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The Official Publication of the Water Environment Association of Utah

DIGESTED news

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ACTIVE STEWARDS OR PASSIVE OCCUPANTS?

*Reflections from the 2026
Environmental Measurement Symposium*



Bowen Collins & Associates
c/o Wyatt Andersen
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INSIDE:

2026 Mid-Year Conference Preview | New Membership Engagement Corner

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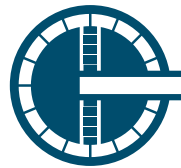
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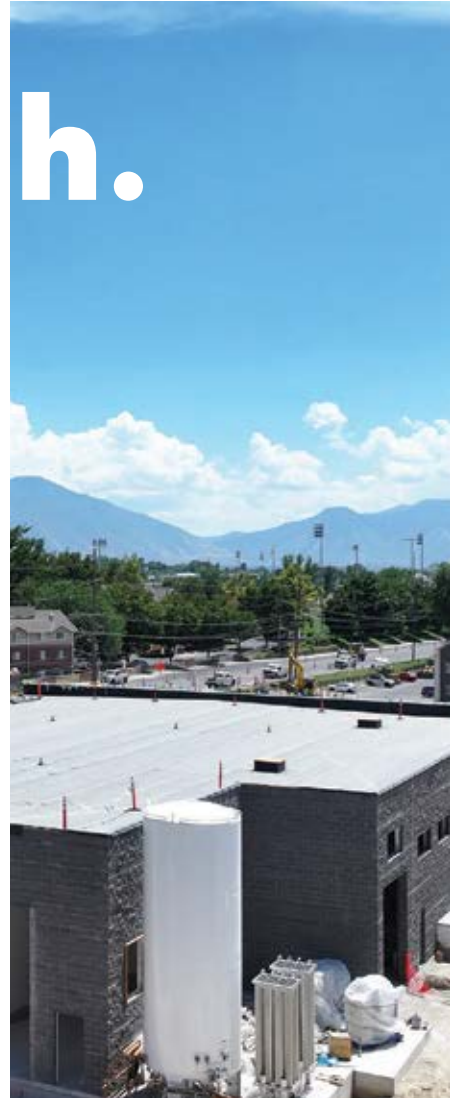
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Fall Update: Cast Your Vote and Celebrating WEAU Volunteers



Gary Vance

I hope everyone had a great summer. After a chaotic and way too hot last couple of months, I love the slow descent back to the normal routine... leaves turning, cooler days and long nights, kids back in school, and of course the WEAU Engineering Symposium and Mid-Year Conference on the horizon.

Please be on the lookout for an email regarding a vote on amendments to WEAU's Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws – it may already be in your inbox by the time you read this! The WEAU Board has embarked on an effort to amend these documents – updating them for current practices within the organization, submitting for WEF approval, and clarifying the 501c.3 nonprofit status of the association for tax purposes. The amendment of both documents requires notification of, and voting by the association membership. Per the governing documents, the amendments will be adopted if two-thirds of the voting members accept the proposed amendments. Please review the documents and vote! Feel free to reach out to myself or anyone on the Board if you have any questions or concerns.

“ Please be on the lookout for an email regarding a vote on amendments to WEAU's Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws.



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“Through WEAU’s robust network, you will find mentorship, professional growth, and a passionate community dedicated to protecting our environment. We invite you to get involved, join a committee, and grow with us.

Please also review the new Membership Engagement Corner in this issue of *Digested News*. The purpose of the Membership Engagement Committee is to build a stronger, more connected WEAU community. Be on the lookout for upcoming member surveys, social events, photo contests, prize opportunities, and more!

I also want to take a moment to thank you all for your hard work and dedication – both to this organization and also the industry as a whole.

I’ll never forget that when Covid hit and the world seemed to shut down, very few people recognized the incredible work our

public works employees were doing out on the front lines, maintaining essential services and working in the field while most of us were quarantined and stuck in endless Zoom calls and Teams meetings. As one sewer collection system operator told me: “Covid don’t want what I’ve got!” Every day, your expertise and vigilance protect our public health and Utah’s waterways by keeping our collection and treatment systems running safely under all conditions.

This is a 100% volunteer organization. Our volunteers are the true engine of WEAU. From organizing our conferences, managing technical sessions, organizing

trainings of all types, engaging students and young professionals to develop our next generation of leaders, organizing social/networking events, conducting leadership training, and countless other behind-the-scenes tasks, your dedication builds the framework for our entire industry’s success.

Through WEAU’s robust network, you will find mentorship, professional growth, and a passionate community dedicated to protecting our environment. We invite you to get involved, join a committee, and grow with us.

I hope to see many of you at the Bees game and other WEAU events coming up! 



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Useful Computer Programs to Learn for a Recent Engineering Graduate in the Wastewater/Water Industry

By Wyatt Andersen



Hello *Digested News* Readers, Nearly eight years ago I entered a job as an entry level consulting engineer in Utah's wastewater and water industry. At the time, I had limited knowledge as to what computer programs I would be using daily and what computer programs would help me succeed in this industry. I wanted to take a moment to reflect on what I now perceive to be useful computer programs for a recent engineering graduate just entering the industry.

The following is a list I have compiled, and feel is worth sharing:

- Microsoft Excel – Whether you are working as a consultant in the private sector or working in the public sector, Excel is a tool that you will use on a weekly, if not daily, basis. As engineers, we deal with a lot of data and calculations, and Excel is a fundamental tool that excels in those functions.
- ArcGIS Pro – When I first started in the industry, ArcMap was the most widely used GIS platform. Only a couple of years later, ArcGIS Pro became the latest and most powerful GIS option. Transitioning from ArcMap to ArcGIS Pro came with a learning curve but it has been well worth it. This GIS program is highly useful for design projects as well as planning projects.
- Autodesk Civil 3D – Some engineering consulting firms have a separate drafting department, while others like to have entry level engineers learn how to draft for their own design projects. The most common drafting program is Civil 3D, so I recommend that entry level engineers become very familiar with this computer program.
- HEC-RAS/HMS – The HEC programs are useful tools for hydraulics and hydrology in storm water projects. They can be applied to both storm water design projects and planning projects.
- Autodesk Infoworks ICM or Aqunuity AquaTwin Sewer – When I first entered the industry, Innovyze's InfoSWMM was the primary software I used the most for sewer collection system hydraulic modeling. The times have changed in the past year or so and now the two most common computer programs for this function are Autodesk's Infoworks ICM or Aqunuity's AquaTwin Sewer. Our company has been leaning towards AquaTwin Sewer because the capabilities are very similar to InfoSWMM.

Hopefully these tips and insights are useful to recent graduates that are finding their way through the water and wastewater industry. [DNI](#)



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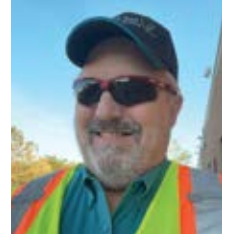
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CONSTRUCTION

Committee Chair Spotlight



Spencer Parkinson

This quarter, I would like to spotlight Spencer Parkinson.

Spencer works for South Valley Water Reclamation Facility as their Pretreatment Director. Spencer has worked there for 28 years, the last 17 of which have been in pretreatment. Spencer first started in wastewater at the Hyrum plant as an operator and was there for 18 months. He has a Grade IV Treatment certification, as well as a Grade IV Collections certification.

Spencer has worked and is currently working with several committees, including the awards committee, 5'S committee, and pretreatment committee. He has recently been asked to take a position as one of WEAU's board members. He also works for Rural Water as an instructor in wastewater.

Spencer has an associate's degree in environmental technology, along with a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in public administration. He helped develop a training program for South Valley's operations, and the basis of it was part of getting his master's degree. He also served in the Marine Corps as a Lance Corporal for six years, where he went to the Aleutian Islands.

He has been married for three years but has known his wife for over 30 years. They have five daughters, four stepsons, and four grandkids. Spencer currently lives in



Pocatello, Idaho, where he travels back and forth to work during the week. He has also earned a 5th degree black belt, works as an instructor for first aid and CPR, a firearms instructor, a range safety officer, and is even an ordained minister. Spencer has been a scout leader for 12 years and enjoys working with Legos. [Bn](#)



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Collections College: Building Better Operators, Stronger Systems, and a Smarter Wastewater Workforce

How WEAU's hands-on certification training continues to raise the bar for collections professionals across Utah.

Every spring and fall, the Water Environment Association of Utah sponsors Collections College, an eight-week training program designed to help wastewater collections operators, managers, and other industry professionals prepare for the Collections Certification Exams. Meeting once a week for full-day instruction, the course gives attendees the structure, study discipline, and practical review they need to approach certification with confidence.

But Collections College is more than an exam-preparation class. It is a place where field experience meets classroom instruction, where operators sharpen their understanding of collection system operations, and where professionals gain tools they can take directly back to their crews, utilities, and communities.

A Practical Education for Essential Work

Collections systems are often out of sight, but they are never out of importance. The daily work of maintaining wastewater infrastructure protects public health, preserves water quality, and keeps communities functioning. Collections College recognizes that responsibility and gives operators a focused environment to strengthen the knowledge behind the work.



The course walks participants through the core concepts of wastewater collection operations, including system maintenance, pumps and lift stations, safety, math, troubleshooting, and exam review. By combining technical instruction with real-world discussion, the training helps connect textbook concepts to the decisions operators make in the field every day.

Confidence Through Preparation

One of the greatest accolades of Collections College is its ability to turn uncertainty into confidence. Certification exams can

be intimidating, especially for operators balancing study time with demanding work schedules. The weekly format gives participants time to absorb material, ask questions, practice calculations, and build momentum over the course of the program.

Attendees leave better prepared for the exam, but the larger accomplishment is professional growth. A successful course does not simply produce test-takers; it produces operators who understand their systems more deeply, communicate more effectively, and approach their responsibilities with greater skill and pride.

Learning From Those Who Know the Work

A defining strength of Collections College is the practical experience brought by its instructors. The best training in this field comes from people who understand both the regulations and the realities – people who know what it means to respond to problems, maintain infrastructure, and keep service reliable in every season.

That experience gives the class a conversational, problem-solving quality.





Students are not only memorizing material; they are learning how experienced operators think through challenges. They hear examples, compare practices, and gain perspective that cannot be captured by a study guide alone.

A Benefit to Operators, Utilities, and Communities

The value of Collections College reaches far beyond the classroom. Operators who strengthen their knowledge contribute directly to safer work practices, more

efficient maintenance, better decision-making, and improved protection of public resources. Utilities benefit when staff members are better trained, more confident, and better prepared to meet certification requirements.

Feedback and Comments

Here are some comments from recent Collections College attendees:

I wanted to let you know I passed the Collections II with an 84! Thank you for running such an excellent class. Thanks again.

My experience with Collections College was exceptional. The course strikes a rare balance between technical depth and practical application. The material is highly relevant to real world collection system operations, and you did an excellent job connecting regulatory requirements to what actually happens in the field. The structure of the course kept the pace engaging while still allowing time to fully understand complex concepts.

What stood out most was the question-and-answer format with live feedback in real time. That immediate interaction made the material stick and allowed us to correct misunderstandings on the spot. Your approach to teaching math was especially effective, clear, systematic, and easy to follow even for those who may not use those skills every day.

The course manual was another highlight. It is well organized and practical, making it easy for working professionals

to study efficiently while balancing a full schedule. It is a resource I will continue to use beyond the course.

I will also never forget the countless videos, pictures, and laughs you integrated into each week's presentation. It made the course engaging and memorable. Do not forget to include some of those classic Ken Kerri cartoon images in the next run.

I also want to share a personal result that speaks to the impact of the program. I passed the Collections Grade 4 exam last week with a 90, which honestly surprised me. Before taking this course, I had taken the exam twice with minimal preparation and scored in the low to mid 60s each time. This 8-week Collections College made a measurable difference in my understanding and performance.

I would strongly recommend Collections College to anyone involved in wastewater collections, whether they are newer to the field or experienced professionals. It is one of the most useful and well executed training programs I have attended. This course is absolutely worth the time and investment. I have

been in the wastewater industry for over 15 years and have attended countless trainings and courses, and this one stands out. Thanks again for the opportunity to be part of it.

Your well put together study manual/course book is excellent in flowing with the Ken Keri readings and helpful for flowing through those. The different mini practice tests and the large full size trial run test was amazing for getting a trial run before you take your test; knock the nerves out of the way somewhat.

I would also point out that your instructing style is excellent in breaking down the math and problem solving of the question to the answer that the question is most likely looking for even if you don't know what the solution is; but kind of know what it might be. Plus, it was fun, good learning environment. Great class, would do it again!

I really enjoy your class and it has helped me out a ton on my tests.

PASSED! Thank you! Your class helped a lot; the course is working!



For many attendees, the course also creates lasting professional connections. Collections College brings together people from different systems and agencies who share similar challenges. Those conversations build a stronger professional network and reinforce the idea that wastewater work is a shared public service mission.

Raising the Standard

The lasting accolade of Collections College is simple: it makes good operators better. It supports certification, strengthens field knowledge, encourages professionalism, and reminds participants that their work matters. In an industry where reliability is measured by what the public rarely sees, programs like

Collections College help ensure that essential systems remain in capable hands.

As WEAU continues to sponsor the program each spring and fall, Collections College stands as an investment in people – the operators, managers, and professionals who keep Utah's wastewater collection systems running safely, efficiently, and responsibly. [DRI](#)



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A Day in the Life of a Wastewater Collections Operator

Wastewater collections operators are the invisible backbone of municipal public health. While treatment plant operators manage the purification process, collections operators maintain the vast underground network of pipes, manholes, and pump stations that carry waste away from homes and businesses. These are just a few of the things that a collections operator may be faced with from day to day.

Operators spend a significant portion of time clearing blockages and performing preventive maintenance. They operate heavy-duty vacuum and jetting trucks to flush and clean the sewer system. High-pressure water nozzles blast away grease, roots, and debris, while powerful vacuums remove the material from the downstream manhole to prevent future clogs.

Operators use closed-circuit television robotic mainline cameras to visually inspect the pipe conditions. They do this by driving motorized, camera-equipment through sewer mains to inspect pipe integrity. Operators analyze live video feeds to pinpoint structural defects, cracks, root intrusions, and illegal taps, logging the data into GIS mapping software.

“ Collections operators maintain the vast underground network of pipes, manholes, and pump stations that carry waste away from homes and businesses.

When inspections reveal broken pipes, operators shift into construction mode. Depending on the depth and location, they perform traditional open-trench excavations to cut out and replace failed pipe sections. Alternatively, they may use trenchless technologies, such as pipe bursting or cured-in-place pipe lining, to fix lines without disrupting surface traffic.

Operators routinely inspect manholes to ensure structural safety. Operators check for signs of corrosion from hydrogen sulfide gas, missing bricks, shifting rings, and frame damage. They also look for evidence of surcharging, which indicates downstream bottlenecks or capacity issues. Maintaining the infrastructure often requires hands-on masonry skills. Operators apply specialized mortars to rebuild crumbling manhole benches, channels, and walls. They also use cement to reset heavy manhole frames and adjust rings to match changing street grades during paving projects.

Inflow and Infiltration occurs when groundwater leaks into the sewer system through cracked pipes and joints, which can lead to overloaded treatment plants. Operators often stop this by injecting chemical grouts into joints using specialized packing tools. The chemicals expand upon contact with moisture, sealing the pipe from the outside.

Because wastewater cannot always flow downhill, collection networks rely on pump stations to pump wastewater uphill to where it can continue to flow by gravity. Operators visit these stations daily or weekly to pull and clear clogged pumps, test backup generators, clean wet wells of grease blankets, and ensure float switches trigger properly.

Often these lift stations rely on complex electrical systems. Operators troubleshoot pump control panels, read electrical schematics, and test voltage and amperage using multimeters. They maintain and program Variable Frequency Drives, alternating relays, and SCADA systems send alerts during power or pump failures.

Let's stop thinking of collections as “just cleaning lines” – there is so much more to the job than that. It takes grit, technical skill, and round-the-clock dedication to keep our cities running. Thank you to every collection operator out there. Without you, our world would be a big pile of mess! 

John Woodrow, Collections Committee, CDSO

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Collections Certification Quiz

1. A 54-inch storm sewer flowing half full, at a velocity of 1.35 feet/sec, will discharge how much flow into a creek?
 - A. 13.85 MGD
 - B. 10.73 MGD
 - C. 1.85 MGD
 - D. 6.92 MGD
2. How far must shoring extend above the top of the excavation?
 - A. 3 feet
 - B. 24 inches
 - C. 18 inches
 - D. 1 foot
3. A degreasing agent is added to a 16.0 feet diameter wet well that is 18.4 feet deep. 4.5 lbs is required for every 1-foot² of surface area. If the degreaser weighs 8.5 lbs per gallon and has a concentration of 13.8 mg/l, how many lbs of chemical must be added to the well?
 - A. 16,639.5 lbs
 - B. 0.78 lbs
 - C. 6,764.3 lbs
 - D. 904.3 lbs
4. In a trench deep enough to require a ladder(s), the worker must not be required to travel more than _____ to get to the ladder.
 - A. Three steps
 - B. 10 feet
 - C. 25 feet
 - D. 15 feet
5. What is the detention time in hours in a tank measuring 312 feet x 97 feet x 86 feet, if the tank receives 945,023 GPH?
 - A. 22.97 Hours
 - B. 2.75 Hours
 - C. 20.60 Hours
 - D. 12.36 Hours
6. Any excavation over _____ must have a ladder for the worker to get in and out of the trench.
 - A. 25 feet long
 - B. 4 feet deep
 - C. 8 feet deep
 - D. 3 feet wide
7. A wet well is 9 feet deep by 21 feet in diameter. When the pump is not running, the water rises 33.4 inch in 3 min 14 sec. If the level falls 4.5 inch in 10.3 min while the pump is running, what is the pump rate in GPM?
 - A. 2,135 gpm
 - B. 2,323 gpm
 - C. 2,380 gpm
 - D. 6,801 gpm
8. Given the data below, what is the most likely cause of the lift station problem?
 - i. DATA: Wet well inlet is normal
 - ii. Well drops normally when pump #1 is running.
 - iii. Well level rises slowly when pump #2 or pump #3 is running; run amperage is the same for all three pumps.
 - iv. One of the pump motors turns backwards when off. Level system is reading correctly.
 - v. Electrical controls are all in automatic.
 - A. Pumps #1 & #2 are air-bound
 - B. Pump #1 check valve stuck open
 - C. Either pump #1 or #2 is wired backwards
 - D. Check valve on pump #3 is clogged
9. Sewer "A" has 106,000 people at 95 GPCD. Sewer "B" has 94,875 people at 100 GPCD. Sewer "C" has 88,756 people at 90 GPCD. What percent of the flow is due to I&I if the total plant flow is 43.00 MGD?
 - A. 43.1%
 - B. 64.1%
 - C. 51.2%
 - D. 35.9%
10. An engineer must approve any trench shoring design above _____.
 - A. 4 feet deep
 - B. A water line
 - C. 50 feet in length
 - D. 20 feet deep 

Answers

1. A, 2. C, 3. D, 4. C, 5. C, 6. B, 7. B, 8. B, 9. D, 10. D

Operator Spotlight: Anthony Rizzuto – Building a Career Through Dedication

For Anthony Rizzuto, a recommendation from a family friend turned into a career he never expected – and one he continues to enjoy more than a decade later.

Anthony joined Central Valley Water Reclamation ten years ago after being referred by a friend's father who worked at the facility. What started as an opportunity to explore a new profession, quickly became a rewarding career in the wastewater industry.

Beginning as a wastewater operator, Anthony gained valuable hands-on experience throughout the treatment process while developing a strong understanding of plant operations. Today, he serves as the Designated Responsible Charge DRC in the Maintenance Department, overseeing the plant's headworks process. In this role, he helps ensure the critical first stage of treatment operates safely, efficiently, and reliably, supporting the entire treatment process downstream.

Anthony also enjoys challenging himself professionally. In past years, he has represented Central Valley Water Reclamation by competing in the Operations Challenge, an event that showcases the knowledge, technical skills, and teamwork required in the wastewater profession. The experience has been both rewarding and a great way to connect with other operators while continuing to sharpen his skills.

When he's not at the plant, Anthony's priorities are simple – his children and the outdoors. He enjoys spending time with his kids and taking advantage of everything Utah has to offer. Whether he's camping, riding dirt bikes, fishing, boating, or hitting the slopes when Utah delivers a good winter, Anthony appreciates every opportunity to get outside and make memories with his family.



Looking back on the last decade, Anthony is grateful that a simple referral led him to Central Valley Water Reclamation. What began as a job has grown into a fulfilling career built on learning, responsibility, and service to the community. His dedication to both his profession and his family makes him a valued member of the Central Valley team and a great example of the people who keep our wastewater systems running every day. [Dn](#)



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PWO Golf Tournament Brings the Water Industry Together

The Professional Wastewater Operators (PWO) Golf Tournament, hosted by the Water Environment Association of Utah (WEAU) at beautiful Thanksgiving Point, was once again a tremendous success. With another outstanding turnout, this year's event showcased what makes Utah's water and wastewater community so special – a shared commitment to protecting our water resources while building lasting professional relationships and friendships.

WEAU extends its sincere appreciation to every team that participated in this year's tournament. Your enthusiasm, sportsmanship, and continued support made for a fun and memorable day on the course. Events like this are possible because of the incredible involvement of operators, engineers, technicians, managers, suppliers, and industry professionals who believe in strengthening our profession through collaboration.

A special thank you goes to the many WEAU members, volunteers, sponsors, and industry partners whose generosity and dedication continue to make this tournament possible. We are also grateful to the outstanding companies throughout Utah and beyond that support WEAU and its mission of promoting cleaner, safer water through education, professional development, and industry leadership. Your partnership helps strengthen the wastewater profession and benefits the communities we all serve.

Congratulations to this year's tournament champions:

- Brad Conder – Insituform Technologies, LLC
- Drew Geiger – Horrocks Engineers
- Zak Bedard – Granger-Hunter Improvement District
- Trevor Andra – Magna Water District

Their teamwork and outstanding play earned them the top spot in a field filled with talented competitors. Congratulations to the winning team on a well-deserved victory!



While the competition is always enjoyable, the true success of the PWO Golf Tournament is the opportunity it provides for professionals across the industry to connect, share experiences, and celebrate the important work being done every day to protect Utah's water resources.

As another successful tournament comes to a close, we're already looking forward to next year. Mark your calendars – the PWO Golf Tournament will once again be held during the same week at Thanksgiving Point. We hope to see returning teams and many new faces as we continue this great tradition of fellowship, friendly competition, and support for WEAU.

Thank you again to everyone who participated, volunteered, sponsored, and supported this year's event. Together, we are making a lasting impact on our industry and advancing WEAU's mission of cleaner, safer water for generations to come. [WEAU](#)



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Maintenance Quiz

1. **What is the primary purpose of UV disinfection in wastewater treatment?**
 - A. Remove suspended solids
 - B. Kill or inactivate microorganisms
 - C. Increase dissolved oxygen
 - D. Remove nutrients
2. **UV disinfection works by:**
 - A. Heating the water
 - B. Adding chlorine
 - C. Damaging the DNA/RNA of microorganisms
 - D. Filtering bacteria out
3. **Which water quality factor most reduces UV disinfection effectiveness?**
 - A. High dissolved oxygen
 - B. High turbidity
 - C. High pH
 - D. Low temperature
4. **What is the most common wavelength used for UV disinfection?**
 - A. 185 nm
 - B. 254 nm
 - C. 365 nm
 - D. 450 nm
5. **Why should quartz sleeves be cleaned regularly?**
 - A. To cool the lamps
 - B. To increase water pressure
 - C. To remove fouling that blocks UV light
 - D. To improve chlorine residual
6. **Which of the following can accumulate on quartz sleeves and reduce UV transmission?**
 - A. Sand only
 - B. Calcium and iron deposits
 - C. Chlorine gas
 - D. Activated sludge
7. **UV lamps should typically be replaced:**
 - A. Only when they burn out
 - B. According to the manufacturer's recommended operating hours
 - C. Every 10 years
 - D. Once a month
8. **A UV intensity sensor should be:**
 - A. Ignored if the lamps are on
 - B. Cleaned and calibrated as recommended by the manufacturer
 - C. Painted black
 - D. Replaced every week
9. **Before performing maintenance on a UV unit, the operator should:**
 - A. Increase flow
 - B. Lock out and tag out electrical power
 - C. Add chlorine
 - D. Turn on all lamps
10. **Which personal protective equipment (PPE) is commonly required during UV maintenance?**
 - A. Safety glasses and gloves
 - B. Sandals
 - C. Hearing protection only
 - D. Respirator only
11. **What does FOG stand for in wastewater treatment?**
 - A. Filtration of Gas
 - B. Fats, Oils, and Grease
 - C. Fuel, Oil, and Gas
 - D. Flow of Groundwater
12. **Why is FOG removal important in wastewater systems?**
 - A. It increases water temperature
 - B. It prevents pipe blockages and treatment problems
 - C. It changes the color of water
 - D. It adds oxygen to wastewater
13. **Which device is commonly used to remove FOG from restaurant wastewater?**
 - A. Sand filter
 - B. Grease trap
 - C. Clarifier
 - D. Chlorinator
14. **What happens when excessive grease enters sewer pipes?**
 - A. Water flows faster
 - B. Pipes become stronger
 - C. Grease can solidify and cause blockages
 - D. Wastewater becomes cleaner
15. **Which source contributes the most FOG to municipal wastewater?**
 - A. Rainwater runoff
 - B. Residential kitchens and food service establishments
 - C. Drinking water plants
 - D. Cooling towers
16. **How often should grease traps generally be cleaned?**
 - A. Only when they overflow
 - B. According to a regular maintenance schedule before they become full
 - C. Once every 10 years
 - D. Never

17. Which wastewater treatment process primarily removes floating oils and grease?

- A. Primary clarification (skimming)
- B. Disinfection
- C. Aeration only
- D. Sludge digestion

18. What is a common sign that a grease trap requires cleaning?

- A. Increased water pressure
- B. Slow drainage and unpleasant odors
- C. Clearer wastewater
- D. Lower water temperature

19. Which practice helps reduce FOG entering the sewer system?

- A. Pouring hot grease down the drain
- B. Scraping food waste into the sink
- C. Collecting used cooking oil for recycling or proper disposal
- D. Flushing grease with detergent

20. What environmental problem can occur if FOG is not properly removed from wastewater?

- A. Improved aquatic habitat
- B. Increased oxygen levels in rivers
- C. Sewer overflows and water pollution
- D. Reduced wastewater volume 

Answers

1. B, 2. C, 3. B, 4. B, 5. C, 6. B, 7. B, 8. B, 9. B, 10. A, 11. B, 12. B, 13. B, 14. C, 15. B, 16. B, 17. A, 18. B, 19. C, 20. C



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A Tale of Two Plants

By Josh Matson

The WEAU Young Professionals group welcomed the summer season by hosting two facility tours that provided members with firsthand exposure to both drinking water and wastewater treatment operations. These tours offered valuable learning opportunities, industry networking, and a closer look at the infrastructure that serves our local communities.

In May, WEAU and AWWA Young Professionals joined forces to host a tour of Metro Water's Little Cottonwood Canyon Water Treatment Plant in Cottonwood Heights. The event brought in one of the largest tour attendances the YP group has hosted to date with a head count of around 50 participants. Attendees learned about the facility's history and its role in delivering drinking water to the Salt Lake Valley.

Metro Water staff provided an engaging overview of the treatment process and shared insights into the challenges of operating a large regional water treatment facility while continuing to provide reliable drinking water service to a growing population. The tour gave attendees greater appreciation for the operations and maintenance efforts required to support Utah's water infrastructure while also giving insight into their upcoming expansion efforts.

The summer tour series continued in July with a visit to the Orem City Water Reclamation Facility. Young professionals from across the industry gathered for a lunch presentation followed by a comprehensive facility tour. Since the first modern treatment



facility began operation in 1958, the plant has undergone continual improvements and expansions to maintain high-quality wastewater treatment while serving Orem's growing community.

During the visit, attendees learned about the facility's treatment processes, operational challenges, and ongoing efforts to meet regulatory requirements while protecting public health and the environment. The tour offered valuable insight into the critical role wastewater operations play in the overall water cycle and highlighted the dedication of their staff working behind the scenes every day.

Together, these tours showcased two essential sides of Utah's water industry, from treating and delivering clean drinking



water to reclaiming and responsibly treating wastewater. The WEAU Young Professionals group would like to thank Metro Water and Orem City staff for sharing their time and expertise. Events like these continue to provide meaningful opportunities for professional development, technical learning, and strengthening connections across Utah's water community. [D11](#)





2026 MID-YEAR CONFERENCE PREVIEW

November 4, 2026 | 8:00am to 4:00pm

Utah Cultural Celebration Center in West Valley City, UT

JOIN US AT THE MID-YEAR CONFERENCE

The Mid-Year Conference is just around the corner, and it is an event you do not want to miss! Whether you are a seasoned expert in your field or only starting your journey, the conference has something valuable to offer for everyone. Our Mid-Year Conference is packed with informative sessions and engaging discussions on all topics wastewater. You will leave with actionable takeaways and new connections that will propel your career forward.

The 2026 Mid-Year conference will be held on Wednesday, November 4th from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM at the Utah Cultural Celebration Center in West Valley City, UT. The technical program will include session for managers, operators, collections, board members, engineers, students, and any others interested in the water and wastewater in Utah.

The Water Environment Association of Utah is dedicated to the professional growth of its members and the preservation and enhancement of the water environment.

**WE LOOK FORWARD
TO SEEING YOU THERE!**

TICKETS

\$135.00 Member Registration

\$100.00 Earlybird rate before November 1st

\$220.00 Guest Registration

\$165.00 Earlybird rate before November 1st

\$0.00 Student Registration

CONTINUING EDUCATION

Are you a certified operator in need of continuing education units? You can earn up to 0.5 CEU by attending the WEAU Midyear Conference.

Are you a professional engineer? It is required that you complete a minimum of 30 hours of professional continuing education within a two-year renewal cycle. The time you spend in sessions at the conference counts toward your continuing education requirement.

MID-YEAR YP SUMMIT

The fourth annual WEAU Mid-Year YP Summit will be held on Tuesday, November 10th. Visit the YP Summit event page for additional information. [DN](#)

CONFERENCE TECHNICAL PROGRAM

TIME	PLAZA BALLROOM A	PLAZA BALLROOM B	PLAZA BALLROOM C	SUITE C
8:00 - 8:30	REGISTRATION AND CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST			
TOPIC	PROCESS CONTROL	WASTEWATER FACILITIES	COLLECTION SYSTEMS	SHART TANK
8:30 - 9:10	Beyond the Number: How Laboratory Data Becomes Better Process Control <i>Rodney Shields – North Davis Sewer District</i>	When Lagoons Hit Their Capacity: Real-World Solutions for Capacity and Compliance <i>Jordan Wanlass – Triplepoint Environmental</i>	Municipal Grease and Odor Control Training <i>John Harrell – Helix Laboratories</i>	SHART TANK
TOPIC	RESIDUALS & BIOSOLIDS	WASTEWATER FACILITIES	COLLECTION SYSTEMS	
9:20 - 10:00	Impact of Biochar on PFAS Transformation during Biosolids Composting <i>R Ryan Dupont – Utah Water Research Laboratory, USU</i>	DAS What I Call Treatment: Leveraging Process Intensification for Capacity and Cost Savings <i>Kelley Florence – Hazen and Sawyer</i>	Large Diameter Cleaning and Recycling <i>Mackenzie Curis – Salt Lake City Public Utilities</i>	
10:00 - 10:20	BREAK			
TOPIC	PROJECT DELIVERY	WASTEWATER FACILITIES	NUTRIENT REMOVAL	WEF 101
10:20 - 11:00	Driving True Costs Out of the Procurement Process through State Cooperative Contracts <i>Jeff Smith – Azuria</i>	Microplastics – How Managing a Small Particle Can Become a Macro-Challenge <i>Susan Spore – Brown and Caldwell</i>	Decision Framework for Secondary Process Intensification Technology Selection at WRRFs <i>Joe Rohrbacher – Hazen and Sawyer</i>	Making Waves <i>Sarah Ward – WEAU</i>
TOPIC	PROJECT DELIVERY	WASTEWATER FACILITIES	NUTRIENT REMOVAL	LEADERSHIP
11:10 - 11:50	Proactive Engagement During Construction of WTP Personnel is Key for Best Results <i>Elias Bishop – Skyline Electric Company</i>	Selecting Clarifier Mechanisms to Meet SLC WRF Needs <i>Grant Davies – AECOM</i>	Aerobic Granular Sludge Implementation – Lessons Learned During Piloting and Startup <i>Gregory Pace – Hazen and Sawyer</i>	Wastewater Laboratory 'A Day In the Life' <i>Latchmie Edwards – North Davis Sewer District</i>
12:00 - 1:20	LUNCH			
TOPIC	RECLAMATION AND REUSE	WASTEWATER FACILITIES	RESIDUALS & BIOSOLIDS	OPERATIONS
1:30 - 2:10	Potable Reuse Projects: From Start to Finish <i>Tyler Nading – Jacobs</i>	Advancing Tertiary Wastewater Treatment: The Role of Cloth Disc Filters <i>Nick Ellis – Nexom</i>	Before It Scales: Proactive Phosphorus Management <i>Tess Laffer – AECOM</i>	Wastewater Operator Certification Database Update <i>Tessa Scheuer – Utah Division of Water Quality</i>
TOPIC	WATER QUALITY	PROCESS CONTROL	RESIDUALS & BIOSOLIDS	OPERATIONS
2:20 - 3:00	PFAS Panel with DWQ <i>Katie Reams – J-U-B Engineers</i>	JBID Process Updates: Ammonia Aeration and a Journey Back to Bio P <i>John Gallagher – JBID</i>	A Comprehensive Approach to Biosolids Management: Risk, Recovery, and Resilience <i>Alicia Gilley – Black & Veatch</i>	Cheers to the PAOs! A Make-shift Fermenter and Beer Waste for the Champions of Phosphorus Removal <i>Dustin Gloor – Central Valley Water Reclamation Facility</i>
3:00 - 3:20	BREAK			
TOPIC	RECLAMATION AND REUSE	PROCESS CONTROL	RESIDUALS & BIOSOLIDS	STUDENT PRESENTATION
3:20 - 4:00	New Reuse Operating Permits <i>Andrew Pompeo – Division of Water Quality</i>	Using a Bench Top Reactor to Optimize BNR <i>Sherry Sheffield-South Valley Water Reclamation Facility</i>	Composting... in Tanks – Intensifying Digesters for better VSR and Class A Biosolids <i>Matthew Williams – Thermal Process Systems</i>	TBD

Active Stewards or Passive Occupants?

Reflections from the 2026 Environmental Measurement Symposium

By Rodney Shields, Chemist/Microbiologist – North Davis Sewer District, rshields@northdavissewer.gov



During the 2026 Environmental Measurement Symposium (EMS), held in downtown Houston, nearly 600 environmental professionals from across the country gathered under a timely theme: **“Strengthening Public Trust in Science.”**

Presentations explored emerging technologies and challenges throughout our industry, from AI-assisted laboratory information management systems (LIMS) and advances in PFAS analysis to laboratory quality, data defensibility, and strengthening

public confidence in the science behind environmental decision-making.

Despite the diversity of topics, one idea seemed to connect them all: **the work we perform every day matters far beyond our laboratories, treatment plants, and facilities.**

One presentation that particularly influenced my thinking was delivered by Dr. Adam Gushgari, Senior Director of Emerging Contaminants at Eurofins Environment Testing. His presentation, *“The Unintended*

Consequence of the Plastic Revolution,” examined both the extraordinary benefits plastics have provided society and the environmental consequences we are only beginning to fully understand.

Plastics have revolutionized medicine, sanitation, food preservation, technology, manufacturing, and modern life. Yet, as our analytical instruments become increasingly precise and our methods more sensitive, we are discovering just how ubiquitous some contaminants have become. So this

“Those of us working in the water industry have been entrusted with something remarkable. Much of our work occurs quietly and without recognition, yet its consequences flow downstream, both literally and figuratively, to people we may never meet. That is an enormous responsibility. It is also an extraordinary opportunity.

then raises an uncomfortable question:

Who is responsible?

Perhaps responsibility is not simply about assigning blame for the past. Perhaps it is about deciding what we do with the knowledge we possess *now*.

Active Stewards or Passive Occupants?

As I reflected on the symposium, one question continued returning to me: **Are we active stewards of our environment, or merely passive occupants of it?** For those of us working in water and wastewater, this question carries special significance. Whether we consciously recognize it every day or not, our profession gives us the opportunity to protect one of the most valuable resources on Earth: **Water!**

Every sample collected correctly matters. Every instrument calibrated properly matters. Every defensible analytical result matters. Every operational decision based upon good data matters. Every time someone chooses integrity over convenience or curiosity over complacency, **it matters!**

The public may never know the analyst who produced a critical result, the operator who recognized something was wrong, or the employee who proposed a better way of doing something. But collectively, those decisions protect communities.

That is stewardship! And stewardship extends beyond our job descriptions. It is also expressed through the influence we have within our organizations, families, neighborhoods, and communities.

Meaningful change does not always begin with legislation, massive infrastructure projects, or someone in a position of authority. Sometimes it begins with one person asking: **Can we do this better? What does the data actually tell us? How can we communicate this more effectively? What can I do?**

I like to think of responsibility quite literally as our **‘ability to respond.’** We have the ability to improve procedures,

mentor newer professionals, educate our communities, communicate science in ways people understand, build partnerships, and bring forward new ideas. Public trust in science cannot simply be demanded; **it must be earned through transparency, competency, consistency, and integrity!**

The Influence of One

It is easy to believe our individual influence is too small to matter. Yet one laboratory employee can identify a better process. One manager can create a culture where quality matters. One educator can inspire a future scientist. One community member can begin an initiative. **One person can initiate positive change!** Our individual actions may seem small, but collectively they become culture, and culture shapes how organizations and communities behave.

The challenges facing the water profession will require good science, reliable

data, innovation, collaboration, and perhaps most importantly, **people who care enough to act.**

Those of us working in the water industry have been entrusted with something remarkable. Much of our work occurs quietly and without recognition, yet its consequences flow downstream, both literally and figuratively, to people we may never meet. That is an enormous responsibility. It is also an extraordinary opportunity.

So perhaps we should occasionally ask ourselves something greater than, **“Am I doing my job?”** Instead, ask: **How am I making a difference through my profession? How am I making a difference in my community? What influence am I having on the people around me?**

And when future generations look back upon the choices we made with the knowledge and opportunities available to us today, what will they see? **Active stewards... or passive occupants?** 



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Treatment Plant – Over 5 MGD
Lagoon – Discharging
Lagoon – Non-Discharging
Laboratory
Collections System – Under 5 MGD
Collections System – Over 5 MGD

OUTSTANDING PROGRAM AWARDS

Pretreatment Program
Biosolids Program
Safety Program

OUTSTANDING INDIVIDUALS AWARDS

Treatment Plant Operator – Under 5 MGD
Treatment Plant Operator – Over 5 MGD
Collections System Operator – Over 5 MGD
Collections System Operator – Under 5 MGD
Supervisor – Under 5 MGD
Supervisor – Over 5 MGD
Pretreatment Specialist
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Wildfire, *of a Sort...*

By Mike Chandler

This summer has been a striking lesson in contradictions. Watching hundreds and thousands of acres of some of my favorite wild places go up in smoke hurts. There is the suffocating smoke in the air combined with the ache of fond memories burned to ash. I teeter between the dashed hope of hiking and skiing in the short term and the knowledge that nature has an amazing capacity for recovery.

For all of us in the world of water, we are caught calculating and constantly re-calculating the balance between the present and the past whether it be the agricultural roots of our past or the

mind-boggling demands and associated benefits of a high-tech future. In Utah, there is a seemingly endless pull of a climate primed for alfalfa production, outdoor recreation, high quality of life, and people who love it so much they all want to move here. On the whole, WEAU Members and other wastewater affiliated organizations have never produced reclaimed water in such high quantity or high quality. And yet, a threatened Great Salt Lake, and harmful algal blooms (HABs), PFAS, and microplastics say, "It is not enough."

I hope that if the images conjured in the preceding paragraphs have left you

smiling and sad, or sentimental and mad, that you will recognize in those emotions a need. We live in a time when big issues stir big emotions. Like all those who faced such challenges before, we are left with a choice. Will we step forward or shrink back? Will we shoulder a portion of the load, or leave it to others to make up the difference?

In the months preceding the publication of this article, we will have completed several of the modules in our WEAU Leadership Series. When we make the decision to step forward, as opposed to shrinking back, sometimes it can feel daunting to consider, "Where should I take



“When we undertake to lead ourselves and others, we leave that rudimentary beginning and must begin strategic thinking. We leave behind the simplicity and familiarity of checkers for the complexity and uncertainty of chess.”

to a particular course of action, the ability to think and articulate clearly is crucial to influencing others.

History shows us that people will submit to people that they fear. They will fall in line behind people who stir their collective outrage. But manipulation is a poor substitute for **integrity and reliability**. Teams and individuals willingly follow people they trust and respect. Integrity is one of the strongest predictors of team performance, not just leader performance.

High stress environments expose leaders. Those who stay composed make better decisions and inspire confidence.

Self-regulation under pressure is a challenging discipline to undertake. Impulse management in a world of instant gratification requires a high degree of emotional maturity.

Early in our adult life, and maybe even early in a new career, regardless of our age, we spend a period acclimating to our surroundings. We learn the lingo and familiarize ourselves with the lay of the land. But, when we undertake to lead ourselves and others, we leave that rudimentary beginning and must begin **strategic thinking**. We leave behind the simplicity and familiarity of checkers for the complexity and uncertainty of chess.

For each of the past four years, the WEAU leadership training has been attended by a cohort of brave individuals who have been willing to be challenged and pushed to grow in ways that were uncomfortable and vulnerable. Watching as some of those people have taken the challenge to make the little, sometimes painfully daily, changes and submit to the process of improvement has left me with a profound degree of respect and admiration. I leave each of the leadership sessions inspired to be a little better myself.

These sorts of personal changes and improvements don't make news headlines. But make no mistake: it is these people, you and your peers, who answer the call to step forward who will make the world a better place. And that too, is wildfire, of a sort. 

that first step?” And “how can I lead myself in a way that will encourage good things and good people to follow?” No training can provide all of the answers, but sometimes we ask the right questions. We give an opportunity to connect with the right people, and, in the end, make the world a little better place.

In this year's series of classes, we have focused on a couple of key issues that any individual in any organization at any level can control. Those issues are *learning agility, social effectiveness, integrity and reliability, self-regulation under pressure, and strategic thinking*. Throughout the 9-module series, we integrate

these issues into a wide range of common leadership skills and traits applicable in both an individual and team setting.

Why are these key issues emphasized? For the following reasons:

Learning agility is a measure of behavioral flexibility. By contrast, IQ is a measure of processing power. Leadership is not about being “smart”; increasingly, it is about being able to adapt.

Leaders who lack **social effectiveness** rarely succeed, even if they are brilliant. Whether new leaders are creating psychological safety within their organization or persuading elected officials



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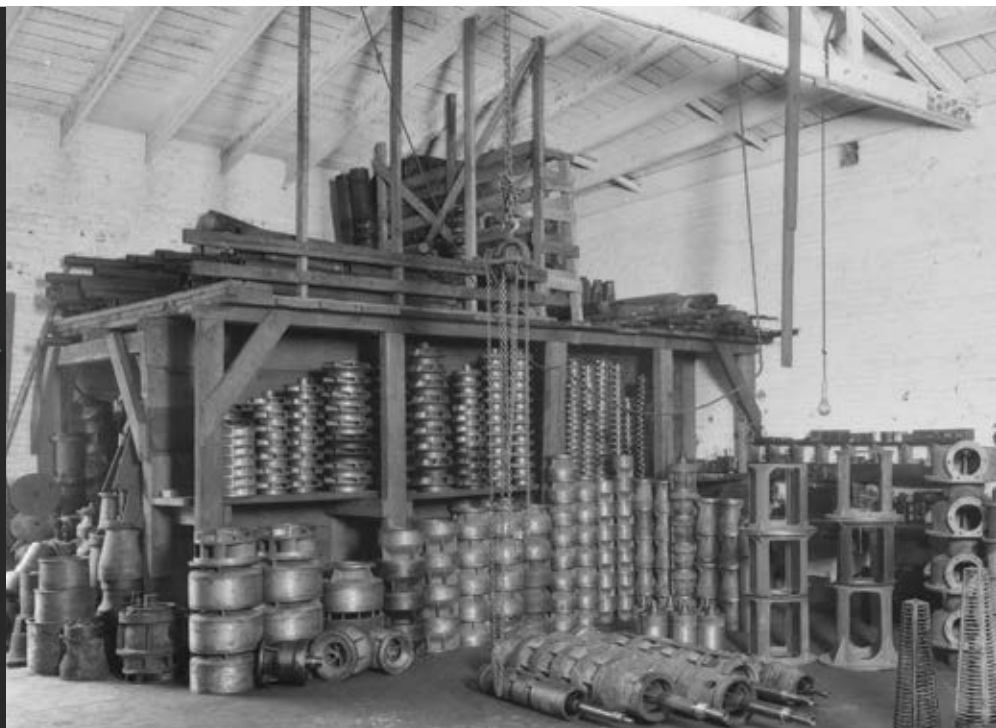
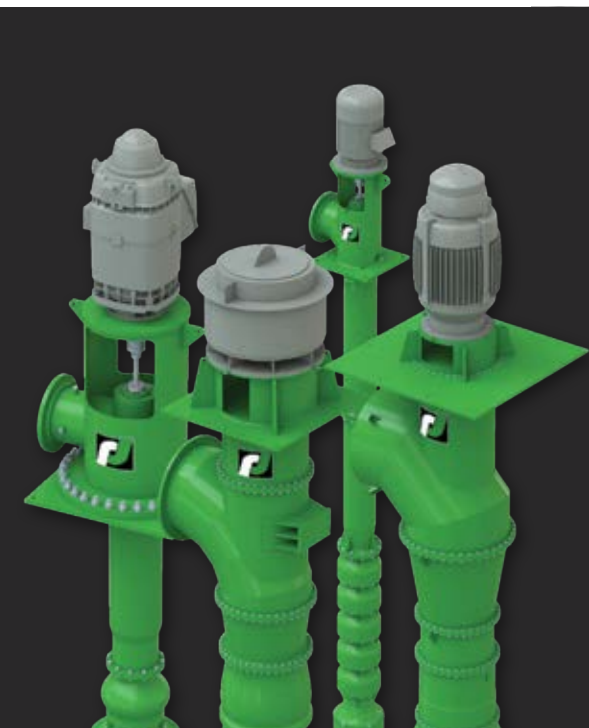
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Welcome to the New Membership Engagement Corner!

As the name suggests, we are a brand-new section in *Digested News*, with articles and opportunities shared in each issue by the new WEAU Membership Engagement Committee. Our committee has one main goal: helping both new and long-standing members get more involved and maximize their membership in WEAU.

We are excited to introduce the membership engagement committee members:

- Taylor Byrum
- Lauren Schmidt
- Colby Willoughby
- Courtney Mobilian
- Jordan Wanlass

Each of us brings a different background and set of ideas to the table, and we are all eager to help build a stronger, more connected WEAU community.

Keep an eye out in the coming months for upcoming member surveys, social events, and a few friendly competitions. One of our first initiatives is a WEAU photo contest, where members can submit photos of themselves and their peers wearing their WEAU swag out in the wild. Contest information, rules, and deadlines are coming very soon! There will also be gift card prizes for the contest winners. In the meantime, if you have ideas for events or feedback on how WEAU can better serve you, don't hesitate to reach out to any of us! [dm](#)



FIND THE HIDDEN GOLDEN SLUDGE SHOVEL!*

Each quarter, *Digested News* has this golden sludge shovel icon hidden somewhere in the content of its pages.

Be the first to find it and email the editor (digestednews@weau.org) the correct page number to **win an Amazon Gift Card – now \$50!**

Emails should include:

- Subject: I found the golden shovel
- Correct page number
- Your name and work address

Winners will be notified directly and named in the next issue of *Digested News*.

*For those of you new to WEAU, volunteers who give notable time and service to WEAU are awarded a “5S” golden lapel pin shovel. With that award, they become members of the **Select Society of Sanitary Sludge Shovelers**. WEAU is always looking for volunteers and maybe one day, you too can become a 5S member. [dm](#)



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WEFMAX 2026

By Nate Cloward

This year, several members of the WEAU team had the opportunity to attend WEFMAX events. The three in-person events were held in Montreal, Pittsburgh, and Bend. This was a positive experience for all who participated, and there was so much value in attending these conferences. I would like to share some key takeaways from each event and highlight a few individuals who presented at them.

The theme for Montreal, Canada, was MA to MA collaboration. The key talking points included:

- Empowering the workforce
- Legislative and advocacy focus
- Strengthening the federation
- Addressing challenges

It is pointed out how critical it is to invest in workforce development, focusing on early onboarding of new leaders and knowledge transfer.

Pittsburgh, PA was the next host city and the one I personally attended. The theme was Operator Engagement. There were many great ideas shared, here are a few that stood out to me:

- A regulator roundtable, giving an opportunity for operators to have an open discussion with regulators.



- Exhibitors bringing pumps and equipment to the annual conference and having operators show how to operate and maintain it as a track.
- A mentorship program where assigned pairs meet bi-weekly to discuss topics written specifically for the curriculum.
- The use of social media to better connect with the next generation of operators.

Marlo Davis presented here, highlighting our Ops Challenge program, showing some of the difficulties that we've faced and how we have grown our program into what it is today.

The last in-person event was held in Bend, Oregon – *Channeling the Undercurrents: Bringing Energy to the Surface*. The focus here was establishing a reliable pipeline for continued workforce development, empowering underrepresented groups, and sustaining the highly engaged professional community that we already have. These goals can be achieved through various models such as PNCWA's WAVE program which uses skill-building workshops, WEF's Inflow Toolkit which helps introduce emerging leaders to opportunities, WEFThinks for small group deep-dives, and Women of Water to promote women in leadership.

Both Lauren Schmidt and Sarah Ward presented here in Bend, demonstrating great examples of the type of leadership we promote with WEAU.

I found WEFMAX to be an amazing platform, providing an opportunity to learn about new ideas, successes, and industry challenges. For me, it was exposure to a whole new way of thinking. But learning ideas is not enough. Implementation is key if we are to make lasting changes that truly benefit our organization. Specifically, we can launch a new program, ARCH (Apprenticeship and Recruitment for Career Horizons), modeled after WEF's InFlow or PNCWA's WAVE programs with support from a WEF MA grant. We can also expand our awards program to recognize additional achievements, including Woman of Excellence and Committee of the Year. We can evaluate our committee and council structure to better facilitate new initiatives, improve collaboration, and break down internal barriers. Together, these efforts will help strengthen, support, and prepare us for future growth.

Thank you for taking the time to read this brief summary of the WEFMAX events that occurred this year. I hope you can see the value that we do, and why we continue to support participation in WEFMAX. 

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That's the annual WEFTEC Operations Challenge, taking place in New Orleans, September 26–30.

But for the teams participating, the talent on display is anything but a game. This high-energy, fast-paced competition offers a chance to learn new skills, meet people in different roles, and prepare participants to become future utility supervisors, directors, and superintendents.

This year, Sulzer is sponsoring three teams through the Water Environment Association of Utah (WEAU) for the challenge: Wasted Gas, representing the Central Valley Water Reclamation Facility (CVWRF) in South Salt Lake; Deuces, representing South Valley Water Reclamation Facility (SVWRF) in West Jordan; and the Wasatch All-Stars, a composite team featuring top talent from facilities across the state.

While each team, of course, wants to bring home a win, they collectively share a desire to put Utah on the map and proudly represent their communities, facilities, and the profession they believe deserves more visibility.

THE UNINTENTIONAL CAREER

People do not necessarily grow up dreaming of a career in wastewater, but if the members of the Utah Operations Challenge teams are any indication, the work quickly wins them over.

When asked how they got started in the industry, nearly every member of the three teams explained they basically stumbled into it. For Cory Zeman, mechanic IV at SVWRF,



the job was close to home and meant he could stop traveling: “When a job opened up here, I jumped on it, and I’ve been here ever since (18 years later).”

After graduate school, Lauren Schmidt, a project engineer at J-U-B Engineers and a Wasatch All-Star, wanted to find a facet of environmental engineering where she could apply her passion for chemistry. “Water seemed to be the right choice, and I fortunately found a wastewater treatment design job.”

Regardless of how they got here, their enthusiasm for wastewater operations is clear – and best summed up by Chase Barron, mechanic I at SVWRF and Deuces rookie, “This is the happiest I’ve ever been at work.”

MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

If people think about wastewater – and that’s a big if – most believe it is monotonous work, surrounded by nasty, raw sewage. These teams will be the first to admit that, sure, there are some smells, and yes, it can get dirty. But they



love it because it challenges them, offers variety daily, and ignites a passion for learning.

Every day is different. Sometimes there are problems to solve or equipment to fix. Water volumes change with the seasons and the weather. "I love this job so much because it's so broad," explained Zeman. "I don't do one thing. One day, I'm fabbing something. The next day, I'm working on the AC. Then, I might be rebuilding a motor. I never get bored. It's all over the place, and my mind loves that."

There's a mechanical side and a scientific side to every wastewater treatment plant. Facilities must adhere to strict environmental and safety requirements to ensure the water discharged from the facility is safe. "Most people don't think twice about wastewater, but it's a lot more in-depth than people realize," offered Deuces competitor Jonathan Baranowski, Safety and Security Coordinator, SVWRF. "There's a vast knowledge from the mechanical side to the process side to microbiology for our lab."

To keep a wastewater treatment plant running, there's a lot to learn. Enter the WEFTEC Operations Challenge. This competition rewards wastewater professionals' breadth of knowledge and skills and serves as a source of pride.

A CELEBRATION OF EXPERTISE AND TEAMWORK

The events of the Operations Challenge are not arbitrary. Each one gives competitors a chance to demonstrate and sharpen skills

directly tied to their careers. "Not only is it fun to compete, but the amount of studying and effort we put into the challenge actually pays dividends to our jobs," stated Wasted Gas team member Jeff Bullock, Direct Responsible Charge operator at CVWRF. He credits his first year of participation in the Operations Challenge for helping him pass his Grade 3 wastewater license exam.

Wasatch All-Star Gauge O'Brien, mechanic at Salt Lake City Water Reclamation Facility, believes the challenge makes him more connected to his profession: "It gives you a great sense of community in the wastewater world. You get to meet so many people that you'd probably never talk to within your day-to-day."

Each team's competitive spirit is clearly a driving force. After all, there are significant bragging rights at stake. "We want to do better than the other two Utah teams, and they want to do better than us," explained Jay Nowell, electrician at CVWRF and Wasted Gas team member. "But we're also there to root them on."

Cody Downard, Collections Operator at Snyderville Basin Water Reclamation Facility and coach of the Wasatch All-Stars, seconded that sense of camaraderie and appreciation: "The respect that we have for each other. It's a great team-building thing to compete."

WORK THAT MATTERS

Participation in the Operations Challenge isn't just about mastering difficult skills or beating the competition. The competitors

are proud to represent their facilities and communities because they know why their skills matter.

Wastewater professionals do essential work that most people never think about. "It's a really challenging job, and it's really rewarding when you see the environmental impact of what we do," stated Bullock. "We treat around 50 million gallons of wastewater a day on average at CVWRF. The environmental impact that we would have if we didn't do what we do would just be devastating."

The WEFTEC Operations Challenge gives these important people a stage. "There's a sense that you're needed, this job is needed, and you're contributing to society," explained Kyle Catano, Operator IV at SVWRF and Deuces team member. "I love being in wastewater. Most people think it's icky and gross, but it's not. It's awesome. My mind is tested every day, and it's a great field."

For a few days in September, Operations Challenge will put these typically behind-the-scenes professionals in the spotlight. But their expertise, teamwork, and dedication to their communities are on display every day, even if the world doesn't know to look. "People in the water industry are really special," said Schmidt. "They wouldn't always agree, but they save lives every day with what they're doing." 

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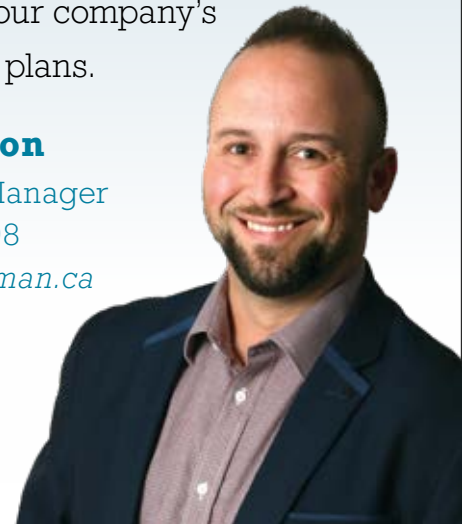
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