

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND
WATER EQUITY PRIVATE SECTOR
ALLIANCE - PARTNERING WITH
UTILITIES

PNWS-AWWA Section Conference
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TOPICS



1. Introduction
2. Private Sector's Role
3. Challenge – Reaching Communities
4. Challenge – Meaningful Partnerships
5. Challenge – Changing Workforce
6. Open Discussion / Questions

Intro -

- Mentoring
 - Find a mentor, be a mentor
- Other programs are available
 - Duke WILD (Water Innovation Leadership Development)
 - WEF WLI (Water Leadership Institute)
 - WEF/AWWA YP Summit



The screenshot shows the US Water Alliance website. At the top left is the logo, which consists of a circular graphic of blue and green lines next to the text "US Water Alliance". In the top right corner, there is a blue square with a white hamburger menu icon. Below the logo is a wide banner image of two people sitting on a wooden dock by a lake at sunrise or sunset, with mist rising from the water. To the left of the main content area is a vertical navigation menu with the following items: "Vision and Mission", "Our Work", "Our Members", "Become a Member", "Board of Directors", and "Leaders Circle". The main content area features the heading "Mentoring Connections Program" in a large, bold, black font. Below the heading is a paragraph of text: "The US Water Alliance's Mentoring Connections Program develops the six essential One Water leadership capacities through one-on-one mentoring relationships between Rising Professionals and exceptional leaders in the field. The program is open to all US Water Alliance members."

The Private Sector's Role in Partnering with Water Utilities To Advance Environmental Justice



Victoria Johnson
Global WBG Equity Director
HDR



Lindsay Birt, Ph.D.
Client Solutions Manager
Xylem

Private Sector Leaders Alliance

in partnership with

The National Association of Clean Water Agencies



Walt Walker, PE
Associate/Water Equity
Practice Leader
Greeley and Hansen



Andrew Nishihara
Civil Engineer
Stantec

- All are entitled to safe drinking water and clean waterways at an affordable rate
- Water utilities serve as anchor institutions
- Projects planned, designed, and executed to maximize community benefit

- Andy Kricun



<https://bit.ly/3L54r98>

Challenge: Reaching Communities

Approximate Number of Public Water Systems and Private Wells

Oregon

- 2,500; 23% private wells (pop. 1,000,000)

Washington

- 4,100; 10% private wells (pop. 750,000)

Idaho

- 2,000; 20% private wells (pop. 400,000)

California

- 8,000; (3,000 community, 5,000 NTNC/TNC)
- 5% private wells (pop. 2 million)

Funding availability
Resilience to affordability



- Large systems
- Small systems /
Special districts
- Private systems

***Nationally, 97% of 150,000 public water systems serve less than 10,000 people
("Small Drinking Water Systems Research," USEPA, 2020)***

Challenge: Reaching Communities

PFAS:

- Mass DEP offered complimentary sampling for public
- 500,000 people on private systems
- Partnership with UMass for analytical services
- Prioritization of private wells and people served in communities that are not predominately served by public water systems.

Nitrate:

- Oregon free well water quality test (Northern Morrow and Umatilla Counties)



Circuit Rider:

- Short-term, limited technical assistance providers
- Assistance for small communities / water systems; can include NT / NCs

Funding Opportunities:

- Grant Assistance
- Loan Applications
- Non-profits, community-based organizations, and private sector partnerships

What can we do to help prevent systems from falling through the cracks?

Challenge: Meaningful Partnerships

AWWA (2019) Guidebook:

- Contracting and procurement
 - Increase contracting services with local, small, minority-and woman-owned businesses
 - **Beat goals**
 - Plan or policy to increase procurement of goods from local, small, minority-and woman-owned businesses
 - **Contractor outreach**
 - Enlisting smaller on-call contracts for services that could be more accessible to small businesses
 - **Thoughtful CIP**
 - Integration of community benefits to bidding selection process
 - **Workforce or volunteer opportunities**
 - Growth and development opportunities for contractors and service providers
 - **Train your competitor partner**

A Water Utility Manager's Guide to Community Stewardship



American Water Works
Association

Dedicated to the World's Most Important Resource®

Challenge: Meaningful Partnerships



Recovering
Stronger

Transforming Water Management Post COVID-19

Catalyzing Community-Driven Utility
Consolidations and Partnerships

US Water Alliance (2022):

- Consolidations – California Context
 - Target of 200 consolidations in next few years
 - Defining the boundaries
 - Underserved or systems who were historically left behind
 - Seat at the table
 - Cost risk vs. health / water quality vs. autonomy
 - Leverage community-based organizations, third-party facilitators, State powers

Challenge: Meaningful Partnerships

- July 2019 - Senate Bill 200
 - Annual budget allocation of up to \$130M through 2030 (\$1.3B, total)
- Program identifies public water systems and domestic wells that are considered at-risk to help with project / funding prioritization
 - 2/3 of systems are located in low-income / disadvantaged communities
- Local community groups and non-profits unable to effectively administer or advocate with drastic rise in funding
- State also facing staffing challenges



Board



Programs



Drinking Water

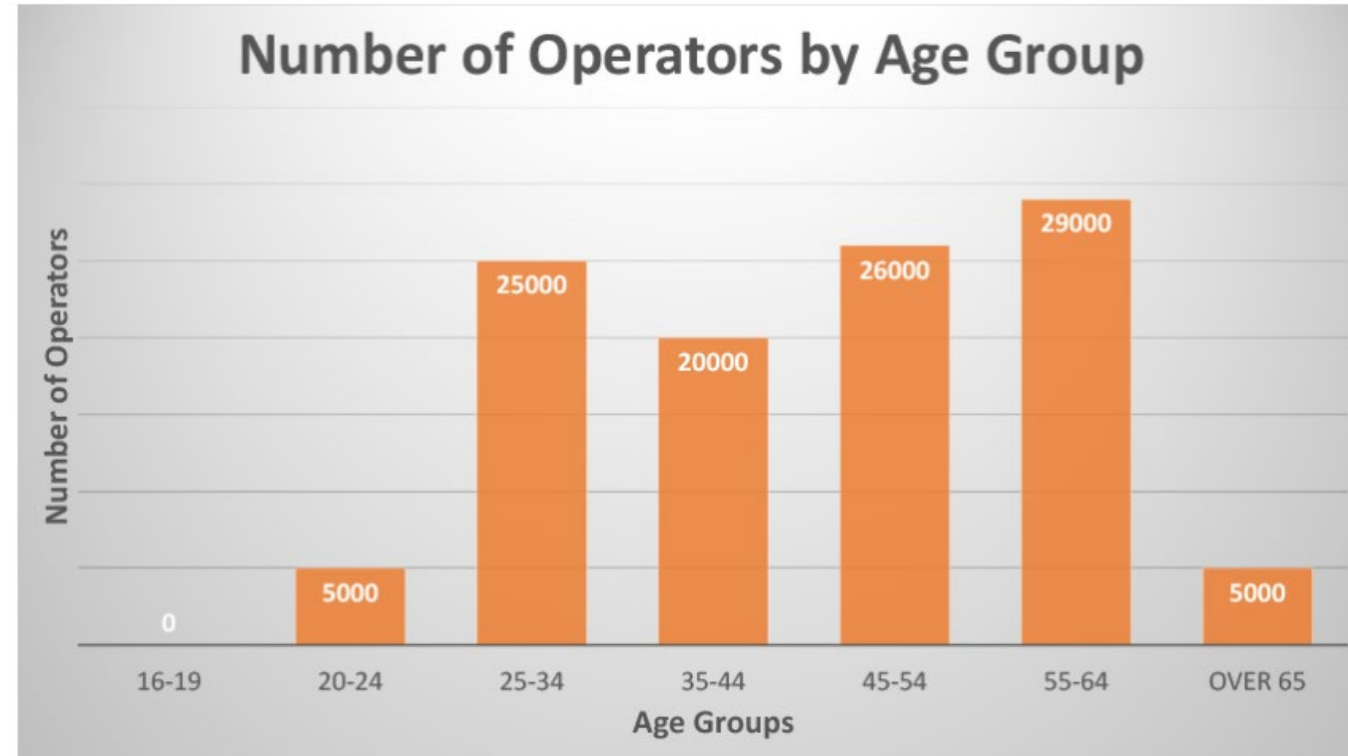


- New legislation passed (2021) to allow for consultants to help with administration, technical assistance, and better support community-based organizations
 - Helps to speed process for assistance

2022 - 934,000 people impacted by failing water systems; down from 1.6 million in 2019

Challenge: Changing Workforce

- Extreme loss of experience
 - 1/3 of workforce will have exited this decade
 - Disproportionately impacting smaller communities
 - Positions going unfilled
- Closing the gaps
 - Push towards diversity and inclusion
 - Non-traditional recruitment
 - Accelerated opportunities



Operator demographics per Bureau of Labor Statistics 2019 estimate

Westech blog (November 2020)

Over 3.2M baby boomers retired in 2020 and 3.3M in 2021, which was over double who had retired in 2019

Challenge: Changing Workforce



- Staffing support
 - Owner's representatives / City engineers
 - Short or long term
 - Additional seasonal / temporary help
 - Succession planning
- Privatization or consolidation of operations
 - May be able to tap larger pool of workers to reduce utility burden
 - Shared services between utilities and cross-training
- Technology / design improvements
 - AMR / AMI systems
 - Membrane filtration / automated treatment systems
 - Accessible equipment and work requirements
 - Accessible facilities
 - Remote operations
 - Community benefits

Due to staffing shortages or cost pressures, often the fallback is to “do more with less”.

RECAP



- A lot of resources available and still being developed
- Opportunities to make a difference in non-traditional ways
- Knowledge is power, continue to share and stay curious

DISCUSSION

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