2018–2019
AWWA IN ACTION

American Water Works Association
Dedicated to the World’s Most Important Resource®
Colleagues and Friends,

As chair of AWWA's Water Utility Council, I've seen firsthand the positive impact our Association's members, volunteers and leaders have on the water sector and the communities we serve. Our Capitol Hill presence and influence as a credible resource for water policy and public health are a valuable benefit to our members.

Together with our utility members, AWWA was instrumental in the 2018 passage of a bill re-authorizing the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA). The legislation also updates portions of the Safe Drinking Water Act to incorporate our recommendations regarding source water protection, security and resilience.

Another great achievement is the 2018 passage of a federal farm bill that included AWWA's legislative priorities. Thanks in large part to the efforts of AWWA members, the bill directs $4 billion over the next 10 years to conservation practices that protect sources of drinking water.

AWWA's work to establish the Water/Wastewater Agency Response Networks (WARN) assists communities struck by major hurricanes, mudslides, floods and wildfires. AWWA's analysis of past responses to Hurricanes Harvey and Irma provided federal policymakers with compelling information about prioritizing water service restoration. In 2018, utilities activated WARNs in Florida, Georgia, Tennessee, Virginia and the Carolinas in communities hit hard by Hurricanes Michael and Florence.

Water quality continues to be a hot topic with the public and media, and AWWA is engaged in many legislative and regulatory discussions about how best to protect public health. The Association ensures that the water utility voice is included in discussions about emerging contaminants such as PFOS/PFOA, and ongoing issues such as lead in drinking water.

AWWA initiatives to support the water sector are highlighted in this booklet. If your utility is not yet an AWWA utility member, please consider joining us.

Sincerely,

Kurt Vause
Chair, AWWA Water Utility Council
Bringing science, real-world experience to regulatory process

The experience and perspective of water utility professionals are critical in the development of effective federal and state regulations. AWWA maintains a strong voice and consistent presence with state and federal regulators to advocate for science-based rulemaking that leads to meaningful risk reduction. On all fronts of the regulatory process, staff and volunteers at the Section and Association levels are actively engaged developing official comments, participating in public meetings and providing regulatory agencies with relevant facts to inform policy decisions.

Recent actions include:

▲ AWWA brought the water utility perspective to the National Leadership Summit on PFAS in Washington, D.C., providing recommendations to address a growing national concern.

▲ Working alongside several water organizations, AWWA developed recommendations for new criteria to better define affordability for households and communities.

▲ With revisions to the Lead and Copper Rule forthcoming, AWWA engaged a team of drinking water experts and economists to prepare a cost-benefit analysis of potential changes.

▲ In an ongoing discussion on how to define and regulate “Waters of the United States,” AWWA advocated for the need to balance the protection of drinking water sources and the need for efficient permitting for water infrastructure and maintenance.
WIFIA funding revitalizing water infrastructure

After years of advocating for the creation of WIFIA, AWWA is celebrating the loan program’s enormous success for utilities. WIFIA exceeded expectations in its first two funding cycles, distributing $5 billion in loans for more than $10 billion in water projects and creating 155,000 U.S. jobs.

With the passage of America’s Water Infrastructure Act in fall of 2018, WIFIA is no longer only a pilot program. Responding in part to face-to-face meetings with AWWA members at the Water Matters! Fly In on Capitol Hill and continuing water sector advocacy, Congress has funded WIFIA at a healthy $50 million annually through 2020.

Demand for loans outpaces supply

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which runs the WIFIA program, received 62 letters of interest from water and wastewater utilities for the second round of loans in 2018. In total, utilities sought $9.1 billion in loans, far exceeding the agency’s $5.1 billion loan budget. In the fall, EPA invited 39 projects from 16 states and the District of Columbia to proceed to the application phase of the two-step process.

San Diego WIFIA loan to save an estimated $184 million

The City of San Diego, Calif., was awarded a $614 million WIFIA loan in November 2018 to finance nearly half of its $1.4 billion water purification project. The savings from the WIFIA loan compared to a typical bond issuance is estimated at $184 million.
WIFIA saves King County $32 million

The first approved WIFIA loan of up to $134.5 million was announced in April 2018 for King County, Wash., to help finance construction of a new combined sewer overflow facility in Seattle’s Georgetown neighborhood. The facility will treat up to 70 million gallons of stormwater and sewage that currently flow into the Duwamish River during heavy rains, subsequently draining into Puget Sound. The project, scheduled for completion in 2022, is expected to cost $275 million, with King County saving up to $32 million in financing costs through WIFIA compared with a bond issuance.

"King County and its customers were very pleased to secure the WIFIA loan for our project. Being able to secure that loan helped us keep our 2019 rate increase at 2.5 percent. There is value in certainty. It helps simplify rate making when you’re able to incorporate $135 million of financing at a known interest rate into your financial models.

– Dan Kaplan, financial services administrator, King County Wastewater Treatment Division"
Advancing an action plan for lead

Continuing into 2019, lead in drinking water remains a top concern for utilities, regulators and the public.

With the EPA working on much-anticipated revisions to the Lead and Copper Rule, AWWA adopted its first Lead Service Line Management policy statement. In formal comments to EPA in 2018, AWWA wrote that “Revisions to the Lead and Copper Rule] should advance strong customer protections today while we work for a future where lead is no longer in contact with the water we drink.”
Communicating with consumers

Frequent and transparent communications are essential to building consumer understanding about lead risks. To help utilities address lead risks with confidence and clarity, AWWA developed a Lead Communications Toolkit, with adaptable outreach documents, samples from colleagues across North America and off-the-shelf tools.

(awwa.org/lead-communications)

Refining corrosion control

Controlling corrosion is a critical element of reducing lead risks, and AWWA continues to help utilities review and refine their practices. AWWA’s M58 Manual of Water Supply Practice Internal Corrosion Control in Water Distribution Systems was recently updated, and the latest research continues to be shared through AWWA publications, events and in the Association’s online Lead Resource Community.

Getting the lead out

AWWA is a founding member of the Lead Service Line Replacement Collaborative, which encourages community-based approaches to replace lead service lines. To help utilities direct local efforts, the Association released a new standard, AWWA C810-17 Replacement and Flushing of Lead Service Lines.
AWWA celebrated a major legislative achievement on behalf of utilities large and small in 2018 with the passage of the farm bill, which, thanks in large part to Association efforts, recognized the connection between smart farming practices and clean drinking water.

The Association’s farm bill activity was spurred on by a series of water quality challenges resulting from nutrient runoff from agricultural operations. Most visible among them was the 2014 algal bloom in Lake Erie, which prompted a “do not drink” notice to the city of Toledo, Ohio.

In a multi-year, coordinated campaign that included hundreds of meetings on Capitol Hill, testimony before congressional committees, op-eds and public outreach, AWWA highlighted the benefits of federal programs that help farmers and utilities collaborate on source water protection. The result was legislation that included robust funding for farm conservation practices that protect drinking water sources and benefits for farmers who use practices that improve downstream water.

A guide for collaboration

In June 2018, the Association released a guide that highlights opportunities for water systems to use U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) conservation programs—particularly through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)—to expand the effectiveness of community partnerships.

“The USDA conservation programs have tremendous potential to forge partnerships that benefit both agricultural producers and water consumers,” explained Tracy Mehan, AWWA executive director of Government Affairs. “This guide provides an inventory of available programs, guidance on how to access those programs and real-life case studies that demonstrate the power of utility-farmer collaborations.”

(awwa.org/source-water-protection)
Draw me a picture...

A popular AWWA “whiteboard explainer” animation helped both legislators and the public clearly understand the connection between nutrient runoff and water quality. Released in early 2018 on AWWA’s YouTube channel, the video gave water professionals a simple way to introduce a complex subject to many audiences.

DECEMBER 2018
Final farm bill passes Congress with all AWWA ‘asks’ included

JANUARY 2018
AWWA publishes farm bill whiteboard animation to frame issues and partnerships

JUNE 2018
House and Senate each pass farm bills that recognize need for source water protection

JUNE 2018
AWWA releases guide to assist water systems in exploring USDA programs to protect source water

APRIL 2018
AWWA members take farm bill asks to Congress during Water Matters! Fly In

JANUARY 2018
U.S. Rep. Marcia Fudge introduces legislation with AWWA priorities for inclusion in farm bill
Protecting water systems against cyber attacks

With cyberattacks a growing threat to businesses and critical infrastructure in the United States, AWWA released a new online guide to help utilities protect themselves, *Cybersecurity Risk and Responsibility in the Water Sector*. This document helps utilities comply with America’s Water Infrastructure Act of 2018, which requires water systems serving a population of more than 3,300 to conduct risk and resilience assessments of their systems, including electronic, computer and other automated systems. Also available on AWWA’s Cybersecurity Guidance website is a Cybersecurity Use-Case Tool. ([awwa.org/cybersecurity](https://awwa.org/cybersecurity))

Cybersecurity is the top threat facing businesses and critical infrastructure in the United States, according to the Director of National Intelligence, Federal Bureau of Investigation and Department of Homeland Security.
Advanced WARNing

WARN prepares utilities to respond quickly and effectively to emergency events including hurricanes, flooding, earthquakes and wildfires. To apply real-time lessons learned by utility, state and federal officials involved in past emergencies, AWWA and WARN released in 2018 an After-Action Report on 2017 Hurricanes Harvey and Irma. It includes additional steps to help policymakers and utilities prepare for future emergency events that disrupt water and sewer utility service.

Emergency Response Best Practices Resources

AWWA offers these recently-released resources to reflect current best practices in emergency planning:


▲ Emergency Preparedness and Response for Water Utilities DVD. The DVD covers emergency preparedness requirements to help water utilities establish an acceptable level of emergency preparedness based on both identified and perceived risks.
Affordability

Wanted: sustainable infrastructure and affordable water services

Water rates are increasing faster than the cost of most other goods and services across North America, as water systems invest to renew aging infrastructure. AWWA is working at both federal and local levels to help utility members ensure sustainable, high-quality water services while maintaining rates that their customers can afford.

In 2018, AWWA approved an Affordability Policy Statement recommending that utilities work with their local, state, provincial and national governments to “ensure that applicable laws and policies do not impede utility efforts to address affordability challenges and evaluate new policies that allow low-income households to have access to utility services while maintaining the fiscal sustainability of utilities.”

There’s an increasing recognition in the water industry that affordability is essential to utilities being able to satisfy their primary mission of delivering quality water service. We recognize there are customers at the low end of the socio-economic spectrum who can’t afford basic sanitation and drinking water…. Our industry needs to better understand what affordability means and be able to provide assistance to those who need it.

— Michael Matichich, chair of the affordability subcommittee, AWWA Rates and Charges Committee
In the United States, federal policy has historically measured a household’s ability to afford water service based on a community’s median household income—an indicator that does not adequately capture the struggles of individual households with low incomes. AWWA is collaborating with the National Association of Clean Water Agencies and the Water Environment Federation (WEF) on cost-benefit analyses that more effectively convey the financial capacity of communities and individual rate payers to comply with regulatory requirements.

In August 2018, AWWA and WEF presented the ground-breaking Transformative Issues Symposium on Affordability in Washington, D.C., bringing together water sector professionals, consumer advocates, consultants and academics from across North America to explore challenges and solutions to the affordability conundrum. Information from that event and more affordability resources are available at awwa.org/affordability.

“The collective wisdom of water sector experts will help thread the needle of the complicated but solvable challenges of water’s affordability. We know water cannot become a luxury item that only some can afford and at the same time, full cost recovery is essential. Some communities are now looking the affordability challenge squarely in the eye. Solutions are best shared sooner rather than later.”

— David LaFrance, AWWA Chief Executive Officer
In today’s changing media landscape, how water professionals communicate externally is often as important as what they communicate. AWWA keeps utilities abreast of challenging media issues through Public Affairs advisories and Water Utility Insiders, helping them articulate real risks while bringing scientific perspective to broadcast and online reports.

**Tactical response**

At the beginning of 2019, the AWWA Public Affairs Council began work on a strategic, step-by-step risk communications guide to assist water and wastewater utilities in managing public communications crises. The guide is designed to help utilities respond to the increasingly common water quality news stories sparked by social media posts and advocacy reports.

**Unpacking the data**

The Safe Drinking Water Information System—SDWIS, as it is commonly known—is ground zero for EPA data on regulatory violations, but for most people, the data are confusing. A developing AWWA SDWIS communications resource will allow water professionals to better explain the meaning of the data and resulting statistics for the benefit of water consumers and decision-makers.

**Community engagement**

AWWA is developing a handbook that provides a framework within which water systems can consider community stewardship. This includes initiatives such as recruiting veterans into the workforce, efficiency and conservation efforts, and community education, with a special focus on environmental justice issues.
AWWA Utility membership improves your operations and creates smart water policy.

The Power of Utility Membership

▲ Learn about issues before they become full-blown crises
▲ Improve your day-to-day operations
▲ Stand with the water community to inform smart government regulations and legislation
▲ Provide professional development opportunities to staff to earn CEUs

Utility Members Get More

▲ AWWA Standards
▲ Regulatory and Legislative Alerts
▲ Media Advisories
▲ Water Utility Insider
▲ Public Affairs Assistance
▲ Special Tools and Resources
▲ Leadership Opportunities

Bill Young, Utility Director of St. John’s County Utility Department

“Utility membership with AWWA supports the Water Utility Council, and the WUC represents the water industry better than we ever could on our own. When I learned about the important policy work the WUC was accomplishing on behalf of AWWA members, I knew Utility membership was essential for St. John’s County.”

To maximize your benefits or learn more about Utility Membership options, please call 303.734.3471 or email membership@awwa.org