



Environment Association

Montana Water Newsletter



Issue 5 – April 2018

Free Materials: Value of Water at WEF

The Value of Water Campaign is an organization supported by top leaders from across the water industry to promote awareness of the importance of water in all its forms and uses. The organization focuses on public education and dissemination of information on the value of water to drive home the importance of investment in this most precious resource and the infrastructure to support its many uses. WEF is a supporter of the Value of Water Campaign and has made some educational materials available for FREE on its website:

<http://www.wef.org/resources/f-or-the-public/value-of-water/>.

Check it out and see if there is something you might want to use to communicate the value of water and the cost to keep it clean to your rate payers.

STATE OF THE WATER INDUSTRY REPORT

For the past 15 years AWWA has produced an annual State of the Water Industry Report. This report uses questionnaires sent by email to utilities in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico. The 2018 survey results were based on 967 respondents, most of them AWWA members. The AWWA Connections newsletter (<https://www.awwa.org/publications/connections/connections-story/articleid/4944/2018-state-of-the-water-industry-report-reveals-long-term-trends.aspx>) described the responses as a “deep dive into the issues facing the sector and a roadmap for water professionals.” A few results are summarized here:

The AWWA Connections article states that we are still facing many of the same issues as in 2004, especially about aging infrastructure – a very disheartening result.

For a fourth year running, concerns about financing for capital improvements, renewal, and infrastructure replacement are topping the list. This is closely followed by long-term water supply availability and public understanding of the value of water systems and water resources. About the latter two, respondents felt that the water industry has been doing a good job communicating with regulators and rate payers but has done a poor job communicating the difference between the cost of service and rates to customers so that they will appreciate the value of safe drinking water and understand the necessity for all users to invest in the support of current and future supply of safe water.

If you find yourself struggling to cover the cost of supplying water you are not alone, over 25 percent of respondents reported the same. And when looking into the future, over 30 percent of respondents predicted difficulties covering the cost of services. On the positive side, a few more respondents reported that their utility’s access to capital is as good or better than at any time in the past 5 years.

THE COST OF CLEAN

Water is free, keeping it clean, safe, & flowing is not. We must invest in our systems.

\$4.8 trillion to maintain water & wastewater systems

\$5.98 trillion to maintain stormwater systems

A topic that seems to become more and more relevant as natural disasters appear to be on the increase, is emergency preparedness. Over half of responding utilities reported having emergency preparedness plans. However, the largest increase in concern over responses from past years is the issue of cybersecurity.

If you would like to read more, please follow the above link. The report itself will be posted on the AWWA website soon.

VALUE OF WATER

- **60%** of Americans are in favor of paying more to invest in water infrastructure.
- **23 to 1** = return for U.S. public health from early clean water investments.

Water Week 2018

This week (April 16 – 21) is Water Week. This is a time when water and wastewater professionals from all disciplines meet in Washington, D.C., to bring awareness of issues such as infrastructure funding, affordability, regulatory reform, and research support to the attention of state and national representatives. WEF and AWWA along with other water organizations are again co-hosting the National Water Policy Fly-In event from April 17 – 18 in Washington. This event takes place annually and attendees have the opportunity to hear from high-level Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) staff, members of Congress and Congressional staff, advocacy professionals, utility experts, and more about current policies relating to water and wastewater infrastructure planning and support.

Nate Weisenburger, Secretary/Treasurer of the Montana Section AWWA is representing Montana along with one or two others. The summary document at the below link outlines the requests for funding and policies that WEF is communicating to Congress and federal agencies. Check it out at <https://www.wef.org/globalassets/assets-wef/5---advocacy/water-week/water-week-2018-policy-asks.pdf>.

WEFTEC OPERATOR INGENUITY CONTEST

Give your wastewater system operators the chance for the national recognition they deserve for coming up with ingenious fixes to everyday problems. Check out the Operator Ingenuity Contest at <https://www.weftec.org/ingenuity/>. This contest has discovered about 40 award-winning fixes in its first 6 years. Entries are judged on safety, resourcefulness, and how transferable the ideas are. The criteria are kept simple to encourage all kinds of entries. Past winners have included painting buildings different colors to make deliveries easier, building a replica manhole, lateral, and cleanout cap to show customers how smoke inspections work, and a device to safely and easily lift the clarifier skimmer in the winter to prevent the skimmer from freezing to the grease box.

One of the past winners was Andy Loudermilk from the Bigfork Water and Sewer District. He received this award for his invention of the “scum sucker.” Loudermilk repurposed an old rotary-lobe positive displacement blower into a vacuum to remove scum from the top of the facility’s membrane bioreactor tanks and deposit it into the facility’s solids holding pit. Other awards were given for solutions as simple as installing a trough to catch chemical spills and as complex as developing a tool to spot deliver root pesticide inside of sewer pipes.

If your operators have ever rigged a bucket with a hole to catch and deliver fluid or repurposed old truck parts to help with a task related to your wastewater system, it is worth submitting. The only catch, the utility or operator will need to be a WEF member. Quick, join WEF and then submit your worthy invention!

(See <https://wef.org/membership/join-wef/membership-categories/>)

INFRASTRUCTURE WEEK IS BACK!

In just over one month, during May 14 through 21, will be the 6th annual National Infrastructure week. During this week, events are organized countrywide, including here in Montana, to educate and create awareness about the infrastructure needs in our country. This includes the buried infrastructure for water and wastewater systems. Stay tuned to the website of Infrastructure Week 2018 (<http://infrastructureweek.org/>) or the website of the Montana Infrastructure Council (<http://mtinfrastructure.org/>) to find out what may be planned in the country and here in Montana. An email from Infrastructure Week 2018 sent to subscribers summarized things succinctly:

“What: Infrastructure Week is a week-long series of national programming to draw attention to infrastructure's importance to our economy, jobs, communities, and future. Led by our Steering Committee and coordinated by more than 300 Affiliates, we'll host hundreds of events around America, speak out in the press, reach millions of citizens through social media, and drive home the message that too many Americans are still waiting for modern, fast, reliable, and safe infrastructure. And while we wait, the future won't. It's #TimeToBuild.

When: May 14-21, 2018

Where: In Washington, D.C., around America, in the press, and on social media

Who: You. Your company. Your mayor, state legislator, or Congressional delegation. Your water and electric utilities and public transit agencies. Your trade association or your members. Your local Chamber of Commerce, contractors, and labor unions. We are all stakeholders in our nation's transportation, water, energy, and communications infrastructure. We are all in this fight together.

How to Participate: There is no cost to participate (except the cost of inaction). Your organization can formally become part of Infrastructure Week by becoming an Affiliate. Then use our toolkit to help you plan an event, participate in the press and on social media, and tell your story.”

Montana Statewide Water and Wastewater Rate Study

Are you curious about how the water and wastewater rates in your community compare to those of other communities in Montana? The Department of Natural Resources & Conservation (DNRC) publishes a statewide rate study every couple or years and posts them on the DNRC website. A link is posted on the website of the Water, Wastewater and Solid Waste Action Coordinating Team (W2SACT) at <http://dnrc.mt.gov/divisions/cardd/wasact>. If you are interested and would like to see the 2014 and 2016 rate studies, check the links under the “Publications” heading. The 2018 rate study is close to being finalized and a link will be posted on this website as well. You may also find other useful information on this webpage related to project funding, help with hiring an engineer, water and wastewater guides, and more.

