



The EffluentLine

Volume 55 | Number 4

Contents

Overview.....	Pg. 1
Contact Us.....	Pg. 2
Letter from the President.....	Pg. 3
Public Communication and Outreach Committee (PCOC).....	Pg. 4
Young Professional Committee Update	Pg. 5
Joint Fall Conference Recap	Pg. 7
Celebrating Excellence: 2024 Golden Manhole Awards	Pg. 9
Women in Water Fall Conference Breakfast 2024	Pg. 11
NWEA Awards Scholarships	Pg. 12
NWEA Featured Member: Jake Hansen	Pg. 13
Call for Papers: 68th Annual Great Plains Waste Management Conference ...	Pg. 15
2025 "SNOWBALL" Conference.....	Pg. 16



Todd Sukup receiving the Hatfield Award at the 2024 Joint Fall Conference.



Lucas Billesbach receiving the Bedell Award at the 2024 Joint Fall Conference.

Overview

The Nebraska Water Environment Association (NWEA) is a member association of the Water Environment Federation, a not-for-profit technical and educational organization that was founded in 1928. Its mission is to preserve and enhance the global water environment. Federation members are 41,000 water quality specialists from around the world, including environmental, civil and chemical engineers, biologists, government officials, treatment plant managers and operators, laboratory technicians, college professors, students, and equipment manufacturers and distributors.

The Effluent Line is an official publication of the Nebraska Water Environment Association, published by the Public Communications and Outreach Committee (PCOC). The Association is a non-profit corporation in the State of Nebraska dedicated to the improvement of water quality in the State of Nebraska. Editorials, Articles, Web Page content and Outreach Committee opinions are not necessarily official positions or endorsements of the Association, its officers, or committee member employers.

To submit news-articles or organization-related correspondence please go to the "Article Submittal Form" on the website (www.nebwea.org) under the **NEWSLETTER** drop down at the top of the main page.

For any other inquiries about the newsletter, website, or social media platforms please contact:

Brittni Stephens, PE - PCOC Chair

Nebraska Water Environment Association
2111 S. 67th Street, Suite 200 Omaha, NE 68106

Office: (402) 938-2463 **Cell:** (402) 430-1610

Email: bstephens@olsson.com

Where to Find Us

Online	www.nebwea.org
LinkedIn	www.linkedin.com/company/nebraska-water-environment-association
Facebook	https://www.facebook.com/NebraskaWEA/
Twitter/X	https://twitter.com/NebraskaWEA

SAVE THE DATES

Conference Dates	
Snowball Conference	January 22-23, 2025
Great Plains Conference	April 16-17, 2025
Heartland Conference	July 17-18, 2025
Joint Fall Conference	November 5-7, 2025

Executive Board Meetings	
January 22, 2025 (Snowball Conference)	10am - 12pm
April 15, 2025 (Annual Retreat)	9am - 3pm
April 16, 2025 (Great Plains Conference)	1:30pm - 3:30pm
July 17, 2025 (Heartland Conference)	10am - 12pm
November 5, 2025 (Joint Fall Conference)	3pm - 5pm
November 6, 2025 (Annual Business Meeting)	1:30pm - 3:30pm
November 7, 2025 (Joint Fall Conference)	10am - 12pm

<https://nebwea.org/training>

Contact Us: Board and Chairpersons

2024 Executive Board		
President	Brittany Travers	(402) 880-0321
President Elect	Blake Birkel	(402) 937-3680
Vice President	Marc Rosso	(531) 207-3244
Federation Delegate	Lucas Billesbach	(402) 319-5951
Treasurer	Ryan Hurst	(402) 443-3222
Secretary	Jeremy Walker	(402) 458-5657
Director at Large	Doug Glaze	(308) 324-3902
Director at Large	Darren Jack	(402) 742-2941
Director at Large	Shawn Ovenden	(402) 399-4896
Past President	George Hunt	(402) 554-4842
At Large Member	Scott Seelhoff	(402) 742-2941
At Large Member	Kylie Wilmes	(402) 727-2672
At Large Member	Lee Dunn	(402) 709-3646
WEF House of Delegates Speaker-Elect	Scott Aurit	(402) 926-7082
2024 Committee Chairpersons		
Arthur Sidney Bedell Award	Mike Milius	(308) 227-2630
Finance and Audit	Mike Milius	(308) 227-2630
Awards	Aaron Dressel	(402) 580-9758
Collection System	Adam Wilmes	(402) 250-3001
Constitution & Bylaws	Jeremy Walker	(402) 458-5657
Diversity, Equity & Inclusion	Garrett Lane	(402) 829-1328
Governmental Affairs	Derek Gardels	(402) 926-7121
Great Plains Waste Management	Daria Sakharova	(412) 580-2314
Industrial/Hazardous Waste	Dillon Devitt	(402) 926-7109
Life Member/Quarter Century	Jeremy Walker	(402) 458-5657
Mfr. & Representatives Committee (MARC)	Lee Dunn	(402) 709-3646
Membership	Jeff Saltzman	(402) 669-6016
Nominating	Lucas Billesbach	(402) 319-5951
NWOC Advisory/Training	Scott Seelhoff	(402) 727-2672
Pretreatment/Industrial Waste	Abhijeet Saraf	(217) 979-6333
Program	Blake Birkel	(402) 937-3680
Public Communications and Outreach	Brittni Stephens	(402) 430-1610
Public Education	Scott Seelhoff	(402) 727-2630
Resource Recovery/Biosolids	Keegan Bell	(402) 444-3503
Safety	Joel Jirak	(402) 458-5657
Scholarship	Dr. George Hunt	(402) 554-4842
Scott Wilber Award	Aaron Gustin	(402) 607-9470
Student Activities	Dr. George Hunt	(402) 554-4842
Training	Ryan Hurst	(402) 443-3222
William Hatfield Award Chair	Aaron Dressel	(402) 580-9758
Young Professionals	Abhijeet Saraf	(217) 979-6333
5S Award	Jon Harger	(515) 233-8599

PCOC Committee	
Chair - Brittni Stephens	(402) 430-1610
Newsletter	
HDR Graphics	(402) 399-4814
Daria Sakharova	(412) 580-2314
Jake Hansen	(402) 214-5301
Ryan Hurst	(402) 443-3222
Todd Boling	(402) 441-7965
Brian Gongol	(515) 979-2837
Scott Aurit	(402) 926-7082
Blake Birkel	(402) 937-3680
Aaron Dressel	(402) 580-9758
Sarah Espinosa	(515) 979-2837
George Hunt	(402) 554-4842
Jim Mahony	(515) 306-6000
Roger Protzman	(402) 844-3897
Jake Rink	(402) 951-2040
Leah Boudreau	(402) 742-7214
Marc Rosso	(531) 207-3244
Mike McBride	(402) 471-4244
Mike Milius	(308) 227-2630
Website	
Shawn Ovenden	(402) 399-4896
Social Media	
Edie Spencer	(402) 548-5049

Contributing Photographer

[Daryl Kottwitz Photography](#)

Letter from the President

This year has flown by, and I can't believe I'm writing my final President's letter. I'm grateful for the opportunity to lead this wonderful group and am proud to reflect on what our organization has accomplished together.



First and foremost, I'm pleased to share that I have officially passed the gavel to Blake Birkel as our new NWEA President. I have no doubt that under his capable leadership, NWEA will carry on the mission with the same commitment and passion.

Blake knocked it out of the park with his Fall Conference planning leadership. We had a record number of vendors in the exhibit hall and great participation from all four organizations, NWEA, NS-AWWA, SWANA and APWA. He also led the charge for signing an agreement for event management. Listening to member feedback, we brought on Expo Pass to elevate our fall conference experience. With streamlined badge printing, CEU tracking, and meal coordination we aimed to create a smoother, more efficient experience for all attendees. I also wanted to highlight the Women in Water Breakfast and Poker Tournament. Both are fantastic events and continue to have record attendance!

I am proud to share that we updated and merged the Constitution and Bylaws into a single, cohesive document, which was approved by our membership. A big thank you to Jeremy Walker for leading that effort. As part of this update, we also adopted a new Code of Conduct, reinforcing our commitment to integrity and accountability within our organization.

In addition, we are focused on enhancing our communications. This year, we signed a partnership with Kelman Services to revitalize the *Effluent Line*, aiming to bring a fresh look and enriched content that will keep our members informed and engaged. These new publications are set to launch in the first quarter of next year.

This year, we had the opportunity to utilize grant funds to support the University of Nebraska's workforce development initiative for teachers. Approximately 20 high school teachers attended the event this summer, which included a tour of Olsson and a dinner. This initiative is focused on educating teachers about the water and wastewater industry, with the goal of inspiring students to consider careers in this field. We are proud to have committed, along with NSAWWA, to supporting this initiative for two years, as it directly impacts the future workforce in our industry.

Our dedication to building connections extended to WEFMAX, where seven of our members traveled to three different locations. Their active engagement with industry professionals from across the nation strengthens our network and brings valuable insights back to our organization. We strongly encourage any NWEA member to attend a WEFMAX if interested. In 2025, the locations and dates are Oklahoma City, OK April 2-4; Salem, MA April 30- May 2; and Palm Springs, CA June 4-6. Our member association is slated to host a WEFMAX event in the next few years.

Financially, our organization remains strong. Diligent management has positioned NWEA well to continue investing in our members and initiatives, ensuring our continued growth and impact.

In closing, I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to each of you. Your engagement, enthusiasm, and support have made these achievements possible. As we look to the future, I am confident that NWEA will continue making a meaningful impact on the water and wastewater industry.

BRITTANY TRAVERS
NWEA Past President

The Dynamic Impact of the Public Communication and Outreach Committee (PCOC)

The Public Communication and Outreach Committee (PCOC) is more than a team; it's the voice of the Nebraska Water Environment Association (NWEA), shaping the way we engage, inform, and inspire our community. Acting as the bridge between technical expertise and public awareness, the PCOC ensures NWEA's work remains impactful and accessible. Here's a look at our journey, achievements, and what's on the horizon.

What We Do

The PCOC champions the dissemination of critical information and fosters collaboration across platforms to meet the needs of NWEA members and beyond. Key areas of focus include:

- Sharing insights on water environment topics, from regulations to educational initiatives.
- Managing communication through newsletters, websites, and social media.
- Delivering content tailored to member needs, all while maintaining fiscal responsibility.

Our Milestones

Key Accomplishments (2018–2023)

- **2018/2019:** Maintained communication with membership utilizing the NWEA website, social media, emails, and the newsletter.
- **2020:** Helped the community navigate the challenges of Covid-19 with enhanced outreach like targeted initiatives with direct email containing critical safety information to operators and other entities.
- **2021:** Held the first PCOC retreat, realigning goals and sharpening our focus.
- **2022:** Launched the first webcast, opening new channels for member interaction.
- **2023:** Focused on diversifying our voice, boosting volunteer efficiency, maintaining *The Effluent Line*, and supporting virtual events.

The Effluent Line

This year, we published four editions of *The Effluent Line*, NWEA's official publication. Exciting changes are ahead:

- Starting Q1 2025, Kelman Services will take over production, reducing volunteer workload and potentially generating revenue:
 - **2025–2026:** No cost to NWEA; Kelman oversees production.

- **2027 and beyond:** NWEA will receive \$500 per issue and 10% of ad revenue exceeding \$15,000 per issue.

Looking to 2025

As we step into the next chapter, our goals include:

- Deepening collaboration with Kelman Services to streamline newsletters and branding.
 - Launching a formal advertisement strategy to maximize revenue opportunities.
 - Considering external support for website administration and assistance expanding website functionality.
 - Expanding social media reach by reviving NWEA's Facebook presence.
 - Fostering collaboration across committees to produce timely, relevant content.
-

Navigating Challenges and Embracing Opportunities

Adapting to evolving needs and overcoming branding constraints have been learning experiences for the PCOC. The partnership with Kelman Services is a transformative step, freeing volunteers to focus on strategic priorities while ensuring high-quality publications and outreach.

The Road Ahead

The PCOC is poised to continue its mission of impactful communication, innovation, and engagement. Beyond newsletters and social media, our work connects people, ideas, and solutions, amplifying the collective voice of the water environment sector.

Together, we will keep pushing boundaries, embracing opportunities, and making a lasting difference for NWEA and the community we serve.

BRITTNI STEPHENS

Committee Chair

Young Professional Committee Update

UNL Mentorship Program

The 2024-2025 NWEA/NSAWWA mentorship program is off to a great start. 24 UNO & UNL students signed up for the program and were paired with mentors from various areas of the industry. Participating students range from freshmen to graduate students. Students and mentors will continue to meet throughout the academic year to discuss various personal and professional development topics.

Joint Fall Conference Poker Tournament

Conference attendees "Upped the Ante" this year for another successful Poker Tournament!

The Young Professional's Group Held their 13th Annual Texas Hold'em Tournament Fundraiser at the Joint NWEA/NSAWWA/ APWA/ SWANA Fall Conference in Kearney.

The evening had a great turnout and was a big success! Participants in the tournament had a lot of fun and the tournament may have gone all night if the event center had let us. In total, we had roughly over 80 players that competed, and the final four players ended up splitting the final prize. Because of the generosity of all the sponsors and players, we were able to raise over \$6,600 to benefit Water for People! A big thank and shoutout goes to Vessco and Gurney & Associates for sponsoring the Poker Emcee and drinks for the evening. The Young Professionals Committee will continue the tournament at next year's Fall Conference, and we hope to continue to grow the success of the event!

Continued on the following page.

Thank You to Our

Sponsors!



13th ANNUAL
TEXAS HOLD'EM
TOURNAMENT

Presented by:
NSAWWA/NWEA
Young Professionals Committee























































Emcee Sponsor

Bar Sponsor

Young Professional Committee Update

Winners

First Place	Wendell Love
Second Place	Kris Thompson
Third Place	Dan Denell
Fourth Place	Nate Williams
Fifth Place	Anthony Kobus



The final table: Lee Dunn (dealer), Wendell Love, Kris Thompson, Dan Denell, Nate Williams, Anthony Kobus, Matthew Pelton, Casey Ackermann, Brandon Zakrzewski

Beatrice WWTF Tour



This month the Student Engagement Subcommittee coordinated with the City of Beatrice to set up a tour of the Beatrice WWTF for UNL students. Students were guided through the facility and had the opportunity to see treatment processes including gravity separation, biological treatment via trickling filter and rotating biological contractors, UV disinfection, and centrifugal dewatering. The students had a lot of good questions and facility operators did a great job tying together different aspects of plant design and operations.

Q4 Professional Development Webinar

The YP Networking Subcommittee hosted a free informational webinar about flow measurement on Wednesday December 11 at noon. The webinar covered an introduction to flow monitoring basics for water and wastewater and real-world applications. 14 participants from 9 different organizations attended the webinar. Thanks to Mike Milius and Jeremy Walker for presenting!

Joint Fall Conference Recap

The 2024 Joint Fall Conference in Kearney was a vibrant gathering of industry professionals, bringing together the Nebraska Chapter of American Public Works Association (APWA), the Nebraska Water Environment Association (NWEA), the Nebraska Section of American Water Works Association (NSAWWA), and the Nebraska Chapter of Solid Waste Association of North America (NE SWANA). Attendees enjoyed a robust program of engaging presentations, thought-provoking panel discussions, and invaluable networking opportunities.



We were especially delighted to welcome Corey Williams, President and CEO of SmartCover Systems, who serves as a member of the Water Environment Federation (WEF) Board of Trustees. Corey brought great energy and provided valuable insights from his perspective as an engineer working on the manufacturing and software side of the industry. His contributions added a unique and dynamic element to the conference, and we're grateful for his participation.

The exhibit hall was once again a hub of activity, with every booth filled by generous exhibitors who not only showcased their innovative products and services but also stepped up to support the conference through sponsorships. Their contributions help keep this event accessible and affordable for all participants.

A highlight of this year's conference was the introduction of onsite badge printing with QR codes. This new system streamlined ticketing for tours/lunches/banquets and Continuing Education Unit (CEU) tracking. While there were a few lessons learned along the way, the system was widely deemed a success and will be refined for future conferences.

The Annual Business Meeting marked a key moment of the conference, with updates from leadership and the election of new board members. We are excited to welcome Daria Sakharova as she joins the board, and we look forward to her contributions to the association's mission.

Another major highlight was the Awards Banquet, an evening of great food, camaraderie, and celebration. Congratulations

to all the award winners who were recognized for their outstanding achievements and contributions to the industry!

- Hatfield Award – Todd Sukup (City of Sidney)
- Bedell Award – Lucas Billesbach (Embris Group)
- Life Member Award – Brian Clow (Carollo Engineers)
- Burke Award – Columbus Wastewater Treatment Facility
- Safety Awards (Gold)
 - 10+ Operators
 - Fremont Wastewater Treatment Plant
 - 5-9 Operators
 - Columbus Wastewater Treatment Facility
 - Norfolk Water Pollution Control Facility
 - City of Chadron Wastewater Treatment Facility
 - 1-4 Operators
 - City of Wahoo Wastewater Treatment Plant
 - Industrial
 - Michael Foods Wastewater Treatment Plant
 - Tyson Fresh Meats – Lexington Wastewater Treatment
 - Lagoons
 - Village of Denton Wastewater Treatment Facility
- Scott Wilbur Awards (Best in Class)
 - Small Municipal < 2 MGD
 - Beatrice Wastewater Treatment Facility
 - Medium Municipal 2 MGD – 5 MGD
 - North Platte Wastewater Treatment Plant
 - Large Municipal > 5MGD
 - Lincoln Northeast Water Resource Recovery Facility
 - Industrial Treatment
 - Hornady Manufacturing
- 4Ws
 - Charlie Kraus (City of Aurora)
 - Randy Johnner (City of Wahoo)
 - Ryan Kinsella (City of Omaha)
 - John May (City of Omaha)
- Golden Manhole Award
 - Emily Holtzclaw (Jacobs)
 - Chris Koenig (HDR)
- 5S
 - Derek Gardels (HDR)
 - Darren Jack (HDR)
 - Jeremy Walker (Olsson)

Joint Fall Conference Recap

For 2024 Fall Conference photos taken by Daryl Kottwitz, visit <https://darylkottwitzphoto.smugmug.com/Events/2024-APWANSAWWANWEASWANA-Conference>

The 13th Annual Texas Hold'em Poker Tournament, hosted by the Young Professionals Committee, was another smashing success, raising significant funds for the Water for People foundation. The fundraiser combined fun and philanthropy, with attendees showing their competitive spirit for a great cause.

Despite the late-night festivities of the poker tournament, many rallied the next morning to attend the Women in Water Breakfast. This inspiring event celebrated the

accomplishments and leadership of women in our industry, fostering meaningful discussions and connections over a delicious breakfast. Kudos to everyone who made the effort to participate despite the lack of sleep!

We extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who attended, presented, volunteered, or supported this year's conference. Your enthusiasm and engagement make this event a cornerstone for learning, connection, and collaboration in our industry. Here's to building on this success for an even better event next year!

BLAKE BIRKEL, PE

NWEA President-Elect, Program Committee Chair



Celebrating Excellence: 2024 Golden Manhole Award

Adam Wilmes

We are thrilled to spotlight the achievements of our 2024 Golden Manhole Society (GMS) inductees, honoring individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the collection systems field.

About the Award

This prestigious award, approved by the Water Environment Federation Collection Systems Committee, celebrates those who have significantly advanced the development and professionalism of the Collection System Industry at a national level. The Federation encourages all Member Associations to adopt this award, emphasizing its role in recognizing exceptional contributions within their regions.

The GMS Award highlights:

- Recognition specific to collection system professionals
- Visionary insights into asset management trends
- A touch of humor and relatability

Honoring Chris Koenig

Among this year's inductees is Chris Koenig, a dedicated professional whose career embodies innovation, collaboration, and leadership in collection system management. Known for his strategic thinking and ability to connect with stakeholders at all levels, Chris has made a lasting impact on infrastructure systems across Nebraska and beyond.

Chris's hands-on approach and dedication to practical, sustainable solutions have earned him the trust and respect of both his peers and the communities he serves. His expertise in managing complex projects has strengthened critical infrastructure, ensuring its resilience for future generations.



Career Highlights:

- Leading innovative solutions for **the downtown Plattsmouth Sewer Separation Project**, a transformative initiative that required close cooperation with City personnel, business owners, and the public.
- Driving the development of **risk-based asset management plans** for sewer systems, helping clients implement sustainable and resilient infrastructure improvements.
- Guiding efforts in **sewer rehabilitation, stream restoration**, and other critical environmental projects that address community challenges with precision and care.



Reflections from Chris

In his own words, Chris shared his gratitude for the recognition:

"I'm thankful for the Golden Manhole Society recognition. It's an honor being recognized by my peers for my efforts in the industry. One of my favorite projects is the downtown Plattsmouth Sewer Separation Project. We were faced with challenges that required innovative solutions and close cooperation with City personnel, business owners, and the public. The resultant project shows how sewer engineers can work with community leaders to use a sewer project to transform a downtown and a city."

Chris's reflection underscores his commitment to fostering collaboration and innovation, qualities that continue to inspire those who work alongside him.

Congratulations to Chris Koenig

We extend our heartfelt congratulations to Chris and all our 2024 Golden Manhole Society inductees for their invaluable contributions to the collection systems industry. Their work not only advances the field but also strengthens the communities they serve.

Stay tuned for more inductee stories in the upcoming *Effluent Line* newsletter!

Celebrating Excellence: 2024 Golden Manhole Award

Honoring Emily Holtzclaw

Among this year's inductees is Emily Holtzclaw, a dedicated professional with over 25 years of experience advancing collection system management. Known for her strategic vision and collaborative spirit, Emily has earned the trust and respect of collection system owners throughout eastern Nebraska.

Emily approaches her work with a historian's curiosity and a forward-thinking mindset, committed to solutions that endure for generations. Her expertise has been pivotal in guiding strategic improvements and strengthening infrastructure to serve communities now and in the future.

Her career highlights include:

- Leading the City of Omaha's first comprehensive CMOM (Capacity, Management, Operation, and Maintenance) self-assessment with the EPA.
- Developing risk-based asset management plans for gravity sewer systems and lift stations, offering clients practical roadmaps for sustainable, resilient infrastructure.
- Contributing to stream restoration, sewer rehabilitation, and CSO (combined sewer overflow) control projects.

Emily's technical expertise and proactive approach have consistently delivered exceptional results, helping communities address complex environmental challenges. Her professionalism and relatable style make her a trusted leader and collaborator, leaving a lasting impact on colleagues and clients alike.



Reflections from Emily

In her own words, Emily shared her thoughts on the award:

"Receiving the Golden Manhole Society award was a complete surprise, and I am truly honored to be selected. It was an added bonus that Adam presented the award! This recognition is particularly

meaningful because it represents a client's appreciation for the support we provided.

I found it incredibly rewarding to engage with the City of Omaha staff—from management to O&M crews—gaining insights into their operations and challenges. This collaboration enabled us to identify shared goals, provide data-driven solutions, and create a roadmap for future planning."

Emily also shared some fun moments from her early career, including a confined space entry while mapping storm sewers and a stream survey, underscoring her hands-on dedication to the field.

Congratulations to Emily Holtzclaw and all our 2024 Golden Manhole Society inductees for their invaluable contributions and commitment to excellence in collection system management!

Stay tuned for more inductee stories in the upcoming *Effluent Line* newsletter.



Women in Water Fall Conference Breakfast 2024

The journey of our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I) committee hasn't been without its challenges. Early on, it was tough to find the right balance between meaningful conversation and productive outcomes. But in our third year of event planning, we've refined our approach, creating events that resonate with participants and foster an inclusive community. Our semi-annual breakfast and lunch gatherings, which alternate between the Great Plains Conference in La Vista and the Fall Joint Conference in Kearney, have become a cornerstone of this effort. These events now serve as more than just a chance to network—they are an essential platform for building connections, igniting dialogue, and generating purpose to the committee's values.

Our "Women in Water" (WiW) events are designed to provide a safe space for everyone, particularly those looking for community and solidarity in the water and environmental sectors. They've proven invaluable in fostering authentic relationships and conversations that go beyond surface-level networking.

One of the standout elements of our events is the atmosphere we create. By kicking off each gathering with a casual icebreaker and a meal, we help participants relax and fuel up before diving into more complex discussions. This informal setting encourages attendees to interact more freely, giving them the chance to connect with others they might not typically engage with during the busy conference schedule. And when those deeper conversations begin—often touching on a range of personal, professional, and societal issues—it's much easier to be vulnerable and open, knowing that everyone is there with a shared purpose.

To ensure that our events remain productive and stay on track, moderators are tasked with facilitating conversations around carefully selected topics, ensuring that discussions stay solution-oriented. With the ability to prepare beforehand, moderators guide attendees toward discussions that explore real-life challenges, identify best practices, and suggest improvements. By framing conversations in a positive, solution-driven way, moderators keep the group energized and forward-thinking, fostering a culture of collaboration and mutual support within the industry.

Key Topics and Questions

The success of these events hinges largely on the topics we choose to discuss. These questions and topics are carefully chosen to encourage reflective and forward-thinking conversations:

Finding Success through Different Stages of Life

- Have you ever experienced an event that has drastically changed your life and/or career path? How did your company (coworker, management, mentor, etc.) or a professional organization assist you during this time?

Bystander Intervention

- What are some reasons you might not intervene in a situation where someone needs help? ie: fear of personal safety, not knowing how to intervene, not realizing it's happening. How does one balance their personal safety and well-being with the responsibility to intervene?

Professional Development & Mentorship

- Do you feel as though you grow more with a mentor with a similar or different mindset to yours? And why? What are the benefits to both sides?

Generational Differences

- Have you noticed differences in preferred communication among generations? How have you navigated the communication differences? ie: Phone call, video call, email, or text.

Beyond serving as a kick-off for conferences, these events act as a launchpad for the rest of the year. They help attendees refocus, realign, and set goals for personal and professional development. While the challenges facing the water and environmental sectors are many, these gatherings are a reminder that the work we do is important and that we are all in it together. They offer an opportunity to reflect on what has worked well, learn from each other, and ultimately, find solutions that contribute to the greater good of our communities and industries.

NWEA Awards Scholarships To Five University Of Nebraska-Lincoln Students

The Nebraska Water Environment Association (NWEA) recently awarded scholarships to five University of Nebraska-Lincoln Students for their commitment to the field of water and environmental engineering.

Three undergraduate UNL Civil and Environmental Engineering students earning scholarships from the NWEA were Anna Dvorak, Heather Riensche, and Jacob Zambreno. One Master's student studying Environmental Engineering, Aashutosh Pant and one Ph.D. candidate in Environmental Engineering, Noe Hernandez were the other two scholarship winners.

Scholarships are based on academic excellence, commitment to the field, demonstration of leadership skills and involvement in the community. Students with clear, well-defined career goals in water and environment engineering are favored because it demonstrates their potential to make a positive impact to the industry.

The Nebraska Water Environment Association (NWEA) is a non-profit organization comprised of professionals dedicated to protecting Nebraska's water quality. NWEA is a member association of the Water Environment Federation (WEF®), which is a not-for-profit technical and educational organization of 34,000 individual members and 75 affiliated Member Associations representing water quality professionals around the world. Since 1928, WEF and its members have protected public health and the environment. As a global water sector leader, our mission is to connect water professionals; enrich the expertise of water professionals; increase the awareness of the impact and value of water; and provide a platform for water sector innovation.

NWEA Featured Member: Jake Hansen

Hello everyone thanks for taking the time to read this or at least making sure that this fine publication is placed in the recycle bin and not the trash. I have been asked to do this a few times by Super-Superintendent Jeff Saltzman and left him hanging on a number of promises to get this to him for inclusion in the latest *Effluent Line*.



I am sitting here about an hour and half before the latest deadline and I suppose its time to rise to the occasion and provide something. I was given a number of questions to pick from for this member spotlight, but like usual I am going to do what I want and tell it how I see it. So get ready for the my story when it comes to this great industry and how it all was set into motion and why I am so happy it did.

I fell into a career in wastewater, I would like to say only figuratively but I would be lying if I said I haven't fallen in literally also. I wasn't a studious or well-behaved student in high school but I was good at problem solving and meeting a deadline, lots of homework done the morning it was due. Well, the ACT proved I was good at problem solving and a meeting between my college entry councilor and dad confirmed that engineering, specifically that of the civil kind would be my route of studies. I was present at the meeting but had little input in the conversation, by choice, if this seems like I was being railroaded into something I had little desire for. Cue 5.5 years later and I'm the proud owner of a bachelors of science in civil engineering from the powerhouse school of the University of Nebraska at Omaha. UNO being a commuter school at the time I made little room for traditional career shaping exercises like clubs, internships, and other networking opportunities. So I found myself making pizzas at Big Freds and trying to decide what to do with my degree, including a brief flirtation with Marines that ended with me getting up in the middle of my military entry process procedure and requesting the first cab out of there, but that's a longer story for a different time. I continued the process of falling into my career by taking the first job that I was offered which was apparently the one that nobody else wanted. I accepted a position as an entry level engineer for the Indian Health Service on the Pine Ridge Indian

Reservation in South Dakota. Providing community and individual water and wastewater services to the residents of Pine Ridge was our primary goal. The remote location, large service area, distant supervision, crime and poverty factors of the region all made this a particularly challenging position for a first-time engineer. But the client interaction, field testing for design, ROW and Land Ownership issues, Contracting and Bidding, Inspection, and many other duties that might be shared by a team were the sole responsibility of me. Although only a few years of my career were spent there it taught me valuable lessons that I still use today. Most importantly it taught me how to take a project from conception to operation, and all the roadblocks that exist in that path, and the confidence to make decisions best on the best-known info and move forward.

Although I was sad to be done with the people and the area that I came to know as family and friends, I was happy to get back to one of what I considered the one of the best cities in the US, the City of Omaha. Getting on with the City of Omaha with its benefits, work life balance, and stability was a great opportunity in my mind. Even with all those silver linings you might be surprised how many times in the first two years I thought about quitting and trying something else. There are only so many curb access ramps one can design before you are having nightmares about them. Once again, I fell into another opportunity that shaped my career. An engineering position opened up at the Papio WWTP and I was asked if I would be interested. If it was the Indian Health Service that helped shape me into my professional self, it was at Papio where what I am today was truly chiseled into being. It provided me the opportunity to take those small project lessons and apply them to multi-million-dollar designs and hundreds of millions of dollar construction projects. They say it takes a village and I could not agree more. I have had so many people, Plant Management, Plant O&M Staff, Public Works Support Staff, Consultants, Contractors, Regulators, Equipment Vendors, Utilities, and many others help me along the way. If I am able to give back half of what was shared with me, I will be a lucky man.

Continued on the following page.

NWEA Featured Member: Jake Hansen

So you may ask yourself, “Jake, good story I guess, but what the hell are you trying to share? What can I take from this?”

- Don’t be afraid to not have a plan, or not know what’s next, or take a leap of faith. There are so many opportunities in this industry that you might not be aware of.
- Appreciate and be thankful that you are part of a team making this world a better place. Celebrate yourself!!
- Take advantage of the people and networking our association provides. I have met many who I would consider lifelong friends

- The people in this industry are without equal. I consider myself blessed to be part of it.

If you have any questions or feel I might be able to help in any way, please don’t be shy. Jake.hansen@cityofomaha.org is only a click away.

Thank you.

P.S. I would be remiss if I didn’t mention my Beautiful Wife Jackie who is my everything and I would be lost without. Also, our sometimes behaved goldendoodle Gus.

Call For Papers:

68th Annual Great Plains Waste Management Conference

April 16th & 17th, 2025 | Embassy Suites, La Vista Nebraska

Return by January 31st, 2025 by email to Daria Sakharova (dsakharova@gbateam.com) or Sean Bell (sean.bell@hdrinc.com)

The Great Plain Waste Management Conference committee on behalf of the Nebraska Water Environment Association (NWEA) is conducting a Call for Papers. Proposed presentations should conform to at least one of the following topics:

- Industrial and Hazardous Waste
- Wastewater Treatment Facilities
- Wastewater Collection Systems
- CSO
- Regulatory Compliance
- Wet Weather
- Water Quality
- Stormwater Collection and Treatment
- Technology Innovation
- Young Professionals

If you are interested in proposing a paper, please complete the following information for consideration by the committee:

1. Speaker Information:

Name: _____

Company: _____

Title: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone No.: _____

Fax No.: _____

Email: _____

2. Title of Presentation:

3. Please provide a short description (abstract) of paper to be presented. Attach additional sheets as necessary.

4. Length of Presentation Desired (typically 30 or 45 minutes slots are provided):

5. Other Comments or Notes:

6. Great Plains Waste Management Committee Contact Information:

Daria Sakharova, Committee Chair

GBA

10212 F Street

Omaha, NE 68127

Phone No. (402) 513-3154

E-mail: dsakharova@gbateam.com

Sean Bell, Committee Vice-Chair

HDR

1917 S 67th Street

Omaha, NE 68106-2973

Phone No. (402) 399-4834

E-mail: sean.bell@hdrinc.com

2025 “SNOWBALL” Conference

Sponsored by NWEA/NWOD and the League of Nebraska Municipalities-Utilities Section

Location: Holiday Inn, 110 2nd Ave., Kearney, NE

Date: January 22-23, 2025

Registration: 7:30-8:30 a.m. on January 22, 2025

Participant:

Registration (includes lunch and breakfast)

Members (NWEA/NWOD or Utilities Section)

Non-Members

\$150

\$190

Topics include: Collection and Treatment Systems, Operation/Maintenance Practices, Lab Applications, Facility Upgrade Projects, Engineering Projects, Infrastructure Improvements, Regulatory Updates, Safety, and much more.

For sleeping room reservations, call 1-308-237-5971 or 855-444-5769 option “0” and tell them you are attending the *Snowball Conference* to receive the special rate of \$124.95. This room rate will be guaranteed only up to December 25, 2024.

Vendor:

Please see back of this page for Exhibitor Registration

PLEASE PRE-REGISTER USING THE FORM BELOW!

2025 “SNOWBALL” Conference January 22-23, 2025

Municipality/Organization _____

Name(s) _____

Water (1-4) Grade _____ License # _____

Backflow Grade 6 _____ License # _____

Wastewater Grade _____ License # _____

Registration: \$150 for members; \$190 for non-members

Bill me later at this address _____

Email _____ Phone _____



Mail registration and payment to:

Utilities Section, League of Nebraska Municipalities
206 S 13th Street, Suite 800, Lincoln, NE 68508

Call: (402) 476-2829 or Fax: (402) 476-7052

Email: info@lonm.org

Register online with a credit card: lonm.memberclicks.net/2025-snowball-conference

34TH ANNUAL "SNOWBALL" WASTEWATER OPERATOR CONFERENCE



January 22-23, 2025

Holiday Inn, Kearney, Nebraska

Sponsored by the Utilities Section – League of Nebraska Municipalities
and NWEA/NWOD

Exhibitor Registration

Firm name (as you want it to appear on program): _____

Firm Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ FAX: _____

Email: _____ Website: _____

Representatives attending (includes lunch):

Name: _____ Title: _____

Name: _____ Title: _____

Additional Representatives (\$75 per person includes lunch):

Name: _____ Title: _____

Name: _____ Title: _____

PLEASE COMPLETE A PARTICIPANT REGISTRATION IF YOU PLAN TO ATTEND ANY CONFERENCE SESSIONS.

(Check One)

_____ Contribute to Conference Sponsor Fund \$100

_____ Reserve a Display Table* (two lunches included with table) \$300

_____ Reserve a Display Table* (two lunches included with table) AND

Contribute to Conference Sponsor Fund \$400



Each additional representative x \$75 (includes lunch) = \$ _____

Grand Total: \$ _____

***If reserving a display table, please complete the following:**

Does your display table require electricity? Yes _____ No _____

Display Backdrop (check one): Free Standing Display Board _____ Tabletop Display Board _____ Table for Literature Only _____

For exhibitor set up times, please contact the Holiday Inn at 1-308-237-5971.

There is a limited number of display spaces available; therefore, tables will be assigned on a first-reserved basis. Associate members will receive first priority of the registrations received by January 10, 2025.

Thank you for your participation! We look forward to seeing you at the 2025 NWEA/NWOD/League of Nebraska Municipalities Annual Snowball Conference.

Mail registration and payment to: Utilities Section – League of Nebraska Municipalities, 206 S 13th Street, Suite 800, Lincoln, NE 68508, or fax form to 402-476-7052; email to info@lonm.org; or register online with a credit card at lonm.memberclicks.net/2025-snowball-conference-exhibitor.

The EffluentLine

Nebraska Water Environment Association

Office of the Secretary

Jeremy Walker

601 P Street, Suite 200

Lincoln, NE 68508

402.474.6311

www.nebwea.org

[f /NebraskaWEA](https://www.facebook.com/NebraskaWEA)

The Effluent Line Volume 55 | Number 4

Quote

*"In time and with water,
everything changes."*

– Leonardo da Vinci



*Final table at the Joint Fall Conference Annual Texas Hold'em Poker
Tournament fund raiser.*