

Mayors Water Council

FALL ISSUE 2024

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Mayors Convene in Kansas City



Mayor Deborah Robertson
City of Rialto, CA
Co-Chair, Mayors Water Council



Mayor Danene Sorace
City of Lancaster, PA
Co-Chair, Mayors Water Council

The Mayors Water Council (MWC) convened in Kansas City during USCM's 92nd Annual Meeting on June 21st, 2024. Led by Co-Chair Mayor Deborah Robertson of Rialto, CA, a host of Mayors, business leaders, and the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) municipal ombudsman gathered to discuss pressing water issues.

Key discussion topics included several new regulations moving forward at EPA that will impact local governments, water investment financing options for upgrades, best practices from the City of Rialto, and innovative new approaches for wastewater treatment facilities.

Mayors assembled with subject-matter experts including **Jamie Piziali** from the EPA as well as MWC Water Development Advisory Board members such as **Black & Veatch** and **Veolia North America**.

Piziali updated Mayors regarding the Agency's upcoming regulatory agenda for 2024 including EPA's recently released combined sewer system (CSS) guide for communities reaching the end of their long-term control plans.





Meeting Recap: Kansas City

Stephen Dopudja (CEO and President of Dopudja Wells and Consulting) gave an overview of the city's water purchase agreement with Inland Empire Utilities Agency (IEUA). As the cost of maintaining a reliable level of service continued to increase and impact ratepayers, the city became interested monetizing its recycled water as an annual revenue source. The 50-year partnership with IEUA will allow the city to gain increased financial capacity while the recycled water will serve as a resource to improve the resiliency and environmental health of the region.

Francesca McCann, Director of Alternative Funding, Financing and P3 from Black & Veatch, offered attendees an overview of available water infrastructure financing options and how best to navigate the funding landscape. McCann spoke on how the historic new investments through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law include funding through the SRF's for specific projects and programs, such as for lead pipe removal efforts and addressing emerging contaminants.

Additionally, Conference Staff provided a briefing on critical upcoming regulatory actions on water restructuring and cybersecurity. Recently, focus on EPA's regulatory environment has centered on lead and PFAS, however local leaders need to also be aware of water system restructuring proposals as well as forthcoming cybersecurity directives.

Finally, **Fredric Van Heems**, President and CEO of Veolia North America, gave an overview of the company's innovative work of transforming municipal wastewater facilities into hubs that support green jobs, climate resilience, and sustainability. Also known as an "Ecofactory," these hubs optimize municipal operations by providing economic, ecological, and educational improvements for the entire community.

Materials and presentations from this meeting can be found online [here](#).

The next 2024 Mayors Water Council Fall Meeting will be held in **San Diego on November 21-22 at the San Diego Westin Bavview**. You can find more information [here](#).



Pictured L to R: Fred Van Heems (Veolia North America), Jamie Piziali (EPA), and Stephen Dopudja (Dopudja Wells & Consulting)



Mayors Water Council Meeting during USCM's Annual Meeting in Kansas City, MO.

Mayor Danene Sorace Appointed Co-Chair of The United States Conference of Mayors Water Council by Conference President Andrew J. Ginther

Danene Sorace, Mayor of Lancaster, PA, was appointed Co-Chair of the Mayors Water Council (MWC). Mayor Sorace was elected in 2017 to serve as Lancaster's 43rd Mayor, the second woman to hold this post. The Mayor has been an active Member of the: MWC, the Women Mayors Leadership Alliance, and the Small Cities Forum.

As Mayor of Lancaster, one of the few Pennsylvania cities that continues to own and operate water and wastewater plants, Mayor Sorace has been involved with some of the most comprehensive water quality projects in Pennsylvania. Currently, the Mayor is navigating several additional new federal water mandates involving the replacement of all lead and galvanized drinking water service lines and monitoring drinking water sources for PFAS – a family of alkyd chemicals associated with firefighting foam and consumer products – as well as a consent decree to eliminate combined sewer overflows from its combined wastewater system.

"I'm honored to co-chair the Mayors Water Council alongside Mayor Robertson of Rialto, California. Every water system in America is navigating new federal mandates, and we must act to preserve and protect our water and maintain its affordability. The affordability question is one that I will continue to elevate. In Lancaster, the cost of rehabilitating aged infrastructure and complying with new federal mandates will make the City's water and sewer rate unaffordable for 43% of the City's households. It is of great concern."

EPA Regulatory Horizon

Water Systems and Cybersecurity

With the increase in cyber-attacks targeted across our nation's infrastructure facilities, including against water systems, the federal government has heightened its efforts on how best to reduce risk and safeguard the delivery of safe water services.

The White House's new [national security memorandum](#) designates EPA as the sector risk management agency responsible for water and wastewater systems. As such, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), in coordination with the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), will work with EPA to identify sector risk and inform recommendations to the President. The EPA is currently working alongside CISA as Chair of its [Government Coordinating Council](#) to collect input from public members regarding cybersecurity strategies and policies that are relevant to the resilience of the water sector.

Finally, the National Security Council and EPA invited all U.S. Governors to convene in a cybersecurity discussion to identify security challenges and address gaps in promoting these efforts. States were then asked to submit a water system cybersecurity action plan by the end of July.

Water System Restructuring

The EPA has proposed a new rulemaking, the [Water System Restructuring Assessment Rule](#), outlining a framework for States, communities, and public water systems to consider alternative restructuring options. Most importantly, the proposed rule would give States new authority to mandate restructuring assessments for public water systems.

The Conference submitted comments to EPA in conjunction with the National League of Cities (NLC) outlining our concerns. Overall, we urged the Agency that without additional modification to the final rule, the proposal would not ultimately meet the goals intended by Congress. We stressed the need for additional direct funding options for local governments, deeper affordability considerations, further clarification on key elements of the proposed rule, and expanded flexibility provisions for restructuring incentives.

Additionally, the Agency should further clarify that any final restructuring decisions would be voluntary from the public water system. Implementing any restructuring plan without appropriate coordination between the community, local and state officials, and water systems could result in affordability and operational challenges that are even more unsustainable than before restructuring took place. We urge EPA to engage stakeholders on these items before finalizing the proposed rule.

You can [view our letter here](#).

New Cost-Benefit Analysis of PFAS Drinking Water Rule

By Water & Health Advisory Council

PFAS occurrence data across national water systems, known as UCMR 5, revealed significant discrepancies in the EPA's assessment of impacted water systems. American Water Works Association (AWWA) worked with Chad Seidel, Corona Environmental and Black & Veatch to review the most recent PFAS occurrence data across national water systems to better understand the associated national costs to treat drinking water. Their findings [show that](#):

- The final drinking water rule would require an installation of treatment for PFAS that would reduce PFAS exposure from drinking water for 35 million Americans, only about half of the EPA's original estimate as part of the final rulemaking.
- More than 7,000 entry points will need capital improvement investments to install treatment of PFAS in drinking water. This cost will total an estimated **\$37.1 to \$48.3 billion** over the next five years. The annualized cost is estimated to be **\$2.7 to \$3.5 billion** when combined with costs of operations and maintenance. This is roughly twice the EPA's estimate as part of the final rulemaking.

The discrepancy further underscores the need for EPA to reassess and prioritize funding for the most pressing issues facing our nation's water systems.

Mayors Spotlight: Water in my Community

Mayor Jack Bradley City of Lorain, Ohio



Mayor Jack Bradley is currently serving his second term as Mayor of Lorain, Ohio. The city is located on the shores of Lake Erie and at the mouth of the Black River. A diverse community of 65,000 residents, Lorain has a historical industrial based of steel production, auto manufacturing, and ship building. While these industries have left the city, Lorain has been left with the task of remediating sites and retooling for the 21st century.

Mayor Bradley has been proactive in using government funding to address the restoration of the Black River, an area of concern as designated by the U.S. EPA. As a result, over \$30 million in grant funding has been leveraged and the Black River is on its way to being removed as an area of concern and the surrounding environment has seen the return of fish, fowl, and wildlife as well as potential economic development.

The city faced a dilemma in finding a solution in maintaining the Black River navigability yet depositing of dredge material from the river. Seeking funding to address this issue, the city secured \$4 million for planning and design from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and \$15.9 million from the Ohio EPA to construct a Dredge Material Reuse Facility (GEO POOL) that acts as a huge coffee filter to dewater dredge material leaving top grade topsoil that can be sold, and the proceeds used to sustain the facility in the future. Over 75,000 cubic yards of dredge material will be dewatered annually.

The city has also sought funding from State and Federal sources to revitalize the west bank of the Black River at Lorain Harbor. The land located where the Black River meets Lake Erie was formally a terminal for iron ore pellets for steel production. Using \$5.3 million in grants from the Ohio Department of Development and ARPA funds, the brownfield has been remediated and the property is now improved for mixed-used development.

In addition, the city was awarded \$1.6 million from the Great Lakes National Program Office Environmental Justice fund and another \$4 million from Congressman Bob Latta in Congressional Directed Funding to develop a “Sunset Pier”, which would enhance a fishing area and improve a public boat launch to better connect citizens in our underserved community with Lake Erie. The park will be dedicated to the international acclaimed author Toni Morrison, who was born in Lorain.

All in all, Lorain is a city moving forward by recovering from its past industrialization and preparing for a reinvigorated and exciting future.

Mayors Spotlight: Water in my Community

Mayor Justin Brooks City of Erie, Colorado



The Town of Erie, Colorado has been taking a proactive approach to meet the West's water challenges through several innovative projects that are both sustainable and efficient, in keeping with the Colorado Water Plan. Erie joined the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District's Windy Gap and Windy Gap Firing Projects to obtain and store 2,000 acre-feet of re-usable water to boost the Town's water supply. Erie has also been awarded a grant from the Colorado Water Conservation Board for the North Water Wells development, which would enhance local groundwater supplies and further reduce reliance on the Colorado River. The Town recently installed a hydro turbine at the Lynn R. Morgan Water Treatment Facility to create renewable energy by using waterflow to save money on operations and reduce the carbon footprint for the municipality. In addition, Erie will be using its 1,000-acre-foot re-use reservoir and a growing community-wide re-use water system, which will give Erie the capability to take in, store, and treat water for uses other than drinking.

To ensure that all water in Erie is being tracked and accounted for, the Town is leveraging AMI technology as a leak detection and notification system for its users. The intent is to have 100% AMI saturation so water waste can be significantly minimized. The Town is also improving its stormwater management and downstream water quality by constructing a wetlands lagoon in the historic Old Town neighborhood. This nearly completed project will treat storm flows, reduce contaminants, and create an interpretive park with walkways to educate the public about wetlands and water quality. Beyond these infrastructure and supply efforts, the Town has also created burgeoning water conservation programs. Erie started a Turf Replacement Rebate Program in 2022, and since that time, the program has helped replace 161,817 square feet (sq ft) of non-essential turf-grass with water-efficient landscaping. To lead by example, the Town is in the process of utilizing funding from multiple grant awards to convert more than 20,000 sq ft of turf-grass to low water use landscaping at the Leon A. Wurl Service Center in the coming years.

The Town also offers water efficiency rebate programs for residents to adopt water-saving fixtures, increase irrigation efficiency, and utilize rain catchment on their properties. While these programs are very successful, Erie is looking to the future and planning for responsible development while we continue to be stewards of natural resources. Erie has partnered with the WaterNow Alliance Project Accelerator to develop a water-wise landscaping ordinance for new development which will be extremely impactful as the Town continues to expand and grow. Through such measures, Erie has taken a lead role in its water stewardship on the Front Range and statewide. The Town of Erie continues to work toward a secure, reliable, and equitable supply of water into the future.

Mayors Spotlight: Water in my Community

Mayor Angela Birney City of Redmond, WA



Redmond, Washington boasts natural beauty and a thriving community of more than 80,000 people. One vital aspect to maintaining a high quality of life is safeguarding the drinking water supply. Mayor Angela Birney takes proactive steps to protect this invaluable resource. Water comes from two main sources, a shallow aquifer beneath the City (about 40% of the supply) and the Tolt Watershed, managed by Seattle Public Utilities. The remainder is supplied by the Cascade Water Alliance whose mission is to supply water to meet the current and future needs of its members. Mayor Birney is proud to serve on their executive board.

To protect its drinking water, Redmond created a comprehensive Wellhead Protection Program. City staff help businesses above the drinking water aquifer safely manage or reduce the use of hazardous materials. They review plans to prevent groundwater contamination and monitor quality at monitoring wells within the aquifer to safeguard the supply wells. Mayor Birney collaborates with city planners and environmental experts to create and enforce development restrictions within these areas, minimizing potential risks to the aquifer. Redmond recently completed the federally mandated lead service line inventory with no lead pipe found within the City's system.

Redmond's future of continued drinking water protection includes a capital program to replace all asbestos cement pipes and an advanced metering infrastructure pilot program to increase water delivery efficiency and conservation. Together with our partners, these actions ensure clean water is available for our region now and in the future.

Mayors Water Council

A Task Force of The U.S. Conference of Mayors

The Mayors Water Council (MWC) provides a forum for discussions of issues impacting how cities provide safe, adequate and affordable water and wastewater services and infrastructure in America's Principal Cities in the 21st Century. It is open to all Mayors, and functions as a USCM Task Force. The MWC focuses on water resources issues, including: watershed management; water supply planning; water infrastructure financing; rehabilitation of surface and sub-surface water infrastructure; water conservation; wetlands construction and education programs; water system program management and asset management. The MWC will continue to develop nonpartisan local government positions on Federal legislation, regulations and policy. The MWC acts through the USCM Environment Committee, and other Committees as appropriate, to propose and adopt resolutions on water related matters that benefits the nation's cities.



Mayors Water Council June 2024 Mayoral Membership



Co-Chairs

Deborah Robertson, Mayor of Rialto, CA

Danene Sorace, Mayor of Lancaster, PA

*Steven L. Reed
Mayor of Montgomery, AL*

*Becky Daggett
Mayor of Flagstaff, AZ*

*John. P Marchand
Mayor of Livermore, CA*

*Deborah Robertson
Mayor of Rialto, CA*

*Justin Brooks
Mayor of Erie, CO*

*Joe Ganim
Mayor of Bridgeport, CT*

*Joy Cooper
Mayor of Hallandale Beach, FL*

*Alix Desulme
Mayor of North Miami, FL*

*Kevin C. Richardson
Mayor of Lake Barrington, IL*

*John D. Noak
Mayor of Romeoville, IL*

*Mark W. Myers
Mayor of Greenwood, IN*

*LaToya Cantrell
Mayor of New Orleans, LA*

*Leirion Gaylor Baird
Mayor of Lincoln, NE*

*J. Christian Bollwage
Mayor of Elizabeth, NJ*

*David R. Mayer
Mayor of Gloucester, NJ*

*Timothy C. McDonough
Mayor of Hope, NJ*

*Robert T. Kennedy
Mayor of Freeport, NY*

*Thomas Roach
Mayor of White Plains, NY*

*Jamael Tito Brown
Mayor of Youngstown, OH*

*Sharetta Smith
Mayor of Lima, OH*

*Jack W. Bradley
Mayor of Lorain, OH*

*Steve Callaway
Mayor of Hillsboro, OR*

*Danene Sorace
Mayor of Lancaster, PA*

*Mary Lou Pauly
Mayor of Issaquah, WA*

*Angela Birney
Mayor of Redmond, WA*

*Ryan Sorenson
Mayor of Sheboygan, WI*

*Shawn N. Reilly
Mayor of Waukesha, WI*



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