quality of life. The water department provides water to 55,000 customers. We have 6,700 Fire Hydrant, 13,000 Water Valves, and over 963 miles of water pipe in our system.

Legacy System Challenges

Our legacy system contained tiled maps which split at the centerline of a road. We had a disconnected system. Finding assets in the field was a challenge for the field crews. Work-Management consisted of sending the field crews out with a sheet of paper with an address or assets on it and what was to be done to the asset. The papers would get lost on someone's desk or not turned in at all. It would take a long time for field notes to get turned in, and would take even longer for us to create "As Builts" on projects.

Creating a Solution

We implemented ESRI Platform and created an internal GIS site for all of departments to access.

Multiple Data in One System

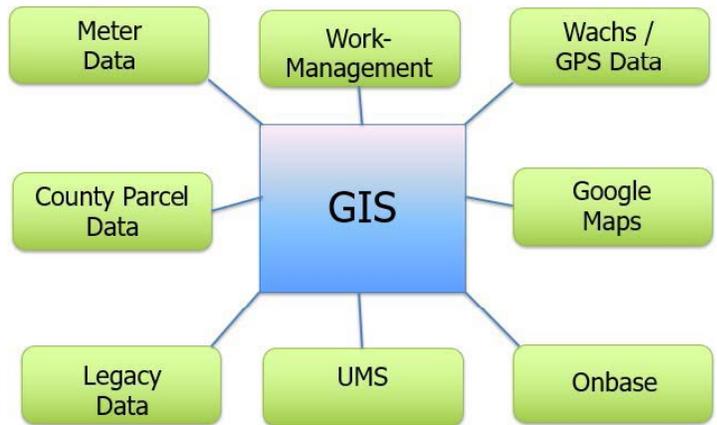


Figure 1 - Internal GIS System

ESRI allowed us to store all of our data in one location and pull in the legacy data from older systems.

We now had all the data at our figure tips along with pretty maps. We created an external webpage using ArcGIS Online and Geocortex so our field crews could access maps externally from their field devices (see figure 2 on page 18).

Implementation Continued: Work-Management

Our next focus was developing a work-management system that would allow us to track our daily work, plan work in advance, track material used on jobs, and create workflows from start to finish on installation, abandonment, and maintenance of assets.

Data at Our Fingertips + Pretty Maps

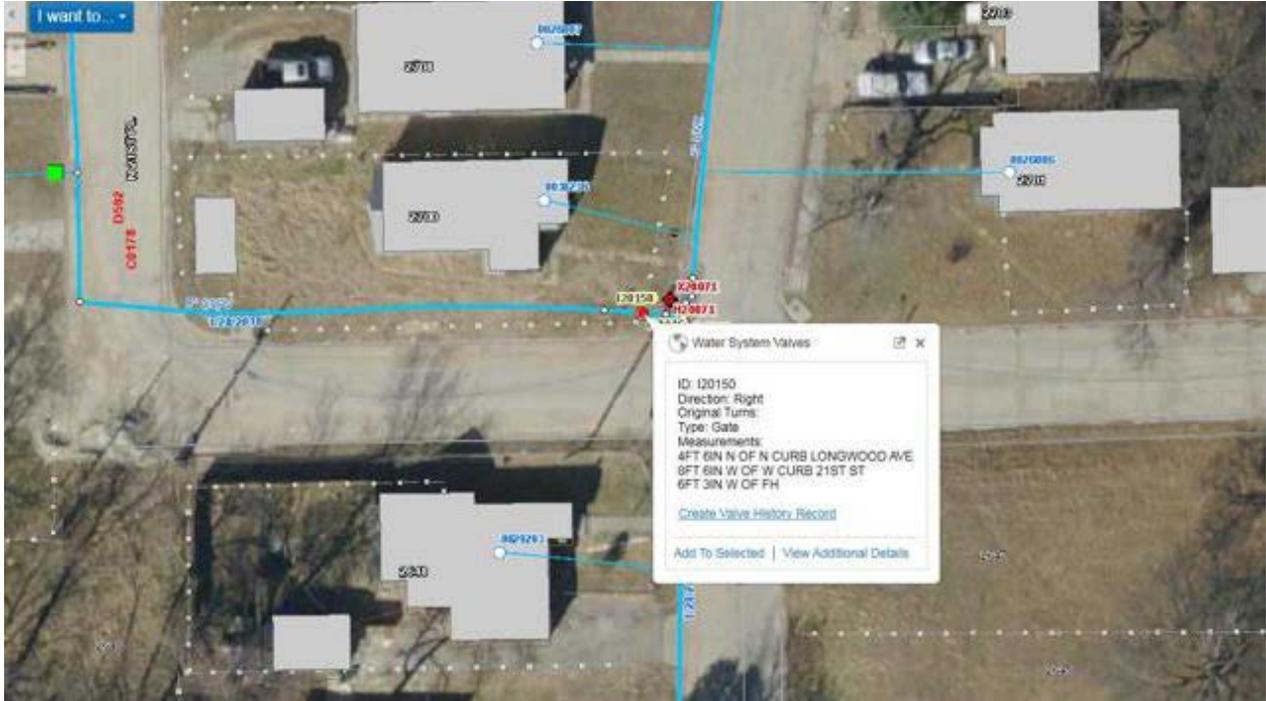


Figure 2 – External web page for field crews using ArcGIS Online and Geocortex

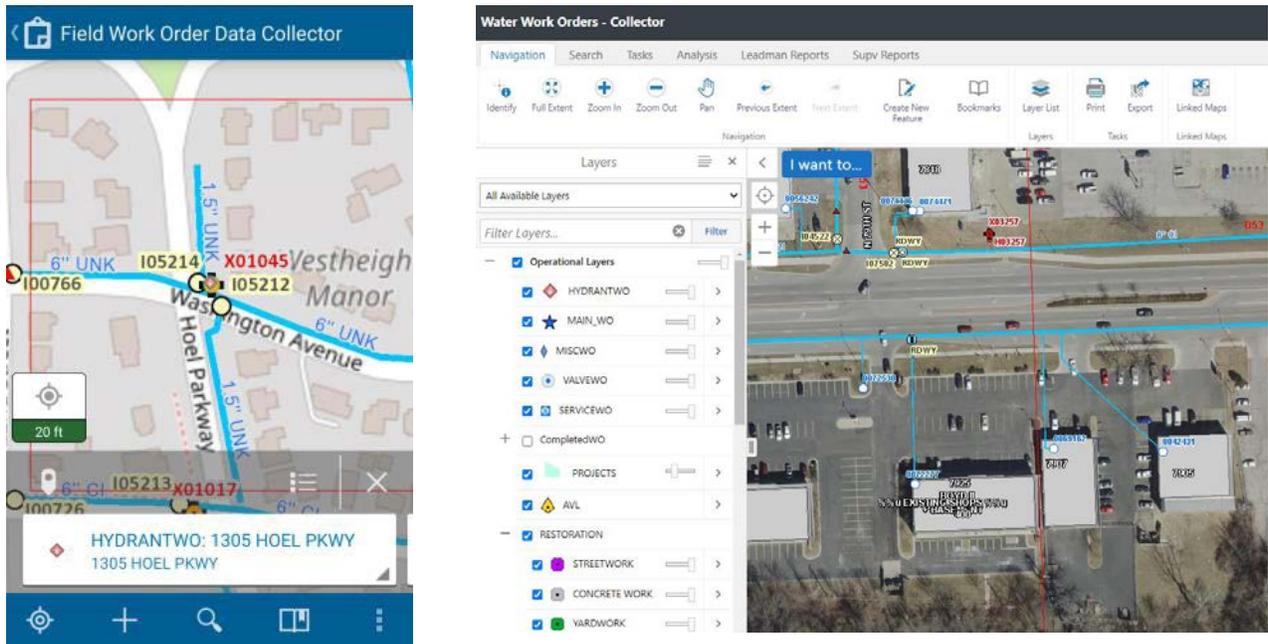


Figure 3 – Field Work Order Data Collector and Work-Management Map

Using ArcGIS online and Geocortex we created a work-management map. Work orders are created based on asset type (hydrant, valve, main, service) and given a priority of one to five that follows our business processes (see figure 3 on page 18).

We also linked our locate data to this map. We set up script files to run on the back end to let us know when jobs were ready to work. When the red locate box appears, this lets us know that locates are completed and the job is ready to be worked.

ESRI Collector App

Using the ESRI Collector App, our field guys can access the work orders on their handheld devices and input

the work they perform. This includes material used, the asset type, size, manufacturer, and it also tracks start and finish time. We worked with our leadman to implement this process and had them help develop the application to help with buy-in on our new processes.

Engineer aides get GPS shots on all assets as they are being installed. Approximately 90% of our assets are recorded via GPS, and our field crews can use their hand held devices to take them to the asset within the collector app.

Follow-up work is captured on the work order after an asset is installed/ repaired such as concrete work, yard work, or plates that need to be picked up.



Figure 4 – ESRI Dashboard

Once the leadman completes his part in collector he changes the status to "installed." Supervisors review the work, change it to waiting mapping and the assets becomes "as built" in the GIS.

Top management use ESRI dashboards to track assets and our distribution managers use ESRI dashboards to track work orders (see figure 4 on page 19).

Benefits of the New System and Savings

We have realized several benefits to the new system.

- » We have one seamless map.
- » Easy integration with other software and existing assets from other programs.
- » Field crews have access to live data and can see updates instantly in the field.
- » Accurate information.
- » We are planning work ahead of time and placing calls to our customers a day in advance letting them know their water will be off for planned maintenance.
- » Jobs are mapped within a day of installation and at times mapped the same day.
- » Management can measure metrics using the ESRI dashboard

Our crews are no longer going to a job and having to wait for locates. The locate data is within the work order map and allows us to see the locates are complete before we send the crew out to a job site.

Our lead man take pictures of the installations. They take pictures before they start of the locates, during



installation, and a photo when the job is complete (see figure 5 on page 21). This also has saved the utility money if there are any discrepancies on how a job site was left after completion.

We have greater accuracy and have decreased our liabilities with pictures of our job sites before, during repair/replacement and after the work. For example, we have included pictures of a main leak (see figure 5 on page 19); our crews capture the locates before digging, the exposed pipe, the repair made, and a final picture of the jobsite when the job is complete. All of these details are attached to the work order including measurements, material, time, and photos along with any follow-up work that needs to take place. 🛠️



Figure 5 - Photos of a main leak captured and attached to the work order

**NO WATER
NO FLOW**

 American Water Works Association

**#NoWaterNoFlow
#ValueWater**



Veterans Workforce Spotlight: Doug Smith, Kansas City Board of Public Utilities

by Brian Bohnsack, Wichita State University Environmental Finance Center

AWWA believes military members are an excellent fit for the water sector because of their technical expertise and experience working nontraditional hours in a regulated environment. KsAWWA has many veteran members and members with family on active duty who are employed at Kansas utilities. This feature aims to highlight a unique perspective on how military backgrounds and careers in the water industry intersect.

After a stint in the U.S. Air Force, Doug Smith decided to follow in the footsteps of his father and mentor, James Smith, and pursue a career in the water industry. It is a perfect fit for Smith. As a child, he would tag along with his father and watch him fix water and wastewater equipment. After serving in the U.S. Air Force from 1998–2002, he used the Federal Reemployment Act to return to the city of Desoto to work for their drinking water plant. He is currently a plant mechanic for the Kansas City Board of Public Utilities.

Smith's military service took him to 27 different countries and provided him with many job skills necessary to succeed in the challenging water industry. One of the key skills he earned was patience.

"When something isn't going as planned, [it's important to have] the patience to stay the course and to see the larger picture," Smith said.

His military training provided him with other important experience including developing leadership skills and a greater understanding of diverse cultures and diversity. It also provided him with some diverse



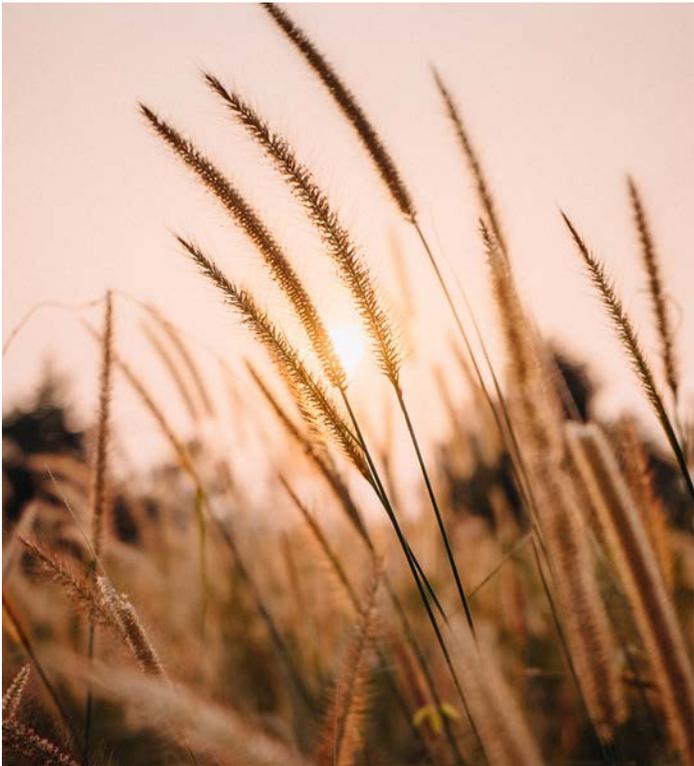
work experience. He served as a game warden on Barksdale Air Force Base in Shreveport, Louisiana. His responsibilities as the base game warden included enforcing fishing and hunting regulations on 18,000 acres of land, 10 ponds, and three lakes on the base.

The combination of his father's mentoring and military experience allows Smith to excel in his career. In addition to serving as a plant mechanic, he also serves on the safety committee and the IBEW Local 53 Accident Investigation Committee.

"I enjoy working with my hands and making a difference in my community. My dad has been in the water career field my entire life and has been a mentor for my career," Smith added.

When not working, Smith enjoys spending time with his wife and two boys. His hobbies include camping and canoeing with his family and searching for dessert recipes from more than 100 years ago and trying his hand at baking them.

Help us find our next Kansas water workforce veteran to spotlight! Email efc@wichita.edu, or complete our [online interview form](#). 🗑️



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AWWA/WEF Young Professionals Summit: Premier Water & Wastewater Industry Workshop



The AWWA/WEF Young Professionals (YP) Summit is the premier water and wastewater industry workshop for young professionals. Join other young leaders by exploring your role in water and discussing how you can best serve the water sector at large.

Contact YP Committee Chair Paul Garrett at ptgarrett@burnsmcd.com for additional information or to learn more about this event. 🗓️

In Memory of Gary Moxley

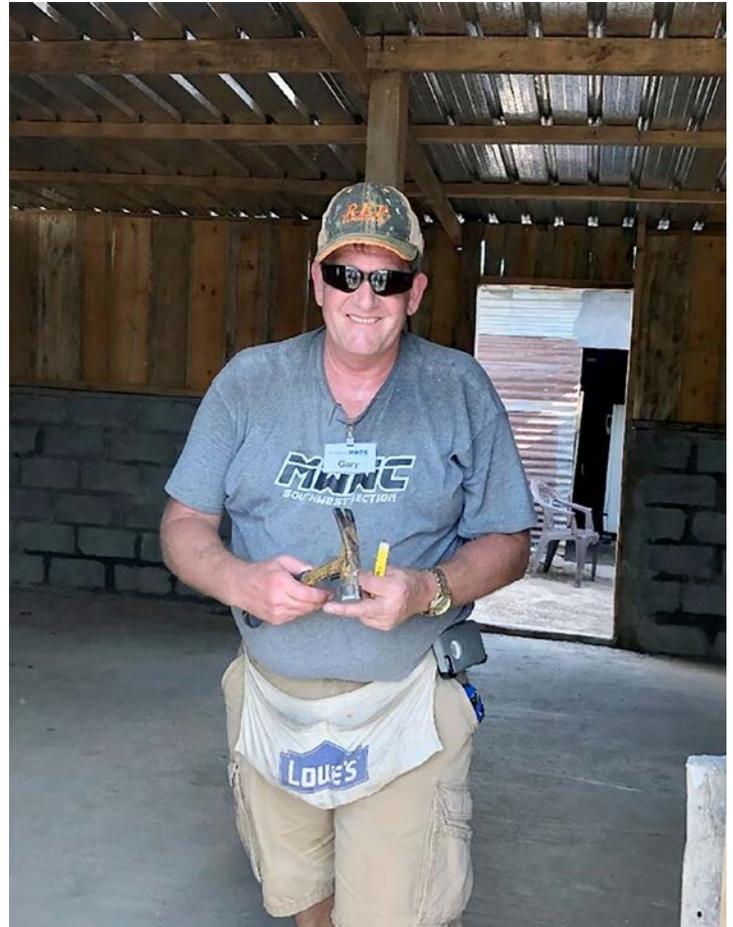
On July 11, 2021, the R. E. Pedrotti team suffered a terrible loss. Gary Moxley passed away after a heart attack early that morning. Gary was an invaluable employee at R. E. Pedrotti Co. for over 35 years. They will always remember his loving spirit, warm smile, and robust laugh.

Gary was also a very active KsAWWA member and chaired the Water For People committee for many years, raising thousands of dollars for this tremendous cause. Gary served on many mission trips to underprivileged countries around the world, helping them in any way he could.

Gary will be deeply missed not only by his fellow employees but also KsAWWA. Our sympathies go out to the Moxley family.

Services were held Friday, July 16, at First Baptist Church of Blue Springs in Independence, Missouri.

Messages of remembrance, obituary, and photos are [available online](#) via Speaks Chapels. 🕯️





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 American Water Works Association

www.awwa.org/value-of-water

Your Water Meets Your Basic Needs.

Without your precious water supply and water systems, you couldn't meet your most essential hygienic needs.

Value Water and Its Role in Your Daily Life.

#NoWaterNoHygiene #ValueWater

Ballot for KsAWWA 2021 Elections

by Hank Boyer, KsAWWA Section Manager

According to the by-laws, we are to publish the ballot for the upcoming election at least 30 days prior to the upcoming election which will be Tuesday, Aug. 31, 2021, at the KsAWWA annual meeting in Topeka, Kansas.

The ballot for the upcoming election is as follows (with incoming members in bold):

2021 BALLOT

Director	Lester Estelle, WaterOne
Chair	Katie Miller, KMU
Chair-Elect	Michelle Wirth, WaterOne
Vice Chair-Elect	Jim Jackson, SUEZ
Past Chair	Durward Johnson, KCK BPU
Secretary/Treasurer	Brandon Sisk, KCK BPU
Trustee 2 nd Year	Jessica Adams-Weber
Trustee 2 nd Year	William Carr, KDHE
Trustee 2 nd Year	John Gilroy, City of Olathe
Trustee 1 st Year	Steve Nirschl, KCK BPU
Trustee 1stYear	Fred Jones, City of Garden City
Trustee 1st Year	Phillip Brown, KCK BPU

2021 12th ANNUAL JOINT CONFERENCE

AUGUST 31–SEPTEMBER 2

Hotel Topeka at City Center • Topeka, Kansas

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Joint Conference Overview

Monday, Aug. 30, 2021

- 11:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.** **Golf Tournament Scholarship Fundraiser (Joint Event)**
Lake Shawnee Golf Course
11:00 a.m. – Check-in and lunch
12:00 p.m. – Shotgun start, four-person scramble
Proceeds to KWEA Scholarship Fund
- 11:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.** **Sporting Clays Shoot (Joint Event)**
Ravenwood Lodge
11:30 a.m. – Check-in, lunch, and practice rounds
1:00 p.m. – Shoot begins
Proceeds to Water For People
- 3:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.** **Exhibitor Setup**

Tuesday, Aug. 31, 2021

7:00 – 8:00 a.m.	Exhibitor Setup
7:30 a.m.	Joint Young Professionals Breakfast
8:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.	Registration Open
8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.	Exhibits Open
9:00 – 11:00 a.m.	Opening Session
11:00 a.m. – Noon	Exhibitor Hour & Refreshment Break
Noon – 1:30 p.m.	KsAWWA Awards & Annual Business Meeting Luncheon KWEA Awards Luncheon
1:30 – 2:30 p.m.	Best Tasting Tap Water Contest
1:30 – 5:00 p.m.	Concurrent Technical Sessions
2:15 – 5:00 p.m.	Environmental Excellence Competition
3:00 – 3:30 p.m.	Refreshment Break
3:30 – 5:00 p.m.	Oakland WWTP Tour: Innovative Technology, Biosolids, WAS Thickening <i>(Pre-registration required) (Sponsors: Ray Lindsey Company & Heron Innovators)</i>
5:00 – 6:00 p.m.	Joint Meet & Greet with Exhibitors <i>(Drink tickets provided + cash bar; door prizes)</i>
6:30 – 9:30 p.m.	All-Conference Meet & Greet: Kay McFarland Japanese Garden <i>(Pre-registration required) Networking, dinner, and drinks</i>

Wednesday, Sept. 1, 2021

7:30 – 8:30 a.m.	KsAWWA OTC Breakfast Meeting
7:30 – 8:30 a.m.	KWEA Board & Committee Chair Breakfast / Annual Business Meeting
7:30 – 8:30 a.m.	KWEA Golden Manhole Breakfast
7:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.	Registration Open
8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.	Exhibits Open
8:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.	Operator's Challenge
8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.	Concurrent Technical Sessions
10:00 – 10:30 a.m.	Refreshment Break
Noon – 1:30 p.m.	Joint Luncheon
1:30 – 2:30 p.m.	Meter Madness
2:30 – 3:30 p.m.	Hydrant Hysteria
3:00 – 3:30 p.m.	Refreshment Break
3:00 – 5:00 p.m.	Backhoe Rodeo
3:30 p.m.	Water For People Silent Auction Closes
5:30 – 6:30 p.m.	Joint Awards Banquet Reception
6:30 – 9:00 p.m.	Joint Awards Banquet

Thursday, Sept. 2, 2021

7:00 – 8:00 a.m.	KsAWWA Breakfast
7:00 – 8:00 a.m.	KWEA SSSSS Breakfast
7:30 – 10:00 a.m.	Registration Open
8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.	Concurrent Technical Sessions
9:30 – 9:45 a.m.	Refreshment Break
12:15 p.m.	Conference Adjournment and Prize Drawing
1:00 – 4:00 p.m.	KWEA ABC Testing Collections, Distribution, Plant Maintenance, Laboratory
1:00 – 4:00 p.m.	KDHE Water & Wastewater Operations Testing

AWWA Past President Melissa Elliott is This Year's Joint Conference Representative



Once again the pandemic has put a small wrinkle into plans, but as water professionals, we are able to go with the “flow.”

Melissa Elliott, past president AWWA (2020-2021), was hoping to

visit us in person, but that will not happen. However, we have arranged to record her presentations to play at the appropriate times during the conference.

Elliott’s career is focused on helping water and wastewater utilities tell their stories. She is the director of Strategic Communication Services at Raftelis where she consults with utilities to provide communication planning, stakeholder engagement, and risk communications. Prior to joining Raftelis, Elliott directed public relations departments at two large Colorado utilities—Denver Water and Aurora Water. All that utility experience means she’s worked with the public on issues as diverse as drought, water quality, potable reuse, affordability, rate structure change, massive infrastructure projects, and customer assistance programs.

Being AWWA president gave Elliott a new avenue to elevate the conversation about the value of the services utilities provide. As a public relations practitioner working in the highly technical water

industry, she makes it her mission to push those around her to stop being so humble about the essential work we do. Elliott says if we want others to understand our challenges, we need to build relationships with the people and communities we serve and talk about the value we provide.

When she’s not working with utilities, Elliott makes her home in Denver where she enjoys cooking for friends, planning future travel adventures, and spending time in the Colorado sunshine with her husband. 🍷



Does your water taste good enough to eliminate the lemon? If so, your utility should enter the annual water taste test.

KsAWWA BEST TASTING TAP WATER CONTEST

**Hotel Topeka at City Center
& Stormont Vail Events Center
August 31, 2021**

Submit entries to Ms. Hank Corcoran Boyer, KsAWWA Section Manager, at the exhibitor registration desk by 10 a.m. on August 31.

Official Judging: August 31 at 1:30 p.m.



Tuesday Meet & Greet Event: Evening at the Japanese Garden

This year's meet and greet will be held at the Kay McFarland Japanese Garden. Located at the Topeka Zoo, this Asian-themed garden features traditional Koi ponds, lush landscapes, and exquisite architectural elements. The contemporary event venue provides modern amenities, a private entrance, and an A/V system.

The Kay McFarland Japanese Garden began from Kansas Supreme Court Chief Justice Kay McFarland's desire to leave an inspirational meditative space for others to enjoy in the capital city of the state she served. Completed in the fall of 2020 by architect GLMV, the finished space includes interpretation

design of the gallery by Studio Tectonic and authentic design by Garden Master Koji Morimoto, resulting in a world-class Japanese garden and event center.

The evening is included in the conference registration for all attendees and exhibitors and is compliments of the Kansas Water Environment Association and the Kansas Section of the American Water Works Association. However, space is limited, and pre-registration is required. Sign-up for the event is available online: <http://www.kswaterwastewater.com>.

Don't miss out! Join us Tuesday evening for drinks, good food, and networking. ☂

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WATER FOR PEOPLE MEMBER DRIVE

ARE YOU LOOKING FOR AN OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Around the world, 1.1 billion people do not have access to safe drinking water, and 2.6 billion are without adequate sanitation facilities. Every day, nearly 6,000 people who share our planet die from water-related illnesses; the vast majority are children.

Water For People helps people in developing countries improve their quality of life by supporting the development of locally sustainable drinking water resources, sanitation facilities, and health and hygiene education programs.

Our vision is a world where all people have access to safe drinking water and sanitation, a world where no one suffers or dies from a water or sanitation-related disease.



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1

We believe in people.

We believe in the dignity of all people and that access to safe drinking water and effective sanitation are basic human rights.

2

We keep it local.

We believe that drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene problems are most effectively solved using local resources.

3

We keep good company.

We believe in the power of partnerships. We search out trusted partners who share our vision and work together to build Long-term relationships based on trust.

4

We keep our promises.

We believe we owe it to the communities we serve, our volunteers, staff, and donors to keep our promises and manage our resources effectively and efficiently.

SHARE THE GIFT OF WATER... THE GIFT OF LIFE

More than 60 committees throughout North America support Water For People's mission through community outreach, advocacy, and fundraising. These volunteer groups are subgroups of their parent organizations, including American Water Works Association sections and Water Environment Federation member associations.

FUNDRAISING OPPORTUNITIES



2021 KWEA / KsAWWA Joint Conference • August 31–September 2 • Topeka, KS

The annual KWEA / KsAWWA Joint Conference is fast approaching, and we need your help to raise funds. The need for Water For People's mission and work continues to increase in developing countries around the world.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Make a financial donation – 100% of your donation will be passed directly to Water For People to help bring clean water and sanitation solutions to communities in need for generations to come.

Make an item donation to the conference silent auction – 100% of the proceeds will be sent to Water For People to provide much needed support as work toward their mission.

Participate in the Water For People Sporting Clays Shoot – 100% of the net proceeds from this fundraiser will be passed on to Water For People. Invite your coworkers or vendors to join you!

Volunteer to serve on the Water For People Committee – The WFP Committee provides public education seminars, disperse educational literature, host fundraisers, and organize the sporting clays shoot.

All donors will be recognized at the conference and in publication. Donation receipts will be provided via email for tax purposes. Additionally, donations greater than \$250 will receive a special Water For People certificate suitable for framing.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact us and/or let us know how you would like to help. Please send your donation to Hank Boyer at the address below or send an email and let us know that you will bring your donation to the conference.

Kansas Section AWWA – Water for People

P.O. Box 3046
Salina, KS 67402-3046
hboyer@cox.net



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2021 CLAYS SHOOT

Monday, August 30
1:00 Shoot

Ravenwood Lodge
10147 SW 61st Street • Topeka, KS

50 Clays – \$47.50
25 Bird Practice – \$12.50

DETAILS

Regardless of skill, all are welcome to join in the fun! Shooters, spectators, and hecklers alike may share in the camaraderie and fundraising for **Water For People**.

Shooting is on an individual basis. Prizes are awarded at random. Skill is not a prerequisite. Just bring a good sense of humor and safety awareness.

WHAT TO BRING

Bring your own gun, ear protection, safety glasses, and ammunition (7 1/2, 8, or 9 shot). If you don't own a gun or have any questions, please contact Martha Silks.

SCHEDULE

11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Lunch, registration, and practice rounds

*Lunch and beverages provided by
EPEC—Charlie Wheeler*

1:00 – 3:30 p.m.

Sporting clays shoot



SHOOTER REGISTRATION

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
SHOOTER NAME	DATE
<input type="text"/>	
ORGANIZATION / COMPANY NAME	
<input type="text"/>	
EMAIL ADDRESS	
<input type="text"/>	
PHONE	
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
NOVICE OR EXPERIENCED?	# PRACTICE ROUNDS (0/1/2)
<input type="text"/>	
TOTAL ENCLOSED	

DEADLINE

Please register early. Send completed form with payment no later than August 20.

PAYMENT

Please make checks payable in full and mail to:

KsAWWA – Water For People
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To pay by card, register online:

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QUESTIONS?

Martha Silks
(816) 853-9474
martha.silks@lrewater.com

MARK YOUR CALENDAR...

Annual KWEA / KsAWWA Joint Annual Conference

2021

Hotel Topeka at City Center
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August 31 – September 2

2022

Hotel Topeka at City Center
& Stormont Vail Events Center
August 30 – September 1

AWWA Annual Conference

June 12-15, 2022 San Antonio, TX

June 11-14, 2023 Toronto, Canada

June 10-13, 2024 Anaheim, CA

June 8-11, 2025 Denver, CO

June 21-24, 2026 Washington, D.C.

June 13-16, 2027 San Diego, CA

KsAWWA Annual Meeting

August 31, 2021