



May 6, 2021 | 2:00 – 4:30 pm ET
Social Event 4:30-5:00 | Pacific Northwest Clean Water Association via Zoom
Participants: 49

WELCOME

Haley Falconer-Opening Welcome: Honored to be here today as the President of the Pacific Northwest CWA. We planned for the development of training for operator training. I realized the goals still exist. This year has been survival at varying levels. We will make it through this time and allows us to focus on our business and processes. People are our focus, and they make us thrive. This year has made us more human. We want to keep our business and people safe by new norms and figuring out that some things we have begun in the past year should stay in place. I miss our gatherings, Board meetings and being able to focus in on our people and our connections. Let us take this time to build our relationships, improve ways to deliver our content and be leaders in the community. Open with a challenge, take that one thing back today? What is that one thing you can take “back” and adapt and shape your MA and reach out to a new connection today. Start to build your water network one volunteer at a time.

- **Ifetayo Venner, WEF Vice President - Welcome:** Thank you to WEF staff, WEFMAX Committee and PNCWA. We are planning for an in-person WEFTEC. Staff is working hard to put together an in-person/online component. I realize how much I love people and love our water people and am excited for October. In an earlier WEFMAX, I noticed we were doing much work on DE&I and membership is taking part in that. WEF had some lower-than-average inclusion scores and will be working on those scores (LGBT, Women under 35, etc. women needing childcare). Staff is working on this to make WEF more inclusive and accessible. Visit the [WEF DE&I](#) page and see WEF’s updated DE&I policy (coming soon).
- **Nikita Lingenfelter, WEF House of Delegates Speaker – welcome from the HOD:** Thank you for joining us today. Thanks to Haley and committee. Updates: Next WEF House of Delegates meeting is on May 13. Keep WEFMAX in mind as well. We need to find new ways how to deliver content. HOD nominations are open. If you know anyone, please let us know. Join a committee as well if you are a current Delegate. PS announcement – Become a water advocate by visiting the [WEF Advocates](#) page. Advocacy is important.
- **Stefanie Farrell, WEF Houe of Delegates WEFMAX Committee Vice Chair-** Encourage you to have your MA submit your WEFMAX feedback to your Delegates. Thank you to the WEFMAX committee and to WEF Staff, specifically Dianne.

SESSION I – Host Topic, Moderator: Rob Lee
Summit Series – Haley Falconer

- Summit Series: Pacific NW CWA – Haley Falconer (PNCWA Board President) – What did PNWCWA do this past year. We are good delivering content and providing it to people and getting better at DE&I.
- PNCWA: 3 States: WA, OR & ID, 1600 members, and are rep. by 22 Committees and subcommittees.
- Changes in 2020: Managers have retired, COVID but demand for content did not change. Summit series was born from this. 6, 3 hour-long sessions organized around a theme, with a balance of education & networking. They occurred over the course of 6 mos., September-February (market events & develop sessions)
- Focused on our Sponsorship and deliver value to them. We had 8 sponsors which sponsored all six sessions. We were able to track CEU's. Our marketing was very good and partnered with Rogue Water and help from Steven Drangsholt (PNCWA).
- 6 Sessions: Communications, Nutrients, Leadership, Stormwater, Construction & Women of Water. Link to web information <https://www.pncwa.org/summit-series-1>
- There was a high cost due to outside consulting. We contracted and ED leadership position; again, more cost. However, we now have a structure for future use for volunteers. There were some challenges which arose due to the platform. We are planning for an in-person conference with a virtual component in Boise for 2021.
- There is a potential for future summits.
- Visit this link for session information: <https://www.pncwa.org/summit-series-1>

Thoughts & Questions:

- **Rob Lee (Pacific Northwest CWA)** asked, Was this profitable? It was due to strong sponsorship and our registration numbers were high for women of/in water.
- What made you select women of water? We have had a subcommittee which already existed, and the topic was broader than women of water. The sessions went beyond women of water and into the diversity realm.
- **Laura Oakes (Chesapeake WEA)** - Been a great benefit to have a virtual component. Helps attendance. Made our MA more accessible. Lessons learned? We are going to continue. Virtual works but there will be tons of in-person components as well. People learn differently. Keep doing virtual training and education to include upcoming wastewater short course training. Having virtual Board meetings allows for greater participation. But will we always have a virtual aspect of our future Board meetings?
- **Haley Falconer (Pacific Northwest CWA):** The requirement to go virtual was crucial and what will/does it look like? The forced pivot made us adapt. Virtual is here to stay and we have become better at it. We will better connect and serve our smaller communities. In the past we have leaned toward larger utilities and now focusing on smaller communities. Virtual can assist in this. Seeing benefit with smaller utility participation but need to keep them involved into the in-person model.
- **Tim Wolfe (Chesapeake WEA):** EPA sponsored a EUM workshop for utilities (2-day virtual event). Tough to get interest but we managed to get 50 participants. We needed utility owners to participate. Hybrid is a good approach for some workshops for remote and/or international speakers. We saw the benefits of the hybrid but miss the social aspect of personal interaction.

BREAKOUT SESSION

Breakout Session Questions:

1. What does the future of education look like?
2. How will this impact the reach of an MA, particularly as it relates to smaller communities?
3. How will we carry forward lessons learned regarding outreach and education over the past year?

REPORT OUT

- **Catrice Jones (North Carolina AWWA-WEA):** The virtual is here to stay but there is fatigue. May start seeing some cancellation of virtual events. Broadband & Wi-Fi restrictions of folks in small areas.
- **Doug Pike (Pennsylvania WEA):** Good to be able to reach out to smaller communities but they may not have sufficient internet.
- **Hanah Fodor (Rocky Mountain WEA):** The future is a hybrid model, and we all need room for improvement and seen the advantages as it compares to cost. More bang for your buck since you are not traveling as much.
- **Laura Kammereck (Pacific Northwest CWA):** Two different areas: Small communities who cannot attend conference and some areas which have 10-12 hours travel so virtual is important. There are very large utilities who cannot send everyone who is interested.
- **Nate Davis (Central States WEA):** Hard to get CEU certified but can happen and is very beneficial.
- **Haley Falconer (Pacific Northwest CWA):**
 - Barriers
 - Feeling of being disjointed with management and engineers.
 - Getting away from work to attend activities.
 - The year that operators have had is a real challenge because of COVID, not leaving much room for additional activities.
 - Getting management support – and encouragement – to get involved.
 - What role can MAs play in showing the value of operator involvement to utility/city managers?
 - Not always a monetary constraint, it's often time constraint.
 - Technology can be a barrier.
 - Specific ways to bring operators into more volunteer opportunities?
 - Early morning activities
 - Seek out areas of interest for individuals.
 - Example: NC plant spotlight and getting operators involved
 - Are we providing the services or activities that our operators really need?
 - Have operators present topics.
 - Engage operators and laboratory folks in the K-12 education presentations.
 - Section exchange – focused on operator sharing at conference.

Share 1-2 things.

- Develop virtual tours that can be shared as education (and provide a lower key presentation opportunity)
- 5-7 min videos of operators giving tours or focusing on treatment ask.
- Idea: student chapters are recording/producing in KY/TN and this has been great partnership between students and operators

Many benefits to operations are intangible but have a direct impact to their work and employer (engagement, education, satisfaction in work)

Poll: Initiated by Haley Falconer

In Lieu of sending a gift package to WEFMAX registrants PNCWA would like to use the opportunity to donate to a good cause. Help select from the 3 options below your donation preference:

PNCWA Outreach:	42%
Wassmuth Center for Human Rights:	39%
Water for People:	18%

SESSION II – WEFMAX Topics

Operator Training Initiative

Rocky Mountain WEA - Hannah Fodor & Edyta Stec-Uddin

- Rocky Mountain Operator Training Initiatives: Rocky Mountain WEA – Hannah Fodor (Treasurer) & Edyta Stec-Uddin (Wastewater Operator, Past-President)
- Rocky Mountain WEA: 3 State (CO, NM & WY), about 1,200 members and 17,000 operators in the 3 states and most of the certified in CO.
- Each state has separate certification and different certification managers.
- CO renewal is every 3 years and NM every 3 years, but they have different categories than CO. WY has a 3-year renewal period but has fewer certification categories.
- There are different times training is held, how long the training is and there is a range of costs.
- Technical Advisory Committee: Focused on a specific topic, followed by a tour, now virtual, but going to an in-person as soon as possible.
- PWO Seminars: One-day spread throughout the year at different locations. Very popular. Focused on current topics, usually 2 free seminars each year, 6-8 hours, focused on getting 5- credit hours applicable for operator license renewal and most importantly, they are attended by operators.
- Operator Schools: Week-long. Designed to help operators pass their exams, low cost (\$400/week), great networking opportunity featuring extra events: help nights, toilet bowl trivia night & steak night. Scholarships are offered to operators of smaller utilities.
- Annual Conference: Regular technical 3-day multiple tracks with training units available. Special operator focused tracks are one-day events.
- Committee Events: Innovative Water Technology
- E-Training: Not as popular but important and useful for operators who may need one more hour to renew license.

- We have something for everybody (length, locations, basic-advance, varied costs, different presenters who are mostly volunteers).

Thoughts & Questions:

- **Rob Lee (Pacific Northwest CWA):** what do you do regarding advertisements?
Hannah Fodor (Rocky Mountain WEA) replied, In the past we had paid staff assist with the schools. We no longer use them, and we are doing it ourselves. We have a weekly e-newsletter. We get the word out but if you do not the operators come to us.
- **Jeffrey Berlin (Rocky Mountain WEA):** How much does a Training Class usually cost?
Reply: 50 bucks.
- **Haley Falconer (Pacific Northwest CWA):** How is the operator school funded? Who are the instructors?
Reply: By attendance and the instructors are volunteers.

BREAKOUT SESSION

Operator Training Initiatives Breakout Questions:

1. What are the biggest barriers to getting operators engaged?
2. What are specific ways to bring operators into more volunteer opportunities and MA leadership?
3. Share 1 – 2 things your MA has done to practically increase operator engagement.

REPORT OUT – Moderated by Casey Gish

- **Alondra Hernandez (WEA of Texas):** Many of our members are not operators. We just do not have the membership numbers for operators. Our membership is not operator focused.
- **Dave Gilbraith (Atlantic Canada):** ACWWA is mostly engineers. WE have an operators org. which has been in place for 40 years. ACCWA does not have many operators; like WEAT.
- **Jon Koch (Iowa WEA):** We have good operator participation. Tough getting them to the annual conference but the director's go. Going virtual, they can [now] participate.
- **Steve Drangsholt (Pacific Northwest CWA):** Our content does not speak to operator content sometimes. We need to ask what problem we can solve for them and make sure they are at the table for the discussions. Our geographic area is large, and it is not conducive having everyone come to one place.
- **Dave Gilbraith (Atlantic Canada):** We developed training manuals; we offer courses for the operators. Dues are an issue sometimes. We pay one fee to WEF and then a few \$\$\$ come the AC. We make our money from the conference. No need to dig into the reserves.
- **Rob Lee (Pacific Northwest CWA):** Any Scholarships?

Alondra Hernandez (WEAT): We have scholarships and fundraisers and give away the money.

- **Jon Koch (Iowa WEA):** We dropped our dues.
- **How to increase Operator Participation?** Think about lowering dues and providing a library to check-out books.

REPORT OUT

- **Ellen Frketic (Chesapeake WEA):** We have operators who have other functions. Have an MA-only membership like PA WEA. But there is a lot of competition. NEWEA has a reduced-fee operators' day at their conference. Others offer training at conference and a pre-conference workshop.
- **Haley Falconer (Pacific Northwest CWA):** Show value to the operators. Do plant spotlights like NC WEA is doing and have them present on topics. Use videos and tours to showcase what they know best. KY-TN, partnered with student chapters with operators.
- **Jeff Berlin (Rocky Mountain WEA):** Nevada has a designated a PWO rep position on their board. Involvement with WEF's operations challenge increases participation. Also, Iowa noted there is an older lean toward operators, and need to get younger folks in. There is a lot of success having an event closer to where the operators live/work. Be & go local:
- **Catrice Jones (NC AWWA-WEA):** Barriers: they may want things handed to them. May have those who do not understand it is their career and obligation to get engaged with others in the industry. Need to get them personally involved but not just by an email blast.
- **Clifford Fletcher (Alaska WWMA):** 2 WEF membership are giving away every year to increase operator membership. Annual conference reg. fees are provided too.

SESSION II – WEFMAX Topics

Recruiting and Maintaining Members:

North Carolina AWWA-WEA – Tom Bach & Catrice Jones (E.D.)

- With guidance from WEF, Kelsey Hurst assisted to develop an updated strategic plan to increase and engage our members.
- We will be a growing and diverse org. which engages members, etc.
- Objective 2: Restructuring of membership engagement committee.
- Objective 3: Revive and implement a new member onboarding process by March 2020.
- NC is divided into Regional Zones: Create a cross-section of members, increase personal contact, provide local events/activities, revise onboarding processes, provide opportunities for small group/team activities & Transition "members" into "volunteers."
- Advantages of Regional Zones: Providing networking inside/outside organization, providing new members to ask org. questions to gain valuable feedback, increased support.
- Six electronic touch emails to new member (welcome from Chair of membership to welcome from staff, look around, etc.)
- As a follow up from the emails, there is a phone contact.

Thoughts & Questions

- **Rob Lee (Pacific Northwest CWA):** How to manage volunteer time to handle the emails/phone calls?
Reply: Catrice Jones (NC AWWA-WEA): there are plenty of staff to spread out the workload.

BREAKOUT SESSION

Recruiting and Maintaining Members Breakout Questions:

1. How to transition your recruitment/retention procedures from a virtual platform to a more "personal" face-to-face platform?
2. How do we take advantage of increased energy and enthusiasm as we start opening back up?
 - **Doug Pike (Pennsylvania WEA):** We do not have a platform set up. We used to send some stuff out but not anymore. I do not know what a new member receives. At meetings, the Board would wear lanyards so they could be easily identified for questions, etc. You need a sheet of paper showing what are the benefits. The networking is invaluable. We need to get across the professionalism of our industry.
 - **Frederic Smith (Ohio WEA):** We do not have a concerted effort but do the reverse and try to get them reengaged. We should do a better job welcoming a new member. We do not send stuff to new members anymore. Our #1 selling point is the selling of knowledge.
 - **Jim Baird (Pacific Northwest CWA):** Before COVID we had a Board member attend local events and tied section activities back to the PNCWA. Many locals did not even know they were associated with the PNCWA. There is an effort to show what the value of being a member is. We have 3 states, and the States are split into regions and "we" go to that town/council and give that award to an operator so "they" can see there is value and ties back to the PNCWA. The water professionals are working for you every day.
 - **Lisa Ruane (WEF Senior Staff):** I support moving away from phone calls. It is not where the audience is at.

REPORT OUT – Moderated by Casey Gish

- **Todd Fulton (Missouri WEA):** Our goal was not originally to increase new members but some of the things we did, we were able to gain members. We give away 2 memberships/year and provide some with no charge to attend the annual conference.
- **Cliff Cate (Missouri WEA):** We can reach the small rural operators via a virtual platform.
- **Stacy Walker (Rocky Mountain WEA):** Loss of engagement from long-time volunteers. Alaska sends out postcards to stay in touch. We may do welcome text messages instead of calls and going ahead with golf/bowling events.
- **Tom Bach (NC AWWA-WEA):** We shared much information with KY-TN and NEWEA and it was important. Sharing information cross-MA was crucial. Also, need to meet in smaller groups and invite a new member to those group meetings. We have regional group leader meetings with

the Vice Chair of membership committee and talk about things which are working well and areas where we need to improve. KY-TN is doing walk and talks during COVID.

- **Nate Davis (Central States WEA):** We offer an MA-only membership.

CLOSING

Haley Falconer (Pacific Northwest CWA): Thank you to Dianne for making this happen today. I started with WEF as a student and began with the community project. Thanks again to Dianne. Joy with getting back together and we can make an impact on areas I care about deeply and match them up with people by empowering them. They are waiting for that “ask”.