

2026 Winter Conference Speaker Profiles



Julia Anastasio

Executive Director & General Counsel
Association of Clean Water Administrators
Washington, DC

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Julia Anastasio joined the Association of Clean Water Administrators (ACWA) in May 2014 as the Executive Director and General Counsel. ACWA is an independent, nonpartisan national organization of state and interstate water program managers, who on a daily basis implement the water quality programs of the federal Clean Water Act. At ACWA, Ms. Anastasio focuses on working with state water program directors and EPA's Office of Water on ensuring that the states have the flexibility and resources they need to implement the Clean Water Act in their home states.

Ms. Anastasio has over two decades of experience in government, administrative and environmental law and federal policy development. She began her career with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection as an Executive Policy Specialist and returned to Washington, DC in 2005 to work for the America Public Works Association (APWA). While at APWA, she focused on environmental, sustainability and infrastructure development at the local, state and federal levels. Ms. Anastasio earned her BA from Franklin Marshall College, her Masters in Environmental Law and Policy from Vermont Law School, and her JD from American University.



Kristen Atha

NACWA Board Member
Executive Director
Columbus Water & Power
Columbus, OH

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Kristen Atha serves as the Director, Department of Public Utilities (DPU), for the Columbus Water & Power. In this role, she leads the organization, which includes nearly 1200 employees, including the Division of Water, Division of Sewerage and Drainage and the Division of Power. The Department provides safe, reliable drinking water and wastewater services for over 1.3 million residents in central OH, and electric utilities to approximately 17,000 customers within the City of Columbus. While the Department of Public Utilities is part of the City of Columbus, we provide water and wastewater services to 26 suburban partners, serving in a regional capacity to support the growth and prosperity of the Central Ohio region. Kristen holds Bachelor's degrees in Civil and Environmental Engineering from the University of Cincinnati, and Business Administration from Miami University.

Ms. Atha has spent over 30-years building her career as an environmental engineer focused on working with municipal water and wastewater utilities. Prior to her

appointment in 2022 as Director at Columbus Water & Power, she served as a Vice President and Regional Market Sector Leader for AECOM's water business line in the Midwest. Kristen also recently served as the Chair of the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC)'s Sustaining Scioto Board. The Board guides the Sustaining Scioto Implementation Plan to help the Central Ohio region adapt to climate change and ensure access to clean and abundant water for the growing Central Ohio region. Following her term as Chair, MORPC invited Kristen to serve on the Commission's Executive Committee, providing strategic direction on goals, objectives, policy and budgetary issues that impact the region.



Jay Bernas

NACWA Board Member

General Manager/Chief Executive Officer

Hampton Roads Sanitation District

Virginia Beach, VA

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Jay Bernas was appointed General Manager by the Hampton Roads Sanitation District (HRSD) Commission in February 2022 after previously serving as the Director of Finance for seven years. He has a demonstrated history of integrating engineering, quantitative and financial skills and driving strong financial performance, including three ratings upgrades within two years and obtaining WIFIA and clean water loans projected to save ratepayers over \$600M.

Before his promotion to this position, Mr. Bernas served as Chief of Planning and Analysis for 10 years and was responsible for planning HRSD's \$1.4 billion Capital Improvement Program, performing business case analyses saving \$239M NPV, system capacity analyses to support regional growth and managing four technical sections: Geographic Information Systems, Data Analysis, Hydraulic Modeling, and Capital Planning. Prior to joining HRSD in 2005, he was a project manager with the City of Virginia Beach.

Mr. Bernas graduated from Old Dominion University in 1995 with a Bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering and earned his MBA from the College of William and Mary in 2013. He also has completed the Kenan-Flagler Water and Wastewater Leadership Program and was part of the 2008 class for LEAD Hampton Roads. He received the George Robert House, Jr. Award for the young public administrator of the year from the American Society for the Public Administration in 2006 and was recognized by Inside Business as a "Top Forty under 40" in 2011.

Appointed by the Virginia Beach City Council to serve on the Planning Commission from 2006-2013, Mr. Bernas was its Chair for the last two years of his tenure. He served as chair of the St. Gregory the Great's School Board from 2015-2019. In 2018, he was elected to the \$2.0 billion Virginia Investment Pool Board of Trustees. In 2020, he was elected to the National Association of Clean Water Agencies Board of Directors.



Mickey Conway
NACWA President
Chief Executive Officer
Metro Water Recovery
Denver, CO
[LinkedIn](#)

Mickey Conway was named as Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for Metro Water Recovery in Denver, Colorado in January 2018. He served as Metro's General Counsel for the 4 years prior to his appointment as CEO. Metro Water Recovery operates two treatment plants and collection systems that serve over 60 local governments and special districts comprising of approximately 2 million people in the Denver Metro Area.

Prior to working at Metro Water Recovery, Mr. Conway represented wastewater and public entities for nearly twenty years as an attorney. He holds a BA from Southern Methodist University and a JD from the University of San Francisco School of Law.

Mr. Conway currently serves as President on NACWA's Board of Directors.



Karen Dettmer
Market Manager, Water
Ramboll
Arlington, VA
[LinkedIn](#)

Karen Dettmer has more than 20 years' experience in environmental engineering management, including 16 years in local and federal government project and program management. She has led teams in drinking water engineering, treatment, and supply; public works; and federal policy and regulatory implementation. She leads with a lens toward social impact through equitable, efficient, sustainable public policy and management.



Kyle Dreyfuss-Wells
NACWA Vice President
Chief Executive Officer
Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District
Cleveland, OH
[LinkedIn](#)

Kyle Dreyfuss-Wells was appointed as Chief Executive Officer of

the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District in February 2017. During her previous eight years at the Sewer District, Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells coordinated the District's watershed management efforts across District programs, including the Regional Stormwater Management Program and the application of stormwater control measures to reduce combined sewer overflows under the District's Green Infrastructure Policy. She is Region 5 representative on the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA) Board of Trustees, and Chair of the District One Natural Resources Assistance Council for the Ohio Public Works Commission's Clean Ohio Conservation Program.

Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells graduated *Summa Cum Laude* from The Ohio State University with a BS in Biology. She earned Master's degrees with honors in both Public Affairs and Environmental Science at Indiana University's School of Public and Environmental Affairs, and served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Samoa. Before joining the District, she was Director of the Chagrin River Watershed Partners, Inc.



Jay Fink

Director

Miami-Dade County Water and Sewer Department

Miami, FL

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Jay Fink, PE is the Director of the Miami-Dade Water and Sewer Department, where he leads one of the largest public utilities in the nation, overseeing complex water and wastewater systems serving a rapidly growing region. With more than 30 years of municipal leadership experience, Director Fink brings a deep understanding of infrastructure planning, capital delivery, and operational resilience.

Before joining Miami-Dade County, he served as Deputy Director of Public Works for the City of Miami Beach, where he advanced major stormwater and infrastructure initiatives incorporating climate adaptation, flooding projections, and long-term risk mitigation. His career also includes distinguished service in MA, where he was Commissioner of Public Works for the City of Worcester. In that role, he led a multi-year capital program to modernize aging water, sewer, and stormwater systems dating back to the 1800s, prioritizing environmental benefits and regulatory compliance.

Director Fink has held additional executive roles in the cities of Lynn, Quincy, and Newton, as well as regional Boards such as the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority Advisory Board, further strengthening his expertise in utility operations, asset management, and system modernization. Under his leadership, the Miami-Dade Water and Sewer Department continues to advance large scale capital investments focused on system reliability, regulatory compliance, climate resilience, and long-term service to residents and businesses.

He holds a BS in Civil Engineering, cum laude, from Northeastern University and a MS in Civil Engineering from Tufts University. Director Fink is a registered Professional Engineer in both FL and MA.



Nitin Goel

Planning and Optimization Division Manager
Central Contra Costa Sanitary District
Martinez, CA

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After building a strong technical foundation as a consulting engineering for close to a decade, **Nitin Goel** moved to Central San, first focusing on planning work, then transitioning to Asset Management and pre-design of Treatment Plant Projects. Currently, serving as Optimization Manager with broad responsibilities for all Districtwide optimization efforts. Mr. Goel has a passion for helping my team grow and evolve professionally and collaborating with workgroups all over the organization to provide better work products. Mr. Goel did his Bachelor of Technology in Civil Engineering from Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi, India and MS in Civil Engineering from Duke University.



Juan Guerreiro

Director
City of San Diego
San Diego, CA

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Juan Guerreiro has dedicated himself to improving the water environment. His vision is to create a sustainable water future so our communities can continue to thrive. His mission is to collaborate with external agencies with openness, honesty, and curiosity, and to optimize internal operations by providing a safe work environment for professionals to serve and grow.

Mr. Guerreiro has over 21 years of experience in the water industry working in the public, private, and non-profit sectors. He earned a MS in Water Science, Policy, and Management from the University of Oxford, and a BA in Public Administration from San Diego State University.

He has worked for the City of San Diego for the last 10 years in a growing capacity and since February 2022 has served as the Director of Public Utilities.



Eric Horvath

Director of Public Works
City of South Bend Wastewater Treatment Plant
South Bend, IN

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Eric Horvath, a native of South Bend, was named the city's Director of Public Works in December 2012. The City of South Bend's Department of Public Works has over 300 employees and an enterprise and capital improvement combined budget of over \$100 million per year. Mr. Horvath previously held positions with American Structurepoint, an architecture and engineering firm headquartered in Indianapolis. Mr. Horvath was responsible for the administration and operations of the regional office in South Bend, where he specialized in water, sewer, transportation, and environmental engineering design, as well as the financial management and budgetary control of large public works projects. Before his time at American Structurepoint, Mr. Horvath worked for the City of Elkhart, IN where he served as public works and utilities director and city engineer, overseeing a staff of 150 employees and an annual operating and capital budget of over \$34 million.

Mr. Horvath graduated from the University of Notre Dame in 1993 with bachelor's degrees in civil engineering and psychology. He received a MS in Public Administration from Notre Dame in 2001. Mr. Horvath is also a licensed Professional Engineer in IN.



Andrew Lee

NACWA Board Member
General Manager/Chief Executive Officer
Seattle Publics Utilities
Seattle, WA

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Andrew Lee joined Seattle Public Utilities in 2019, and is currently the Interim General Manager/Chief Executive Officer. Mr. Lee has over 20 years of experience in utilities, having worked for Seattle Public Utilities, the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, Bellevue Utilities, Brown and Caldwell, and Olivia Chen Consultants (now AECOM).

Mr. Lee, who is a Professional Engineer and Program/Project Management Professional, has extensive experience in capital planning and program management, regulatory compliance and negotiations, asset management, and drainage, wastewater, and drinking water engineering.

He has a BS degree in Civil and Environmental Engineering and an MS degree in Environmental Engineering and Sciences, both from Stanford University. Mr. Lee is a

member of the Project Management Institute, and has been a past member of the American Water Works Association and the Water Environment Federation.



Tanya McCoy-Caretti
Director for US Water Business
Arcadis US, Inc.
Sewickley, PA
[LinkedIn](#)

Tanya McCoy-Caretti works with a team of water experts who deliver innovative and sustainable solutions for our clients across the water sector. With over 10 years of experience in civil engineering industry, Ms. McCoy-Caretti has a strong track record of developing and managing strategic partnerships, security and executing large-scale projects, and driving revenue growth and profitability for Arcadis.



Stephanie Norling
President/Chief Executive Officer
Communities of Excellence
San Diego, CA
[LinkedIn](#)

Stephanie Norling is the President and Chief Executive Officer of Communities of Resilience & Excellence (C.O.R.E.), formerly Communities of Excellence 2026, a role she has held since 2014. A nationally recognized leader in community systems change and performance excellence, she has played a central role in developing and advancing the Baldrige-based C.O.R.E. Guide, a practical framework that helps communities align leadership, strategy, and measurement to achieve meaningful, measurable results.

Under Ms. Norling's leadership, C.O.R.E. launched the National Learning Collaborative, supporting communities across the country in applying systems thinking and cross-sector collaboration to complex challenges. This work has since evolved into the Impact Pathway, C.O.R.E.'s milestone-based approach to advancing sustainable community outcomes. Stephanie continues to serve as faculty, mentoring community leaders and guiding teams as they move from shared purpose to sustained impact.

Ms. Norling began her career at the Institute for Healthcare Improvement and later earned an MBA with a Certificate in Nonprofit Management from the University of San Diego. Deeply committed to performance excellence, she served for three years as a National Baldrige Examiner and currently serves on the board of the Alliance for Performance Excellence. In 2023, she received the Baldrige Foundation's Award for Leadership Excellence in recognition of her contributions to the nonprofit sector.

Driven by a passion for collaboration and innovation, Ms. Norling has dedicated her career to empowering communities to achieve transformative outcomes and improve quality of life for all residents.



Patrick O'Neill
Senior Vice President
Black & Veatch Corporation
Kansas City, MO
[LinkedIn](#)



Tony Parrott
Executive Director
Louisville & Jefferson County Metropolitan Sewer District
Louisville, KY
[LinkedIn](#)

Tony Parrott has been in the public utility business for thirty years. He joined the Butler County Department of Environmental Services as Executive Director from 1995 through 2004.

In 2005, he became Executive Director of the Metropolitan Sewer District (MSD) of Greater Cincinnati—bringing wastewater services to 1,200,000 residents of Cincinnati, Hamilton County, and southwestern OH residents. While at Cincinnati MSD, Mr. Parrott successfully negotiated a federal Consent Decree with the US Department of Justice and the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which the federal court approved in August 2010. In 2013, Mr. Parrott was appointed the Executive Director of the Metropolitan Sewer District of Greater Cincinnati and the Greater Cincinnati Water Works.

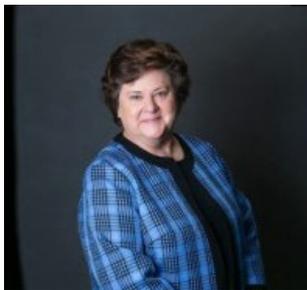
Under Mr. Parrott's leadership, the Metropolitan Sewer District of Greater Cincinnati won the 2014 US Water Prize from the US Urban Water Sustainability Council, a division of the US Water Alliance. Cincinnati MSD also received the Platinum Award for Excellence in Management from the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA) in 2015.

In 2015, he was appointed the Louisville/Jefferson County Metropolitan Sewer District's Executive Director, serving residents in Louisville Metro, Oldham, and Bullitt counties. At Louisville MSD, Mr. Parrott oversees a federal Consent Decree and an annual capital budget of \$300M to bring safe, clean waterways to the community and improve the value of water as a community resource. He is the Water Agency Leaders Alliance President. In 2011, Mr. Parrott was honored as a WEF Fellow by the Water Environment Federation, and

in February 2014, he was recognized by NACWA with a National Environment Achievement Award. His expertise was further acknowledged in 2017, when he was appointed to the US EPA's Environmental Financial Advisory Board. In 2021, Mr. Parrott's contributions were recognized by his appointment to the National Forum for Black Public Administrators Board of Directors.

He was awarded the NACWA President Award in 2022; in 2023, MSD was awarded the NACWA Utility of the Future Award. In 2024, Mr. Parrott was appointed to the US Water Alliance Board of Directors and in November 2024 he received the Owner of the Year Award from the Design Build Institute of America.

In 2025, he was awarded the National Environmental Achievement Award for Utility Leadership.



Susan Pekarek
NACWA Board Member
General Manager
Johnson County Wastewater
Olathe, KS
[LinkedIn](#)

Susan Pekarek is the General Manager for Johnson County Wastewater. She has been with Johnson County for 19 years and was promoted to General Manager in 2016 after serving as the Chief Engineer for three years. Ms. Pekarek provided capital improvement planning and management prior to becoming Chief, leading over \$100M in capital projects supporting growth and asset renewal. She is responsible for overseeing the strategic direction and operations of the Wastewater Department at Johnson County.

Ms. Pekarek graduated from Kansas State University with BS and MS in Civil Engineering. She holds a Professional Engineering license in the state of KS and a Class IV Wastewater Operator's license. She is active in professional organizations including the National Association of Clean Water Agencies and served as the President of the Kansas Water Environment Association in 2017-18. Ms. Pekarek is a graduate of the 2019 Leadership Overland Park Class.

A native Kansan, Ms. Pekarek grew up in rural northeast KS and currently resides in Johnson County.



Kishia Powell

NACWA Board Member

General Manager/Chief Executive Officer

WSSC Water

Laurel, MD

[LinkedIn](#)

Kishia Powell is a dynamic force in the global water sector with 27 years of experience in both the public and private sectors across the US and London. She leads a team of 1789 strong and manages the day-to-day operations of the largest water utility in MD – the 8th largest in the country – and ensures water and water resource recovery services are safely provided to 1.9 million customers throughout a 1,000-square-mile service area. WSSC Water has a combined operating and capital budget of \$1.8 billion, and a six-year capital program of 4.8 billion. Ms. Powell served on President Biden’s National Infrastructure Advisory Council’s Subcommittee for Expanding Workforce Development. She currently serves on the board of the National Association of Clean Water Agencies, (formerly as President), representing over 400 clean water agencies across the country; the Water Research Foundation’s Board of Directors; and the Baltimore Water Task Force. In May 2023, the Maryland Society of Professional Engineers honored her with the *Industry Icon Award*.



Lisa Rhea

Water Resources Director

Hillsborough County Public Utilities

Tampa, FL

[LinkedIn](#)

Lisa Rhea is a FL Professional Engineer with an MS in Environmental Engineering from the University of South Florida and currently serves as the Hillsborough County Water Resources Department Director. She oversees a team of approximately 800 employees to ensure the daily operations of the County’s water, wastewater and reclaimed water service areas to meet the growing needs of the community. The Water Resources Department owns and operates four water treatment plants, two water booster stations, five wastewater treatment plants, over 900 lift stations, and over 6,000 miles of pipe connection all the facilities. Design and construction are underway for two new facilities, a 60-MGD water treatment plant and a 24-MGD wastewater treatment plant. The Department includes engineering, capital project development and delivery with a 5-year CIP value of \$2.2 billion, and customer service and financial management with revenues exceeding \$400 million. Prior to joining Hillsborough County, she worked in private consulting at Jones Edmunds and Associates, served as the Director of Public Works for the City of Oldsmar, and managed wastewater services for the City of St. Petersburg.



Tim Ruggaber
Founder and Principal
HydroDigital
South Bend, IN
[LinkedIn](#)

Tim Ruggaber is a founder and a Principal with HydroDigital. He has worked in the Digital Water arena since 2004 and has developed a number of tools for Real Time Control, Real Time Decision Support Systems, and Real Time Monitoring Systems. He has extensive experience in managing multidisciplinary teams that involve hydraulic and hydrological modeling, real-time control development and implementation, and complex computing platforms. Mr. Ruggaber has worked in providing solutions for wastewater collection systems for over 40 wastewater utilities in North America and Europe, reducing the amount of untreated wastewater overflows by more than 20 billion gallons and reducing new infrastructure needs by more than \$4 billion.



Jennifer Steffens
Director of Digital Water
Carollo Engineers, Inc.
Atlanta, GA
[LinkedIn](#)

Jennifer Steffens is a Professional Engineer and Carollo's Director of Digital Water, where she leads the firm's strategy and practice in applying advanced analytics, AI/ML, and real-time intelligence to help water utilities operate with greater confidence, resilience, and efficiency. With two decades of experience in digital transformation across water, wastewater, and stormwater systems, Ms. Steffens works closely with utilities to translate data into actionable insights that improve treatment performance, optimize operations, and support effective decision-making.

Ms. Steffens is a frequent collaborator with NACWA utility members and a champion of digital tools that elevates our water workforce rather than replace it, ensuring that technology strengthens the expertise of operators, engineers, and utility staff. Her work centers on practical, operator-focused innovation and is known for her ability to bridge technical depth with real-world application, guiding utilities through the complexities of digital modernization amid workforce pressures, climate uncertainty, and evolving regulatory landscapes. She is a trusted advisor to clients navigating this transition and a leading voice in shaping the future of digital water.



Trent Stober
Senior Vice President
HDR Engineering, Inc.
Columbia, MO
[LinkedIn](#)

Trent Stober is the Senior Vice President with experience in water quality assessment and regulatory projects that have shaped major municipal infrastructure programs across the nation. He has managed projects that include wastewater and stormwater utility planning, discharge permitting, assessment of receiving water-beneficial uses and their attainability, and watershed monitoring and management.

Mr. Stober is passionate about collaboration between regulators, utilities and other stakeholders to address community priorities related to the Clean Water Act and other infrastructure needs. In his role as director, he manages a diverse staff in technical areas such as integrated municipal planning, regulatory and enforcement action support, program and project management, asset management, and utility operations. He is a regulatory specialist with a history of applying his experiences, knowledge and practical approaches to solve challenging problems.

Mr. Stober is proud of being a trusted advisor for many communities as they address more stringent regulatory requirements, including some of the most complicated quality issues in Missouri and Environmental Protection Agency Region 7. He has testified quarterly on water quality and permitting issues for over 10 years before the Missouri Clean Water Commission, which is appointed by the Governor to oversee the Missouri Department of Natural Resources Water Protection Program.

He holds a Master's degree in Civil Engineering and a Bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Missouri and was recently inducted as a member of the University's Civil Engineering Academy of Distinguished Alumni.



Todd Swingle
NACWA Board Member
Chief Executive Officer
Toho Water Authority
Kissimmee, FL
[LinkedIn](#)

Todd Swingle serves as the Chief Executive Officer/Executive Director for the Toho Water Authority (Toho) in Kissimmee, FL. Toho serves approximately 170,000 connections with services including Water, Wastewater, and Reuse Water. Mr. Swingle leads over 600 employees that operate 24 water and water reclamation facilities, over 4,600 miles of pipelines and 630 pump stations.

Before joining Toho, Mr. Swingle spent over 25 years serving in various environmental management roles in the utilities, consulting, and manufacturing spaces in the US and globally. He is active in a variety of civic and professional organizations focused on community and the environment. Professionally, Mr. Swingle serves as a board member for the National Association of Clean Water Agencies, the Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies, the Water Research Foundation, and the Florida Water Environment Association Utility Council. Mr. Swingle holds Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in Environmental Engineering from the University of Central Florida, an MBA from the University of Florida, and is a registered Professional Engineer.



Rick Warner

Water Market Strategic Leader Americas

Jacobs

Milwaukee, WI

[LinkedIn](#)

Rick Warner's water journey began at the Truckee Meadows Water Reclamation Facility in NV, where he honed his technical expertise in environmental compliance and process optimization. Over the years, he has held leadership roles in public utilities, private consulting, and national water organizations — bringing a unique blend of technical depth, strategic vision and collaborative spirit to every project.

He has led regional initiatives like OneWater Nevada, a pioneering potable reuse program, and co-founded the Nevada Water Innovation Institute and Partnering for Impact, both of which foster innovation and collaboration across the water sector. His expertise lies in helping communities navigate the intersection of water scarcity, climate resilience and infrastructure modernization.

At Jacobs, Mr. Warner continues to lead strategic growth efforts for water mega markets, helping communities implement programs that deliver affordable, equitable and lasting results. His work bridges technical excellence with community engagement, delivering infrastructure that reflects the values and needs of the people it serves.

Mr. Warner has served as President of the Water Environment Federation (WEF), Director of the Water Research Foundation (WRF) and Chair of independent expert panels for the National Water Research Institute (NWRI). He has also contributed to national initiatives with the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), US State Department, and WateReuse Association. With a passion for mentoring and a commitment to public service, Mr. Warner continues to shape the future of water through thought leadership, advocacy and collaboration.



Rob Whitson

Director of Operations, US West

Aquasight

Troy, MI

[LinkedIn](#)

Rob Whitson serves as Aquasight's Director of Operations for the US West Region. He has nearly two decades in the water, wastewater, and waterpower sectors with experience working with large municipal utilities, Fortune 500s, and others to drive adoption of new wastewater and water technologies, and design and implement water quality compliance programs that benefit rate payers and the environment.