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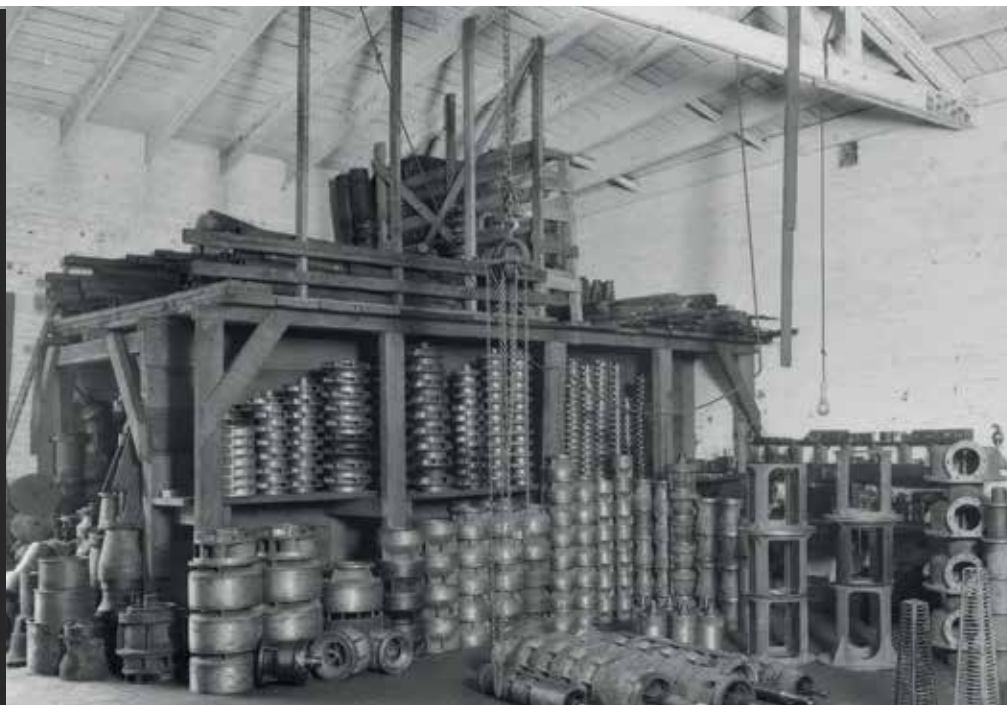
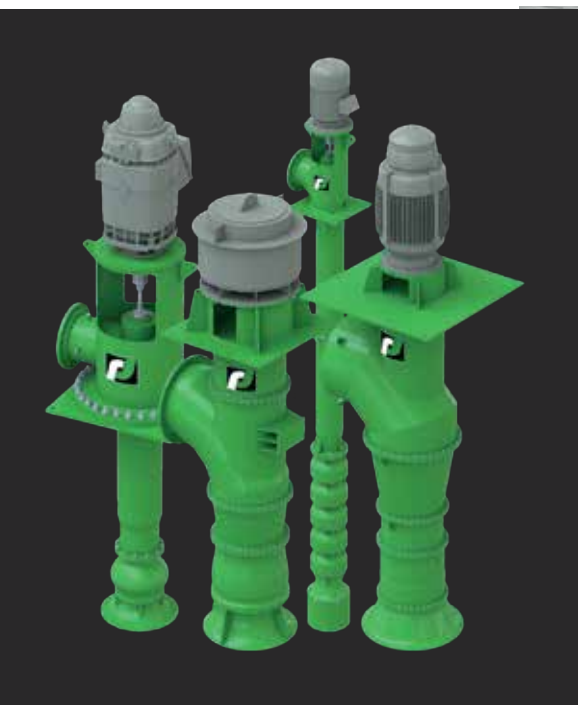
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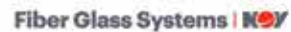
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FEATURES

WEAU Annual Conference Summary.....	29
MA Leaders Steering Challenges into Successes.....	40
Foaming Out Forever Chemicals.....	42



Departments

President's Message.....	8	Maintenance	22
Editor's Message	10	Young Professionals.....	24
Collections Corner.....	15	Lab Corner	27
PWO	18	News and Notes.....	47
Treatment Corner.....	20	Advertiser Product & Service Center....	50

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Becoming More Involved is Rewarding



Gary Vance

First off, I want to thank WEAU membership for electing me President of this great organization. I'm really looking forward to the year ahead and what we can accomplish together. One of my goals this year is to improve transparency and increase volunteer opportunities. Like anything in life, you get out of it what you put into it. It is very rewarding to become more actively involved with an organization like WEAU, both personally and professionally. We have added a volunteer opportunities page to the website: https://weau.org/Volunteer_Opportunities. Vacancies are updated continuously, so please keep an eye on them!

Additionally, we are always looking for feedback on how we can improve the organization. The Board frequently creates new committees to try to fill gaps. Last year, to improve collaboration with the regulatory community, we implemented a new Water Quality Partnership committee. The purpose of this committee is to encourage purposeful communication, engagement, and understanding between POTWs and regulators, including site visits and plant tours for continued education for all parties. We also created a Historian position as a means to digitally document WEAU activities, awards, and trainings moving forward. In recent years, we've created the Water Reuse Committee, Digital Water Committee, Mentor Recognition Committee, Social Media Committee, and also implemented subsidized Leadership Training for our members. We are a thriving organization and we couldn't do it without your input, recommendations, and suggestions for improvement!

New this year are the Auditing Committee and the Long Range Planning Committee. We also want to improve Membership Engagement to include welcome materials/SWAG for new members. In addition, some existing committees are still a work in progress, and we

are always looking for new members and ideas. I invite you to review the committee charters on the website and reach out to me or anyone else on the Board you want to get more involved in shaping WEAU: https://weau.org/WEAU_Committees.

One of my primary goals as President is to invest in and grow the next generation of professionals who are passionate about water quality. We need to engage students early and often about our industry, starting in high school or even earlier. One of my vivid memories growing up is touring a wastewater treatment facility while in high school in Boise; this experience opened my eyes to a world I never knew existed. I know that many Utah POTWs already open their doors to students as a means to educate the public. We also need to engage students at our local Universities, as today's job market is competitive and other industries are hiring some of our most qualified students. Our Student Activities Committee has done a great job interfacing with students and prospective/future WEAU members. This year, through an alliance with Global Water Stewardship, we had 2 student design teams compete in the WEAU Student Design Competition for the first time in many years. The U of U team will be competing at WEFTEC in New Orleans this fall. The USU team will travel to Costa Rica to pitch their solution directly to the impacted community. Finally, we can't forget about our Young Professionals - they bring creative ideas and endless enthusiasm to our organization. The WEAU YP committee is chock full of opportunities, networking events, trainings, and site tours to facilitate relationship building and knowledge transfer as they climb their way up the ladder.

Overall, I am super excited about where things are at here at WEAU and also where we are going. We have an amazing Board with active committees and an engaged membership, and I'm looking forward to great things this year in collaboration with all of you. [DRI](#)



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Tips and Insights for a Recent Engineering Graduate in the Wastewater/Water Industry

By Wyatt Andersen

Hello *Digested News* Readers,
With nearly eight years of experience as a consulting engineer in Utah's wastewater and water industry, I wanted to take a moment to reflect on some of the tips and insights I've gained – advice that I believe would be valuable to a recent engineering graduate just entering the industry.

The following is a list that I have compiled and feel the need to share:

- **Broaden Your Skillset** – As a new engineer who has little to no experience in the wastewater/water industry, you will likely be working on projects under one or two project managers. Often, these managers focus on similar projects year after year, which can limit the variety of their experience. I recommend reaching out to other project managers within your organization who work on different types of projects. Offering to help with a project of theirs can expose you to new projects and expand your skillset, which will be useful for a junior or senior engineer.

“I wanted to take a moment to reflect on some of the tips and insights I've gained – advice that I believe would be valuable to a recent engineering graduate just entering the industry.”

- **Don't Delay Professional Licensure** – Taking the Professional Engineer (PE) exam can be daunting, but it is a critical step toward becoming a successful engineer in this industry. I recommend taking the PE exam within a year or two after graduating from your university. This way, the breadth of knowledge gained during your time at the university will help you pass the exam. The longer you wait, the more the knowledge that was acquired in university will diminish.
- **Ask Questions** – You will likely need to ask a lot of questions to junior and senior engineers when you first start working on projects. There will be many times when you feel stuck on a project task and don't know what the next step is. While some recent graduates will be reluctant to ask questions and just spin their wheels, others immediately turn to coworkers to ask questions. I think a healthy balance between the two is the most successful approach.
- **Get Involved in Industry Organizations** – As a recent graduate engineer, I was not aware that WEAU or WEF existed for the first few years of my career. I was also not aware that there are so many other organizations that you can be involved in, like Rural Water Users, APWA, AWWA, ASCE, etc. I have been involved in the WEAU Young Professionals for a few years now, and it has been a great experience to network with other young professionals in the industry. I recommend getting involved with a professional organization early in your career and joining the Young Professionals if that opportunity is available.
- **Follow Through to Completion** – In the early stages of your career, you may work on a half dozen to a dozen different projects at the same time, making it hard to be fully invested in each of the projects. It is beneficial for your development as an engineer to stay invested in each of your projects until the end of the project, rather than just treating the project like you are completing tasks.

Hopefully, these tips and insights are useful to recent graduates who are finding their way through the wastewater/water industry. 



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DELIVERING OREM'S LONG-PLANNED VISION FOR WATER REUSE

BY ARCHER WESTERN CONSTRUCTION

The Orem Water Reclamation Facility (OWRF) Tertiary Reuse Project represents the culmination of decades of planning by the City of Orem to expand sustainable water management and reduce reliance on potable water supplies. Archer Western joined the effort to construct the final phase of that vision, a tertiary treatment facility that upgrades already-treated effluent to irrigation-quality reuse water while reducing phosphorus discharges to Utah Lake.

Orem was an early adopter of water reuse in Utah, receiving regulatory approval in 2003 to produce up to 9,600 acre-feet per year (8.3 MGD) of Type I reuse water. In 2001, the City invested in a purple-pipe distribution network to support future reuse applications and reduce demand on drinking water supplies. Construction of the tertiary reuse facility began in April 2023, completing the infrastructure needed to fully realize the City's long-term reuse strategy.

The completed facility treats secondary effluent through a cloth-media filtration system consisting of three filters with a nominal pore size of 10 microns. The system is designed for an initial capacity of 7.5 MGD and can be expanded to 15 MGD in the future. During reuse operations, filtered water is disinfected with sodium hypochlorite using a 30-minute contact time and then stored for irrigation use. When operating in lake-discharge mode, the facility employs chemical phosphorus removal through chemical dosing and rapid mixing prior to blending the treated flow back into the plant's effluent stream, significantly reducing nutrient loading to Utah Lake.

The reuse program provides environmental benefits beyond phosphorus removal. During irrigation season, diverting treated effluent for reuse reduces phosphorus loading to the lake while supplying nutrients that can supplement fertilizer requirements for irrigated turf. At current demand levels, the system delivers approximately 1.5 MGD of reuse water to Sleepy Ridge Golf Course, Lakeside Sports Park, the facility's own grounds, and soon Springwater Park. External users typically irrigate overnight between 9 p.m. and 5 a.m. Collectively, the program conserves an estimated 175 million gallons of drinking water annually.

Although funding had been secured by 2018, the COVID-19 pandemic significantly



altered project affordability. Escalating material and equipment costs created a substantial budget gap, requiring a collaborative value-engineering effort between Archer Western, the City of Orem, and Water Works Engineers. The team conducted a comprehensive review of the design to identify cost-saving opportunities while preserving the project's original scope and performance objectives. Combined with additional federal grant funding, these efforts brought the \$21 million project back within budget and ultimately ended \$180,000 under budget.

Procurement challenges proved to be one of the project's defining obstacles. Long lead times for critical electrical equipment – including switchgear, motor control centers, and variable-frequency drives – extended well beyond historical norms, with some components requiring more than a year from order to delivery. Similar challenges affected the project's fiberglass-reinforced mortar (FRM) piping system. The corrosion-resistant piping, manufactured by a limited number of suppliers, required early commitment to quantities and custom fittings due to extended fabrication schedules.

Commissioning presented another unique challenge. While the reuse facility was designed to process 7.5 MGD, initial startup conditions allowed only approximately 0.5 MGD of flow until system optimization was complete and irrigation demand increased. Operating large reuse pumps at a fraction of design flow limited circulation within the chlorine contact basin, resulting in extended hydraulic retention times that complicated both mixing and disinfection control. Additional complexity arose from intermittent ammonia loading at

the bioreactor influent, requiring flow-paced breakpoint chlorination based on ammonia measurements collected hours upstream of much of the biological treatment process. Once irrigation season began in March 2026 and reuse flows increased, operators gained the volume necessary to fully optimize chemical dosing and process performance.

Throughout construction and startup, the project benefited from a highly collaborative delivery approach. The City of Orem, Water Works Engineers, and Archer Western worked closely together to address constructability concerns, manage procurement challenges, and resolve operational issues during commissioning. That partnership helped maintain project momentum despite significant external challenges and contributed to the successful delivery of the facility.

On March 10, 2026, the City of Orem celebrated the project's completion with a ribbon-cutting ceremony. Today, a golf course, parks, and recreational facilities in the community are irrigated with recycled water rather than valuable drinking water, while phosphorus loading to Utah Lake is reduced through advanced treatment processes.

For Archer Western, participation in the OWRF Tertiary Reuse Project reflects the value of infrastructure investments that deliver lasting environmental and community benefits. By helping expand water reuse, protect Utah Lake, and conserve potable water resources, the project provides a sustainable solution that will serve Orem and its watershed for generations to come. •



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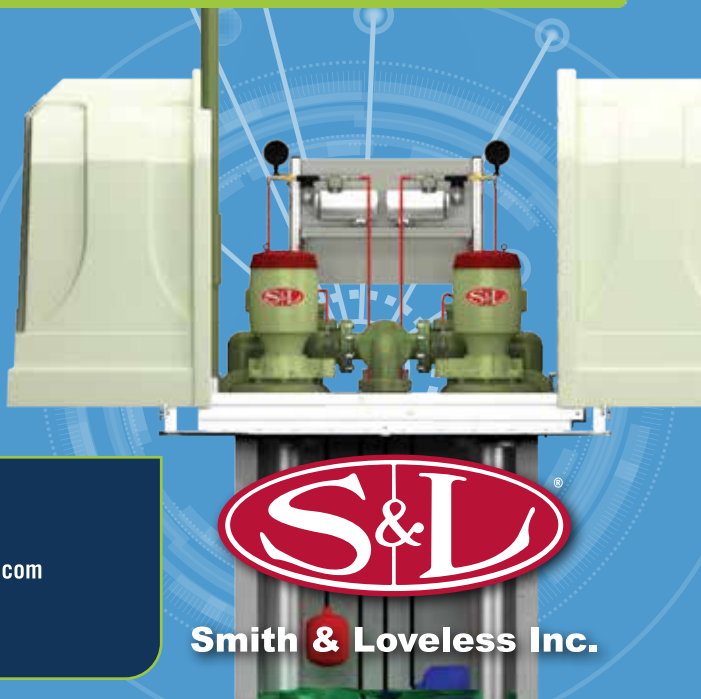
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Committee Chair Spotlight



Dustin Gloor



Bryan Mansell

This quarter, I would like to spotlight Dustin Gloor and Bryan Mansell. They are chairs for the PUBLIC OUTREACH program.

Dustin Gloor started working at the Central Valley Water Reclamation Facility in 2021. He has been in the wastewater industry for 8 years and holds a Wastewater Operator Grade IV certification, along with a Grade II Maintenance certification. Dustin also has a bachelor's degree in environmental science. He has been a process control coordinator at CVWRF for 2 years now. Dustin has been married for 6 years and has one son.

Bryan Mansell is the chief engineer at Central Valley and has been for the last 7 years. Prior to coming to CVWRF, he worked at Brown & Caldwell Engineering Firm for 8 years. He has been in the wastewater industry for 16 years. Bryan started working with WEAU as a presenter when he was still a student, as a member of the young professionals with the student chapter.

Bryan was also the editor of the Digested News for five years, along with a few other roles. He has a master's degree in environmental science. Bryan has been married for 18 years and has four kids, three girls and one boy.

Both Bryan and Dustin told me they are preaching the good word of WEAU. The two



of them have been attending career fairs and trade shows that overlap with wastewater, including NASTT and Rural Water, where they let people know about career paths and opportunities. They have also met with the Watershed Symposium.

Bryan and Dustin are planning to attend the STEM Fair as a way to teach kids about wastewater. They are exploring different ways to raise public awareness and enhance their own knowledge by interacting with other industries. This is the first year they have

attended this fair, and they are trying to figure out the best pathway to benefit both WEAU and the public. They have ordered a bunch of PPE with the WEAU logo and name to be used for plant tours and other activities to help increase public awareness.

If anyone would like to help them with this, or if anyone is interested in getting involved with WEAU on one of the committees, you can reach out to any board member or committee chair and they will be happy to help you. [DGI](#)

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SHAPING OUTCOMES IN AN UNCERTAIN CONSTRUCTION ENVIRONMENT

By: **Matt Williams**, Sr. Director of Business Development, The Haskell Company



The construction industry has always operated with uncertainty – but today that uncertainty emerges earlier and carries greater consequence.

While material price volatility has moderated compared to recent years, the market has not returned to pre-2020 norms. Persistent labor constraints, long-lead equipment, and evolving supply chains continue to influence project outcomes. For water and wastewater infrastructure, these pressures are compounded by regulatory requirements, aging systems, and the need to maintain uninterrupted operations.



Material Inflation Index – Source RS Means & ENR Cumulative Data

At the same time, owner expectations have shifted. **Success is no longer defined solely by final cost or delivery date, but by how predictable and transparent the path to that outcome is.**

In this environment, the greatest risk is not a single cost overrun – it is discovering misalignment too late to correct it efficiently. That reality is changing how project teams approach cost, design, and decision-making. Estimating is no longer a checkpoint. It is becoming a continuous tool used to guide project outcomes as they evolve.

FROM COST VALIDATION TO COST VISIBILITY

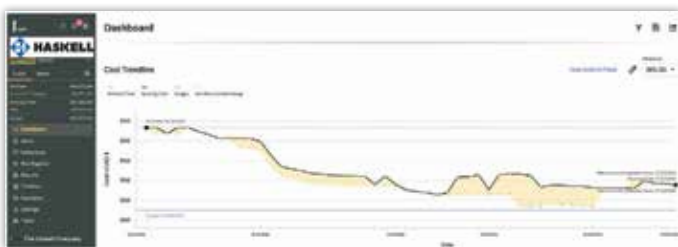
Traditionally, estimating has been treated as a validation exercise – a way to confirm whether a completed design aligns with a target budget. In today's environment, that approach creates unnecessary exposure.

Leading owners are asking a more proactive question: not simply “What will this cost?” but “How do we shape this project to achieve the desired outcome?”

Answering that question requires estimating to inform decisions while flexibility still exists. When applied early and continuously, estimating provides:

- Visibility into cost trajectory as design progresses
- Early identification of risks
- The ability to evaluate alternatives and adjust proactively

Rather than reacting to cost overruns, teams can actively guide projects toward alignment from the start.



Project Cost Trendline Driven by Informed Decision Making – Source Haskell

WHY CM/GC IS GAINING MOMENTUM

Construction Manager/General Contractor (CM/GC) delivery is gaining traction because it changes when key decisions are made. Instead of bringing the contractor in after design is largely complete, CM/GC integrates construction expertise during design. This transforms estimating from a one-time pricing exercise into an ongoing input that informs design, schedule, and constructability in real time. This early involvement allows teams to:

- Understand how design decisions affect cost before commitments are locked in
- Evaluate alternatives while options remain viable
- Identify long-lead risks and adjust procurement strategies
- Maintain alignment between scope, budget, and schedule

For municipal wastewater projects – where funding, regulatory compliance, and operational continuity intersect – this visibility is especially valuable. It enables informed decisions early, when they are less costly and more impactful.

TRANSPARENCY DRIVES BETTER DECISIONS

A defining feature of CM/GC is its open-book approach to cost. The full project team has access to:

- Detailed cost breakdowns
- Market-based input from subcontractors and suppliers
- Clear identification of risk and contingency

This transparency enables better decision-making. Owners can evaluate trade-offs early – whether that means accelerating procurement to protect schedule or adjusting scope to maintain budget.

It also reduces inefficiencies common in traditional delivery. By collaboratively managing risk, teams avoid layering excessive contingencies, improving cost accuracy and making better use of project dollars.

SHAPING THE PROJECT BEFORE IT SHAPES YOU

The advantage of early alignment becomes most visible during preconstruction. Through structured preconstruction, teams can:

- Develop progressive estimates as design advances
- Align procurement with market conditions
- Secure long-lead equipment early
- Evaluate alternatives that improve cost, schedule, or performance

This approach shifts the contractor's role from estimator to strategic partner. Instead of reacting to risk later, the team actively works to identify and manage it from the outset.

DELIVERING CONFIDENCE, NOT JUST A NUMBER

Traditional delivery methods often defer cost certainty until late in design, when flexibility is limited and changes are expensive. CM/GC reverses that dynamic, through continuous estimating, cost trending, and collaborative review, teams maintain alignment from concept through construction. This provides not only cost clarity, but confidence in the outcome.

For public wastewater owners balancing technical complexity and ratepayer impact, that confidence is critical.

A BETTER PATH FORWARD

Uncertainty will remain a constant in construction. The organizations that succeed will not eliminate it – they will manage it differently.

Collaborative delivery models like CM/GC provide a framework to do exactly that. They replace uncertainty with visibility, reactive decisions with proactive strategy, and siloed roles with integrated teams. Most importantly, they enable teams to move beyond tracking cost. They allow teams to shape outcomes. And in today's environment, that distinction makes all the difference.



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A collaborative CM/GC approach brings early visibility to cost projections and transparency around value-engineering impacts.

Cost certainty doesn't happen at the end of a project, it's built from the start. Through the CM/GC delivery method, our team collaborates closely with owners and partners to provide transparent pricing, real-time insights and continuous alignment from concept through construction.

The result is a partnership-based preconstruction process that reduces surprises and provides cost certainty.



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Annual Ops Challenge Showdown Delivers Skill, Camaraderie, and Another Championship Run

Each year, water professionals from across Utah gather in St. George for a high-energy test of skill, precision, and teamwork: the Annual Ops Challenge Showdown, hosted as part of the conference organized by the Water Environment Association of Utah. What might sound like a niche competition is, in reality, a cornerstone event that highlights the expertise and dedication behind one of society's most essential services – wastewater management.

Pulling off an event of this scale is no small feat. From the competing teams and their supporting employers to the organizers, judges, and technicians working behind the scenes, the Ops Challenge is a year-round commitment. Equipment must be maintained, tests meticulously prepared, and scoring systems refined to ensure fairness and accuracy. The result is a seamless, high-caliber competition that continues to raise the bar each year.

This year's showdown featured nine teams vying for the coveted title of "Toilet Bowl Champions". Representing the northern region were Central Valley Water, Jordan Basin, North Davis, Salt Lake City, Snyderville Basin, and South Valley. From the south came two rising contenders from the Ash Creek Special Service District, alongside a dynamic Young Professionals team representing talent from across the state.

Preparation for the Ops Challenge is intense. Teams spend months refining techniques, practicing scenarios, and identifying efficiencies that could shave precious seconds off their times. Every movement is deliberate, every decision calculated. Yet, despite the competitive atmosphere, the spirit of collaboration remains at the heart of the event. Teams routinely share advice, offer tips, and support one another – a reflection of the broader mission uniting them all.

That mission extends far beyond the competition floor. The relationships built here translate into stronger coordination and innovation across the wastewater



industry. Together, these professionals are working toward a shared goal: safeguarding public health and protecting water resources for communities downstream.

When the final scores were tallied, defending champions Central Valley Water once again claimed the overall title, demonstrating consistency and excellence under pressure. South Valley secured a strong second-place finish, followed by Jordan Basin in third.

Several standout performances added to the excitement. The Young Professionals team successfully defended their Process Test title for the second consecutive year, signaling a promising future for the industry. Ash Creek Special Service District impressed



with third-place finishes in both the Process Test and Laboratory events, while Salt Lake City and Snyderville Basin also earned podium spots across various challenges.

As the competition wrapped up, one message resonated clearly: the Ops Challenge is more than a contest – it is a celebration of dedication, teamwork, and shared purpose. Organizers extended their gratitude to all participating entities, managers, and board members whose ongoing support makes the event possible.

In an industry often operating out of sight, the Ops Challenge Showdown offers a rare and inspiring glimpse into the people and expertise that keep our water systems safe, reliable, and resilient. [Dn](#)

“Preparation for the Ops Challenge is intense. Teams spend months refining techniques, practicing scenarios, and identifying efficiencies that could shave precious seconds off their times.”

Operator Spotlight: Morgan Jeppson

I'm pleased to introduce Morgan Jeppson from the Ash Creek Special Service District.

Morgan grew up in an Army family, living across the West Coast before eventually settling in Southern Utah. There, he and his wife are raising their two children and enjoying an active, outdoors-focused lifestyle. In his free time, Morgan enjoys hunting, hiking, mountain biking, and traveling with his family.

Before entering the wastewater industry, Morgan spent 10 years in the medical field as an ER technician. About two years ago, he made the transition into wastewater operations and has fully embraced the change. He now operates a wide range of equipment, including vac trucks, CCTV vans, and heavy machinery used in excavation projects, handling both new installations and repairs.

Morgan is a key member of Ash Creek's collections crew, known for his strong decision-making and leadership skills. He has also been instrumental in the success of the Ash Creek Operator Challenge team, contributing from the very beginning and helping the team achieve impressive results in just a few short years.

Ash Creek is fortunate to have Morgan on the team, and we appreciate all the hard work and dedication he brings every day. [on](#)



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Treatment Certification Quiz

1. **What is the main purpose of primary treatment in wastewater treatment?**
 - A. Biological degradation of organic matter
 - B. Removal of suspended solids by physical processes
 - C. Disinfection of pathogens
 - D. Nutrient removal
2. **Which unit process is most commonly used in primary treatment?**
 - A. Aeration tank
 - B. Trickling filter
 - C. Primary sedimentation tank
 - D. Chlorination chamber
3. **What is “primary sludge”?**
 - A. Sludge formed during biological treatment
 - B. Sludge collected from secondary clarifier
 - C. Sludge settled at the bottom of primary clarifier
 - D. Sludge after digestion
4. **What is the typical removal efficiency of suspended solids in primary treatment?**
 - A. 10–20%
 - B. 30–60%
 - C. 70–90%
 - D. 95–100%
5. **Which temperature range is typical for mesophilic anaerobic digestion?**
 - A. 10–20 °C
 - B. 20–30 °C
 - C. 30–38 °C
 - D. 45–60 °C
6. **What is the primary purpose of the activated sludge process?**
 - A. Remove large debris
 - B. Disinfect water
 - C. Biologically degrade organic matter
 - D. Remove heavy metals
7. **What is the function of the aeration tank?**
 - A. Sedimentation
 - B. Filtration
 - C. Supply oxygen for microbial activity
 - D. Chemical disinfection
8. **What is the typical dissolved oxygen (DO) range in an aeration tank?**
 - A. 0–0.5 mg/L
 - B. 1–3 mg/L
 - C. 5–10 mg/L
 - D. 10–15 mg/L
9. **Which condition can cause sludge bulking?**
 - A. High dissolved oxygen
 - B. Low nutrient levels
 - C. Excessive chlorine
 - D. High temperature only
10. **What is the main objective of secondary clarifier?**
 - A. Aerate wastewater
 - B. Remove dissolved solids
 - C. Settle biological flocs
 - D. Add chemicals 

Answers

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



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Maintenance Quiz

1. **Which part of a centrifugal pump is installed to increase efficiency and prevent internal liquid leakage?**
 - A. Mechanical Seal
 - B. Stuffing box bushing
 - C. Weir ring
 - D. Sleeves
2. **Maintenance performed on plant equipment should be based on?**
 - A. Plant flow rate
 - B. Available personnel
 - C. Budget issues
 - D. Manufactures specification
3. **A water-filled mechanical pump seal not only helps to prevent leaks, but also?**
 - A. Cools the material being pumped
 - B. Keeps the pump primed
 - C. Acts as reserve water supply
 - D. Prevents pump shaft wear
4. **When locking out a piece of equipment for service, the number of locks needed will be?**
 - A. One for each person working on the equipment
 - B. One for the electricians and one for the mechanics
 - C. One for the master electrician only
 - D. Only by the worker who installed it
5. **Enclosed, Open, and Semi-closed are terms used for the designation and selection of?**
 - A. Impellers
 - B. Lantern Rings
 - C. Sleeves
 - D. Stuffing boxes
6. **Calculate the water horsepower for a pump delivering 875 gpm against 118 feet of head.**
 - A. 101 HP
 - B. 55 HP
 - C. 7 HP
 - D. 26 HP
7. **How many feet of pipe are needed for 2 miles of pipe?**
 - A. 11,640
 - B. 10,560
 - C. 8,700
 - D. 9,650
8. **A 40 HP pump runs for 18 hrs per day and is 85% efficient. How many kW hrs were used in a day?**
 - A. 631.9 kW hrs
 - B. 537.1kW hrs
 - C. 489.7 kW hrs
 - D. 746 kW hrs
9. **Which type of tools need to be used in a Digester Class A classification?**
 - A. Steel
 - B. Stainless Steel
 - C. Aluminum
 - D. Copper Beryllium
10. **Safety features such as limit switches and shear pins are used on clarifier drives to?**
 - A. Guard against unauthorized personnel operating the equipment when high torque conditions occur
 - B. Automatically shut down the equipment when high torque conditions occur
 - C. Control the incoming wastewater level to avoid flooding
 - D. Quickly take the clarifier offline for preventive or emergency maintenance 

Answers

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



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2026 Annual Conference Recap

By Josh Matson

The 2026 WEAU Annual Conference marked another eventful and successful week for the WEAU Young Professionals (YP) Committee, with multiple opportunities for networking, learning, and outreach during our time in St. George.

On Tuesday and Wednesday, the YP Ops Challenge Team – Lauren Schmidt, Cassie Spencer, Riley Fisher, Nate Rogers, and Coach Josh Matson – competed in the WEAU Operations Challenge competition for their third consecutive year. Conference attendees were encouraged to stop by the Exhibit Hall on Wednesday to cheer on the teams as they competed throughout the day. For the second year in a row, the YP Team took first place in the Process Control event. They also finished second in the Laboratory event and earned fourth place overall out of nine teams, greatly improving on their performance from the last two years. The Operations Challenge serves as a strong reminder of the technical skills, teamwork, and problem-solving required of today's wastewater operators, while highlighting the essential role they play in protecting public health and the environment. Congratulations to all teams who competed this year!

During the conference opening lunch on Wednesday, Young Professionals were invited to sit at designated tables for networking and an optional icebreaker activity. A Jenga-themed game helped spark



conversations and connections among first-time attendees and long-time members from across the state. The momentum continued into the evening with a joint YP and Operations Challenge Team Social at Crush Golf + Grill. The event once again brought together Young Professionals and Operations Challenge team members for an evening of food, golf, and networking. The social saw another strong turnout this year, including many new faces who joined in on the fun.

To close out the week, the first ever YP Committee Open Forum was held on Friday during one of the technical presentation slots. This session provided an open space for attendees to learn more about the Young Professionals Committee, ask questions, and share feedback directly with committee leadership. Participants also heard from several experienced YPs who shared how their involvement with WEAU has positively impacted their careers. Whether new to WEAU or already active in the YP group, attendees were able to explore ways to get more involved and help shape future initiatives.

Together, these events showcased the energy, leadership, and service mindset of WEAU's Young Professionals, reinforcing their important role in both the conference experience and the future of Utah's water industry. If you want to get more involved with the YP group and receive our monthly event invites, please email yp@weau.org. 



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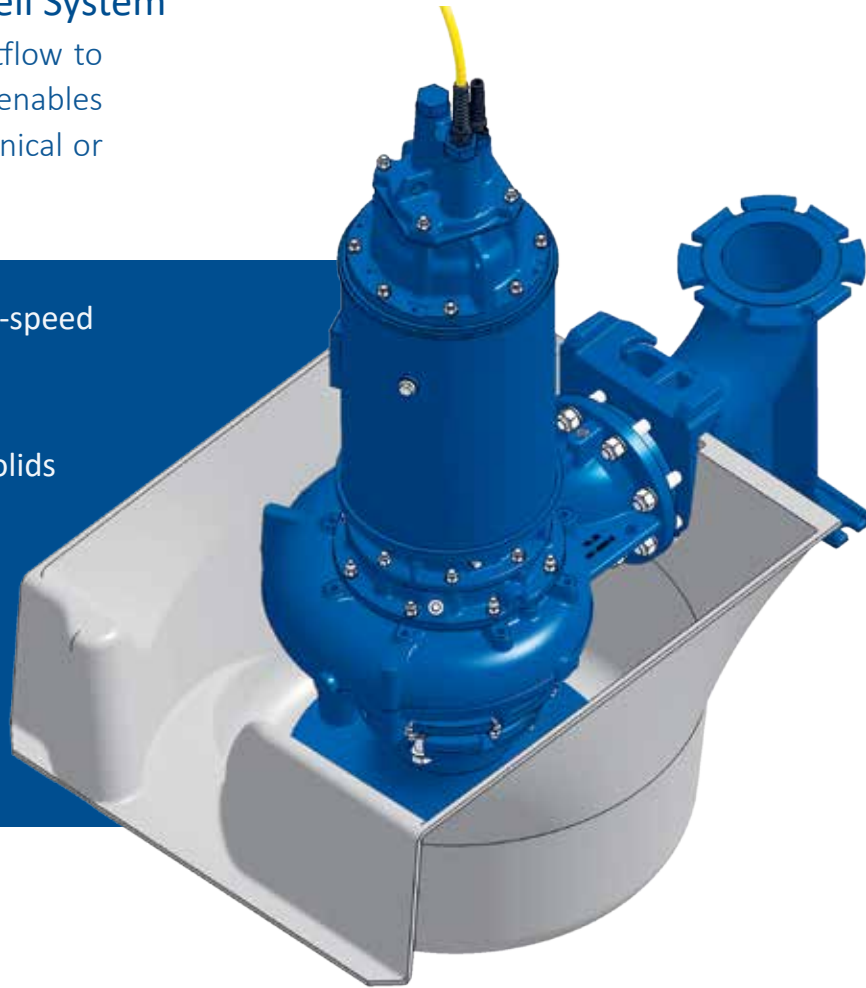
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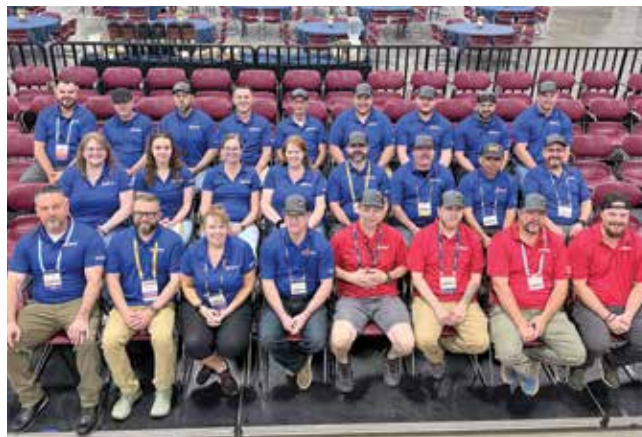
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A Big Thank You for Supporting Ops Challenge!



Thank you to everyone who participated in the 2026 WEAU Ops Challenge. We had nine teams participate this year. The teams were made up of 45 people total, with four individuals competing plus one coach for each team. We had 25 judges and volunteers helping to reset the events between teams. Behind these 70 people, there are the coworkers, colleagues, friends, family, general managers, and management that support the Ops Challenge throughout the year while the team members are practicing. The Ops Challenge brings people together and fosters a sense of camaraderie for newbies and seasoned participants.

Each event has its own unique challenges and skills needed to succeed. This year's new lab event was familiar to some, as they may analyze Chlorine and Phosphate in their process control labs at their plant. Its challenge was being patient for 3 minutes of dead time while the vials reacted and developed for Phosphate. Practicing for the process test is a great way to prepare new operators for the certification exam. The collections event is always fun to see the physical challenge of cutting through pipe and simulating a repair that can hold water and pressure while the team is under extreme time pressure. The maintenance event is a fun one to watch, hoping no one loses a key for lockout/tagout, and hoping that all nuts and bolts stay on the table without rolling away out of reach. And lastly, the safety event is a flurry of activity that'll make your shoulders sore just watching the tripod go up and down, as well as the pipes being opened and closed.



These events are fun to watch, fun to cheer for each other, and offer a real-world experience to our real jobs. Thank you to everyone who puts together and maintains each event, making sure that all crucial elements are there for practice and, more importantly, arrive for the competition. And thank you to everyone who supports the event, whether participating or helping cover your coworkers' jobs while they are away practicing. We appreciate you all!

~Tiffini Adams, Long Time Lab Event Judge, SBWRD
WEAU Vice President, 2026-2027 [DM](#)





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2026 WEAU ANNUAL CONFERENCE SUMMARY

THANK YOU, 2025-2026

WEAU BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Thank you to everyone that has served on the WEAU board this year. Gary Vance is looking forward to overseeing the new board as WEAU President for 2026-2027.



WELCOME, WEAU 2026-2027 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Marlo Davis	WEF Delegate

2026 WEAU ANNUAL CONFERENCE SUMMARY

CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS



CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS



2026 WEAU ANNUAL CONFERENCE SUMMARY

OPERATIONS CHALLENGE

Operations Challenge Teams



Snyderville Basin



Jordan Basin – Basin Browns



Central Valley – Wasted Gas



South Valley – Deuces



Ash Creek #1 – Turd Hurders



Ash Creek #2 – Wastewater Wranglers



Young Professionals



North Davis – Royal Flush



Salt Lake City – Salt Lake Solids

CONFERENCE ACTIVITIES

Student Mentorship



Raffle



2026 WEAU ANNUAL CONFERENCE SUMMARY

CONFERENCE ACTIVITIES

Breakout Sessions



Business Lunch



Sponsor



Pre Conference Workshop



2026 WEAU ANNUAL CONFERENCE SUMMARY

VENDORS



2026 WEAU ANNUAL CONFERENCE SUMMARY

INDIVIDUAL AWARDS



Outstanding Collections Operator
(Over 5 MGD)
Kevin Thomas



Outstanding Collections Operator
(Under 5 MGD)
Jay Shular



Outstanding Laboratory Technician
Steven Sneddon



Outstanding
Maintenance Specialist
Aaron Plott



Outstanding
Pretreatment Specialist
Cesar Sandoval



Outstanding Supervisor
(Over 5 MGD)
Jared Gentry



Outstanding Supervisor
(Under 5 MGD)
Gary Wilcox



Outstanding Water Reclamation
Operator (Over 5 MGD)
Zach Lindemann



Outstanding Water Reclamation
Operator (Under 5 MGD)
Brent Jones

INDIVIDUAL AWARDS *continued*



Outstanding Young Professional
Bryan Reynoso



Outstanding IT Specialist
Jason Stansfield



**Grant K Borg
Extraordinary Service Award**
Sharon Burton

PLANT AND PROGRAM AWARDS



**Outstanding Water Reclamation
Facility Over 5 MGD**
Central Valley Water Reclamation Facility



Outstanding Laboratory
Provo City



**Outstanding Collections System
Over 5 MGD**
Provo City



**Outstanding Water Reclamation
Facility Under 5 MGD**
Salem City Water Reclamation Facility



Outstanding Biosolids Program
Central Valley Water Reclamation Facility



Outstanding Pretreatment Program
St. George Regional Water
Reclamation Facility



**Outstanding Collections
System Under 5 MGD**
Ash Creek Special Service



Outstanding Safety Program
Central Valley Water
Reclamation Facility



Excellence Award
Central Valley Water
Reclamation Facility



Facility Excellence Award
Jordan Basin Improvement District

2026 WEAU ANNUAL CONFERENCE SUMMARY

WEF AWARDS



Hatfield Award
Cody Snyder



Arthur Sidney
Bedell Award
Sarah Ward



Laboratory Analyst
Excellence Award
Ed Harrison



WEF Quarter Century
Operator Club
Jill Jones, Phil Heck and Jeremy Deppe

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MA Leaders Steering Challenges into Successes:

A Recap of the 2026 WEF/AWWA Young Professionals Summit

BY LAUREN SCHMIDT

Back in March, I had the opportunity to attend the 2026 WEF/AWWA Young Professionals (YP) Summit in Charlotte, North Carolina. The WEF/AWWA YP Summit is the premier water and wastewater industry workshop for young professionals. Investing in the development of emerging leaders is essential, and the summit helps YPs enhance their professional skills while connecting with other young professionals navigating similar challenges. This year's summit welcomed over 400 YPs, with individuals representing every sector of the water industry and a variety of WEF and AWWA member associations (MAs) (e.g. WEAU).

This year was my third time attending the YP Summit and representing WEAU on the national level. I was also joined by the current WEAU YP Committee Chair, Josh Matson. The 2026 YP Summit was especially meaningful for me due to the launch of the inaugural Member Association Young Professional Leaders (MAYPL) Workshop. A year ago, the MAYPL Workshop was only an idea of mine. At the time, I had two YP Summits under my belt, and from those experiences, I recognized the need for a dedicated space where MA YP Leaders could meet in person and work together with other MAs to discuss challenges and develop action plans to strengthen their organizations. Last summer, I took the idea for MAYPL and worked with the WEF Students & Young Professionals Community (SYPC) leadership team to get approval from WEF to host the MAYPL Workshop in 2026. Fortunately for us, they bought into our vision and greatly valued our innovation and creativity, so our team moved fast to turn MAYPL into a reality.

The positive response to MAYPL exceeded our expectations. In its debut, the MAYPL Workshop broke multiple WEF Workshop records by having over 150+ MA YP Leaders attend from across North America. Several WEF Board of Trustees members and staff attended the workshop and praised it as



one of the best WEF Workshops to date. Throughout the workshop, YPs shared about their MAs and inspired their peers, exchanged ideas and collaborated to overcome MA challenges, and further cultivated their leadership skills to transform as MA Leaders. My favorite part about MAYPL was the energy in the room. As soon as YPs started sharing about their MA challenges, the room got LOUD. They fully embraced this year's MAYPL Workshop theme of "Turning the Ship Around: MA Leaders Steering Challenges into Successes" and are ready to bring what they learned back to their MAs to right the course and make a positive impact.

It was my absolute privilege to create and chair MAYPL. I owe a huge thank you

to the MAYPL Planning Committee (which includes Josh!) for all of their hard work in making MAYPL a great success. The MAYPL Workshop took over seven months to plan, and it was an honor to work alongside each of them. After the success of this year's workshop, I am beyond excited to see what the next MAYPL Workshops will bring in the years to come!

In addition to MAYPL, the second half of the YP Summit Leadership Day also featured the annual Emerging Young Professional Leaders (EYPL) Workshop. This year's EYPL provided YPs with skills for building a network, self-advocacy, and conflict resolution through hearing from impactful speakers and working with their peers in



engaging small-group activities. It brought me great joy to observe numerous YPs grow their leadership skills and form industry connections in real time.

The second and final day of the YP Summit centered around the theme “The Next Wave: Navigating Water Sector Currents.” Strong speakers coupled with an exciting water circuit challenge made it a day of relationship building, collaboration, and personal growth. Our very own WEAU Director and digital water expert, Navneet Prasad, presented in a panel on “Smarter Water: The AI and Digital Landscape in the Water Sector.” Overall, the 2026 YP Summit was a wonderful experience and continues to be one of my favorite WEF events that I look forward to each year.

I left Charlotte feeling inspired, grateful, and excited for the future of our MAs and emerging leaders. Being an MA Leader is very special. It provides an opportunity for making a difference, fostering friendships, building community, and finding yourself. For those already on the MA leadership journey, keep going. For those who have not joined us yet, do it! I promise it is worth it. Thank you to WEAU for supporting Josh & I’s attendance at this year’s YP Summit. WEAU also showed extra support this year by sponsoring the breakfast at MAYPL. All of us are very lucky to have an MA that is financially strong and continues to invest in its members so that we can become our best selves and grow in this industry together. [DM](#)



FOAMING OUT FOREVER CHEMICALS:

Air-Water Partitioning of PFAS in Wastewater Treatment and Implications for Human Exposure

Aiden Karnam (Utah Stockholm Winner)

PFAAS are a group of synthetic chemicals used extensively in industry and consumer products since the 1940s for their oil-, stain-, and grease-resistant properties. The strong carbon-fluorine bonds make these compounds have significant chemical and thermal stability, making them resistant to degradation - hence the term **forever chemicals**. Because PFAS are hydrophobic and lipophobic, they are capable of bioaccumulation and can easily be transported in the environment. There is evidence that long-chain PFAS can bioaccumulate and biomagnify in wildlife. This is evident in the examination of fish and bird species. Research from the *Environmental Research Journal* suggests that eating one serving of fish can equate to drinking around a month's worth of PFAS-contaminated water.

Sources of PFAS: These compounds are present in our water, soil, air, and food. Drinking public water and private water-wells, landfills under federal superfund sites, fire extinguishing foams (aqueous film forming foams-AFFFs), chrome plating, and electronics. PFAS are also found in food packaging, such as grease-resistant paper, pizza boxes, candy wrappers, stain removers, water repellents used on carpets/clothing, nonstick cookware, shampoo, and dental floss are all common sources of PFAS. The market for PFAS is about \$28 billion in 2023 and generates a total industry profit of \$4 billion per year.

Basic PFAS Chemistry: Perfluorinated chemicals have a carbon atom that is completely fluorinated, whereas polyfluorinated chemicals will have at least one carbon atom chain that is not fully fluorinated. Perfluoroalkyl acids (PFAAs) are essentially nondegradable under normal environmental conditions. The carbon-hydrogen bond creates a weak point in the carbon chain that may be susceptible to biotic or abiotic transformation. Biotic and abiotic transformation of many polyfluoroalkyl substances may result in the formation of perfluoroalkyl acids. As a result, perfluoroalkyl acids are sometimes referred to as "terminal PFAS" or "terminal transformation products," meaning no further transformation products will form under environmental conditions. Longer-chain PFAAs are not known to biotransform to shorter-chain PFAAs.

Long-Chain and Short-Chain Distinction: PFAS, predominantly PFAAs, are sometimes described as short-chain and long-chain as a convenient way to categorize them that would behave similarly in the environment. The important caveat is not to generalize about PFAA behavior based on the chain length, as other factors may affect bioaccumulation potential. According to OECD, long chain refers to PFCAs with eight or more carbon atoms, PFSAs with six or more carbon. Because PFAS contains hydrophobic and hydrophilic portions, they exhibit surfactant properties. They form

films at the air-water interface, with the hydrophobic carbon-fluorine tail oriented towards the air and the hydrophilic head dissolved in water.

Health Effects of PFAS: Because PFAS compounds are ubiquitous, we get exposed to them through drinking water and food such as fish and meat. The estimated half-life for PFOS in humans is five years, and the half-life for PFOA is four years. They disrupt mitochondrial function, affect the metabolism of glutamine, arginine, Vitamin B6, interfere with fatty acid beta-oxidation, and interfere with steroidogenesis. Both PFOA and PFOS are suspected carcinogens. 1 in 3 US military personnel have blood levels above unsafe concentrations. PFAS exposure is estimated to cost at least 382,000 global deaths annually. The likelihood of health adverse effects from PFAS depends on the duration of exposure and concentration. Numerous human biomonitoring studies have demonstrated that long-chain PFAAs are present in the blood serum of most US residents. Long-chain PFAAs with a half-life of one to several years are slowly excreted in humans, and serum levels are indicators of long-term exposure to long-chain PFAAs.

Some of the health effects include: Fertility issues and pregnancy induced hypertension/preeclampsia; Increase in cholesterol; Obesity; Immune changes including decreased antibody formation to vaccinations; Increased risk of certain cancers, such as testicular, thyroid, ovarian,

prostate, and kidney; Changes in fetal and child development; Liver damage; Increased risk of thyroid disease; Increased risk of allergies, such as asthma; Hormone disruption; and Ulcerative colitis. Adherence to EPA standards will decrease healthcare costs by at least \$1.5 billion per year.

Foam Fractionation: Foam fractionation is a separation technique based on the preferential adsorption of surface-active compounds at the air–water interface. Its conceptual origins can be traced to the development of froth flotation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a process widely used in mineral processing to separate hydrophobic particles from ore. In froth flotation, air bubbles introduced into a slurry selectively bind hydrophobic materials, allowing them to rise and accumulate at the surface as foam. This process demonstrated the fundamental principle that certain compounds exhibit a strong affinity for the air–water interface. Researchers observed that amphiphilic molecules, including proteins and synthetic surfactants, preferentially adsorb onto bubble surfaces, resulting in their enrichment within the foam phase. These findings led to the

induction of foam fractionation as a distinct separation technique, particularly suited for dilute aqueous systems. Advances in mass transfer theory and interfacial science enabled the development of column-based systems in which parameters such as bubble size, gas flow rate, and residence time could be optimized to enhance separation efficiency.

In recent years, there has been renewed interest in foam fractionation for the removal of persistent environmental contaminants, especially PFAS. Due to their amphiphilic structure, PFAS compounds exhibit strong adsorption at air–water interfaces, making them highly amenable to foam-based separation processes. In turn, foam fractionation is increasingly being investigated as a scalable and energy-efficient method for PFAS remediation in contaminated water systems.

Mechanisms of PFAS Removal via Foam Fractionation: Foam Fractionation is a physicochemical separation technique that partitions the surface-active and hydrophobic molecules from aqueous solutions by accumulating them in the rising bubbles. A foam layer is formed at the aqueous

surface enriched with target surface-active compounds, which is then harvested for further analysis. It has been proven to be a promising treatment approach due to its low operating cost, scaling potential, high recovery of recalcitrant surface-active compounds, and versatile mode of operation (batch, semi-batch, and continuous).

To assess PFAS enrichment in wastewater treatment stream foams, we collected foams from the Central Valley Waste Reclamation Facility (CVWRF) three times. Foam samples were collected with a net mesh from the effluent stream after UV treatment in a 15L bucket. The bucket was filled and transported to the lab. When all the foam had liquified, we got approximately 500ml of liquid. The liquid sample was then filtered through a 0.22µm syringe filter and analyzed for 40 PFAS compounds with an Agilent 6470 Triple Quadrupole Liquid Chromatography-Mass Spectrometry (LC-MS). Non-Extracted Internal Standards (NIS) were added to the samples before instrumental analysis.

Foam fractionation removes PFAS through a combination of adsorption, transport, and foam enrichment processes. When air is introduced into the aqueous



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system, bubbles are generated and rise through the solution. PFAS molecules rapidly adsorb onto the bubble surfaces due to their amphiphilic structure, orienting such that the hydrophobic fluorinated tail extends toward the air phase while the hydrophilic head remains in the aqueous phase. As bubbles ascend, they act as carriers, transporting adsorbed PFAS to the surface where foam accumulates. This foam phase becomes enriched with PFAS relative to the bulk liquid due to continuous adsorption and drainage processes. Liquid drainage within the foam further concentrates PFAS, as water drains back into the bulk phase while surface-active compounds remain associated with the bubble interfaces.

The efficiency of PFAS removal is strongly dependent on molecular characteristics. Long-chain PFAS compounds, such as perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS), exhibit higher surface activity and stronger adsorption compared to short-chain analogs. Consequently, they are more effectively removed through foam fractionation. In contrast, short-chain PFAS compounds exhibit weaker interfacial affinity and are less efficiently captured. In addition to molecular structure, system conditions such as pH, ionic strength, and the presence of co-contaminants influence PFAS adsorption behavior. Electrostatic interactions between



Foam fractionation is increasingly being investigated as a scalable and energy-efficient method for PFAS remediation in contaminated water systems.



PFAS head groups and the surrounding aqueous environment can either enhance or inhibit adsorption, depending on solution chemistry. One of the most overlooked mechanisms of PFAS dispersion in the environment is through aerosolization and atmospheric transport to all parts of Earth. PFAS has been detected in polar bears in the Arctic and in snow samples at the top of Mount Everest.

We conducted lab-scale experiments to evaluate foaming and PFAS partitioning into foam/air (foam fractionation) and develop a strategy for translational applications. Foam samples were collected with a net mesh from the effluent stream after UV treatment in a

15L bucket from a local WWTP in Utah. The bucket was filled and transported to the lab. When all the foam had liquified, we got approximately 500ml of liquid. The liquid sample was then filtered through a 0.22µm syringe filter and analyzed for 40 PFAS compounds with an Agilent 6470 Triple Quadrupole Liquid Chromatography-Mass Spectrometry (LC-MS). Non-Extracted Internal Standards (NIS) were added to the samples before instrumental analysis. Results are shown in Table below.

As evident from the table based on two samplings, some PFAS compounds were enriched in the foam sample. Also, seasonal variations could be observed in PFAS enrichment in the foam. We also monitored PFAS in the influent. Some of the PFAS chemicals were below detection limits or in sub ppt concentration, demonstrating their enrichment in the foam sample. These findings support the potential application of controlled foam fractionation as a practical treatment strategy for PFAS-contaminated waters, while also highlighting the need for further investigation into its performance under complex wastewater conditions and its broader environmental implications. [DOI](#)

About Author:

Aiden Karnam is a junior at Waterford High School in Sandy. This research was conducted at the University of Utah under the guidance of Dr. Ramesh Goel. Aiden is passionate about understanding the fate and transport of emerging pollutants in the environment. Aiden represented Utah in the National Genius Olympiad Competition.

PFAS Compounds	Concentration (ng/L)	
	Date: 11/25/2025	Date: 03/02/2026
PFHpA	124.1232563	18.3995458
6:2 FTS	68.60655862	86.4880501
PFOA	335.5812197	416.4314504
PFHxS	365.7544943	113.5751402
PFNA	139.6808265	53.34997895
NMeFOSAA	59.21350091	2.463620229
PFOS	142.3945969	102.4539023
PFHxA	677.4653128	171.1618318
PFOSA	56.44632374	5.654277147
PFBA	117.2290667	ND
5:3 FTCA	7.760208825	ND
NetFOSAA	49.21350091	8.24010953
PFNS	77.71274389	ND
PFDA	ND	4.842765877

Table: PFAS concentration in foam sample collected at the effluent end

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