88TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

September 15-18, 2026 | Radisson Plaza Hotel | Kalamazoo, MI

MI-ACE 2026

Still Making Waves

Join your fellow water peers and the Michigan Section of the American Water Works Association at the 88th Annual Conference and Exhibits (MI-ACE 2026) at the Radisson Plaza Hotel in Kalamazoo.

MI-ACE 2026 will once again bring together water professionals from across the state for an exciting and insightful conference packed with valuable information to help you tackle everyday challenges while advancing the Section's strategic plan: protecting public health and safety, sharing knowledge and expertise, caring for every person, innovating to build resilient infrastructure, and engaging the public to build support and understanding.

We look forward to welcoming you to Kalamazoo this September as we continue making waves together — with just a little extra 80's flair along the way!

WHY ATTEND MI-ACE 2026?

MI-ACE 2026 brings together Michigan's water professionals for education, collaboration, innovation, and connection. Whether you're looking for practical solutions, industry insight, or opportunities to grow your network, the conference offers something for every stage of your career.

At MI-ACE 2026 You Can:

- Build valuable connections with water professionals from across Michigan
- Gain practical insights, innovative solutions, and best practices from technical and leadership sessions
- Stay current on emerging trends, regulatory updates, and innovations shaping the future of water
- Exchange ideas and collaborate with peers facing similar challenges
- Discover new technologies, products, and services in the Expo Hall
- Learn from experienced leaders and industry subject matter experts
- Earn Continuing Education Credits (CECs) and Professional Development Hours (PDHs)
- Invest in your professional growth while strengthening your organization and community impact
- Enjoy networking events and an energetic conference atmosphere with a fun 80's-inspired twist

FEATURED PRESENTATIONS

Andrea Song, PE

Association Vice President,
American Water Works Association

Andrea Song, PE, serves as the Utilities Division Manager for the City of Westminster, Colorado, where she leads a team of more than 120 employees responsible for operating and maintaining over $4 billion in water and wastewater infrastructure. Westminster's integrated "One Water" approach encompasses drinking water, wastewater, reclaimed water, stormwater, distribution, collections, treatment, utility billing, construction, emergency response, and maintenance engineering.

With more than 27 years of experience in the water sector, Andrea has built an impressive career in both the private and public sectors. After beginning her career as an engineering design consultant, she spent 12 years with Denver Water before joining the City of Westminster in 2021. She holds degrees in Chemical Engineering and Environmental Engineering, is a licensed Professional Engineer, and is a certified Water Treatment Operator.

Andrea currently serves as an Association Vice President and Director for the American Water Works Association (AWWA) and is a Past Chair of the Rocky Mountain Section AWWA. Throughout her career, she has been a strong advocate for operational excellence, innovation, water treatment optimization, and the advancement of the water profession. We are pleased to welcome Andrea to MI-ACE 2026 as this year's AWWA Visiting Officer.

Kelley Dearing Smith

VP Marketing and Communications
Louisville Water Company

Kelley Dearing Smith has dedicated her career to reminding the public of the value and necessity of a product that is often taken for granted – water. As Vice President of Marketing & Communications for Louisville Water Company, she has helped create one of the nation's most recognizable utility brands while strengthening connections with the nearly one million people the utility serves throughout Louisville and the surrounding communities.

Kelley has been helping Louisville Water tell its story since joining the company in 1999 as a communications specialist. Prior to that, she served as Assistant News Director for WHAS-TV. During her tenure, she has authored a book highlighting Louisville Water's rich history, overseen the development of the WaterWorks Museum at the company's original 1860 pumping station, and played a key role in establishing Louisville Pure Tap™ – the first, and still only, trademarked tap water in the United States. Her work has helped showcase not only the exceptional quality of Louisville's drinking water, but also its economic, historical, and community significance.

An active leader within the water industry, Kelley currently serves as Chair of the American Water Works Association's Public Affairs Council and is a frequent presenter on utility branding, communications, and public engagement. Her passion for storytelling has inspired utilities across North America to build public trust by communicating the value of safe, reliable drinking water.

Kelley lives in Louisville, Kentucky, with her husband and two children. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in Broadcast Journalism from Eastern Kentucky University. MI-ACE 2026 is honored to feature Kelley as our Opening General Session Keynote Speaker.

SCHEDULE-AT-A-GLANCE

Additional fee required *
By invitation only **

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2026

9:00 am	Golf Outing Fundraiser *
6:15 pm	Board and Sponsor Dinner **
7:30 pm	Opening Dessert Reception & Trivia Night (hosted by the Young Professionals and SWIE)

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2026

7:15 am	Early Morning Coffee with Exhibitors
8:00 am	Attendee Continental Breakfast in the Exhibit Hall
8:00 am	First Time Attendee Orientation and Continental Breakfast
8:45 am	Opening, Keynote, Awards and General Sessions
12:10 pm	Lunch in Exhibit Hall
1:35 pm	Breakout Sessions
4:50 pm	Happy Hour in Exhibit Hall
After Hours	Sponsor Event

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2026

7:15 am	Annual Business Meeting, Awards, and Breakfast
8:25 am	General Sessions
12:00 pm	Fuller Awards Luncheon *
1:30 pm	Breakout Sessions
4:40 pm	Women on Water Networking *
6:00 pm	Networking Dinner *

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2026

7:15 am	Tom Newhof Leadership Breakfast **
8:00 am	Attendee Continental Breakfast
8:30 am	General Sessions
12:00 pm	Closing and giveaways

EXHIBIT HALL SHOW HOURS

Wednesday, September 16
from 7:15 am until 6:15 pm

Featured Times

- Early morning coffee with Exhibitors: 7:15 am – 8:00 am
- Breakfast with Exhibitors 8:00 am – 8:40 am
- Break in the exhibit hall 10:15 am – 10:35 am
- Lunch with Exhibitors: 11:45 am – 1:40 pm
  (Peak attendance begins at 12:10 pm due to a concurrent session.)
- Break in the exhibit hall 3:25 pm – 3:45 pm
- Attendee Happy Hour 4:50 pm – 6:15 pm

SWIE CHANCE AUCTION – DURING EXHIBIT HALL HAPPY HOUR.

Chance Auction items will be displayed in the lobby outside the entrance to the Exhibit Hall, with a ticket basket placed next to each item. Simply place your ticket into the basket for the item you would most like to win. Winners will be drawn at random from the tickets submitted for each individual item, and there is no limit to the number of tickets you may place in a basket. The SWIE Chance Auction will open on Wednesday, September 16 during Happy Hour in the Exhibit Hall Lobby beginning at 4:50 pm.

Ticket Pricing:

- 3 tickets for $10
- 10 tickets for $20

The SWIE Committee is currently seeking donations for the Chance Auction. To donate an item, please contact us at *info@mi-water.org*. Thank you in advance to all of our generous donors for supporting SWIE initiatives and programs.

Registration Hours

Hours are subject to change.

Tuesday, September 9
4:00 pm – 8:00 pm

Wednesday, September 10
7:00 am – 6:00 pm

Thursday, September 11
7:00 am – 4:00 pm
(Closed during Annual Business Meeting and Fuller Lunch)

Friday, September 12
7:30 am – 10:30 am

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EXHIBITORS

2026 Exhibitors as of June 2, 2026

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ENTERTAINMENT AND NETWORKING

OPENING NIGHT RECEPTION: TREATS, TRIVIA, AND MORE

Tuesday, September 15 – 7:30 pm

Hosted by the Young Professionals (YPs) and SWIE, this lively evening at the Radisson Plaza Hotel welcomes all conference attendees for a dessert reception, beverages, and optional trivia games. Mingle with colleagues, make new connections, and kick off the conference with fun, laughter, and learning. In the spirit of this year's 80s-inspired conference theme, expect a few retro surprises mixed into the evening — including some themed trivia questions alongside a variety of general knowledge topics. Whether you're here to network, test your trivia skills, or simply enjoy sweet and savory treats, there's something for everyone.

Admission is included with your conference registration.

FIRST-TIME ATTENDEE ORIENTATION AND BREAKFAST

Wednesday, September 16 – 8:00 am

Those attending MI-ACE for the first time are invited to attend an orientation breakfast before the Opening General Session on Wednesday. Leaders of MI-AWWA will provide you with some tips for how to get the most out of attending. This is a great opportunity to get acquainted with other attendees prior to the sessions starting.

RSVP is required during registration.

TICKETED NETWORKING EVENTS

These events are offered to allow attendees to maximize their networking and require an additional fee.

MIAWWA ANNUAL GOLF OUTING

Tuesday, September 15 (Tee off at 9:00 am)
LYNX Golf Course

Located in Otsego, Michigan, The LYNX Golf Course is conveniently accessible just minutes from US-131 and only 21 miles from the Radisson Plaza Hotel, our conference host location.

The LYNX is a public 18-hole golf course open to all golfers and known for its dramatic elevation changes, scenic river views, and peaceful "up-north" atmosphere – without the long drive.

Both nines begin and end at the highest point on the course, approximately 120 feet above the Kalamazoo River. The front nine concludes with a short uphill dogleg-left Par 4 measuring 353 yards, while the back nine features the course's signature Hole No. 10, a 411-yard Par 4 with an 85-foot elevation drop from tee to fairway.

Come experience one of the most scenic, challenging, and best-conditioned golf courses in Southwest Michigan.

Network on the course while supporting two important causes: Safe Water in Ecuador and AWWA's Water Equation.

Golf hole sponsorships are available for $250 — an excellent opportunity to promote your company while supporting a great cause. For additional sponsorship opportunities, please contact *info@mi-water.org*.

Registration Information

Separate registration required.

- Individual Golfer — $155
- Foursome — $600 (save $20)
- Mulligans — $5 for 2 do-overs

FUNDRAISING BENEFICIARIES

Safe Water in Ecuador (SWIE), a program of MI-AWWA, works to bring clean, safe drinking water to indigenous communities in Ecuador.

Water Equation, a program of AWWA, offers training scholarships and leadership development to young professionals.

FULLER LUNCHEON

Thursday, September 17 – 12:00 pm

A time-honored tradition, the Fuller Luncheon honors Michigan Water Utility Hall of Fame inductees, the Raymond J. Faust Awardees, and the George Warren Fuller Awardee. Come enjoy lunch and celebrate the titans of the water sector in Michigan. Faust and Fuller awardees are announced during the luncheon.

Pre-registration required: $25

WOMEN ON WATER

Thursday, September 17 – 4:40 pm

Join fellow women water professionals for an engaging networking experience designed to spark new connections and conversations. Through a fast-paced speed-networking format, you'll have the opportunity to meet peers from across the industry, exchange ideas, share experiences, and expand your professional network.

Whether you're a student, emerging professional, or industry veteran, Women on Water offers a welcoming environment to connect, learn, and support one another while celebrating the growing impact of women in the water sector.

Registration required: $20

THURSDAY NETWORKING

Thursday, September 11 – 6:00 pm

Throw it back to the 1980s at Thursday Night Networking during MI-ACE! Join fellow attendees in the Radisson's West Michigan Room, where historic charm meets modern design for an evening of retro fun and industry connection.

After a full day of conference sessions, unwind with great food, drinks, and Music Bingo featuring iconic hits from the decade. Break out your best 80s-inspired attire – neon, denim, big hair, leg warmers, or vintage concert tees encouraged – and enjoy a relaxed evening connecting with colleagues and friends from across the water industry.

Whether you come for the networking, the nostalgia, or the music, this will be a night you won't want to miss.

Pre-registration required: $75

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

SCHEDULE OF RECOGNITION

Wednesday, September 16, at 10:00 am

- Executive Director's Award
- Silver Water Drop Award
- Gold Water Drop Award
- Life Member Status Award
- EGLE Edward Dunbar Rich Award

Thursday, September 17, at 8:00 am

- Chuck Van der Kolk Volunteer of the Year
- Young Professional of the Year
- Professional Excellence Award – Individual and Organization
- Operator Meritorious Service Award
- Richard Husby Public Awareness Award

Thursday, September 17, at the Fuller Luncheon

- Michigan Water Utility Hall of Fame
- Raymond J. Faust Award
- George Warren Fuller Award

VOLUNTEERING AT MI-ACE

Did you know MI-ACE's success is made possible through the generous time and dedication of our volunteers? We invite you to lend a helping hand at MI-ACE 2026! Volunteer opportunities include registration, session moderating, the member booth, and more.

A volunteer sign-up is available at *https://www.mi-water.org/mi-ace-2026-volunteering*

Please note: you must be registered to attend MI-ACE 2026 to volunteer.

TECHNICAL PROGRAM

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2026

8:45 am – 9:00 am

1.1 Welcome and Opening Remarks

Molly Maciejewski, Ann Arbor Public Works
Nichole Sajdak, Arcadis

9:00 am – 10:00 am

1.2 Building Trust Through the Story of Water

Kelley Dearing Smith, Louisville Water Company

Join Kelley Dearing Smith, Vice President of Marketing & Communications for Louisville Water Company, as she shares her journey in the water industry and explores how storytelling, branding, and strategic partnerships can build public trust in drinking water. Through examples from Louisville Water – including partnerships with Churchill Downs, Louisville Slugger, and Kentucky's bourbon industry – attendees will discover new ways to communicate the value of water and strengthen connections with their communities.

10:00 am – 10:15 am

1.3 Awards

Molly Maciejewski, Ann Arbor Public Works
Andrea Song PE, AWWA Visiting Officer

10:35 am – 11: 05 am

1.4 AWWA Visiting Officer Address

Andrea Song, PE, Association Vice President and Director for the American Water Works Association

11:10 am – 11:40 am

1.5 Finding the Source of Lead in Blood

David Cornwell, Cornwell Engineering Group

Over the last few years we have been researching and reporting on the use of high precision isotopes to locate the source of lead in water and pipes. The next logical step was to expand the research to find the source of lead in blood. In this presentation we will explain the technique,show case study results, and how public health officials, researchers and utilities could use it. In these cases after identifying the source and removing it, the children's BLL dropped.

1:45 pm – 2:15 pm

2.1 Surgery while running a marathon: Inservice Inspection and renewal planning of a 120-inch Transmission Main

Olivia Olsztyn-Budry, Great Lakes Water Authority

Great Lakes Water Authority (GLWA) operates and maintains one of the largest prestressed concrete cylinder pipe (PCCP) inventories in North America. In August 2022, GLWA experienced a failure on its largest transmission main in the system, a 120-inch PCCP which serves 1 million people. Once the repair was made and the transmission main returned to service, GLWA faced the challenge of investigating why the transmission main failed, and how to evaluate the condition of the 26 miles of pipeline to proactively identify distressed pipe sections for future renewal and repair to avoid another catastrophic failure in the future. Planning began shortly after the break in 2022 and took about three years to get to the point of performing the condition assessment. This presentation will focus on the emergency repair, the forensic investigation and the planning steps that GLWA took to perform a full in-service electromagnetic condition assessment of the 120-inch to gain an understanding of the overall condition of the transmission main as well as a discussion of the risk review and risk mitigation planning.

2:20 pm – 2:50 pm

2.2 Planning for Tomorrow While Delivering Today: How Holland BPW Is Preparing Its Water System for the Next Generation

Brian Phillips, Fishbeck
Nathan Johnson, Holland Board of Public Works

HBPW is implementing a coordinated planning effort to address aging infrastructure, rising demand, and increasing variability in water use across its service area. Major evaluations, including a second Lake Michigan intake study, pretreatment basin study, and filtration system assessment, are helping define where strategic reinvestment is needed to maintain long-term performance. At the same time, HBPW is completing targeted improvements such as high-service pump station modernization and a new parallel transmission main to strengthen near-term reliability. Demand-side strategies, including advanced metering analytics, irrigation education, and new tiered and seasonal rate structures, are reducing peak usage and supporting financial sustainability. Together, these initiatives form a balanced, system-wide roadmap that prepares HBPW's water system to reliably serve the community today and well into the future.

2:55 pm – 3:25 pm

2.3 Engineering and Construction Sequencing Gymnastics: Replacing Yard Piping, Valves, and Meters at GLWA's Water Works Park

Eric Van Orman, PE, AECOM
Vittoria Veltri, Great Lakes Water Authority

As Detroit's oldest water treatment facility site, Water Works Park Water Treatment Plant has undergone numerous piping reconfigurations over its 165 year lifespan. The front yard high service piping system – dating as far back as the 1870s – includes RCP, PCCP, riveted steel, and cast and ductile iron

pipe ranging from 12 to 72 inches in diameter, with more than 15 transmission mains serving multiple pressure districts. This presentation details the engineering, hydraulic modeling, and complex construction sequencing required to replace and commission this extensive piping network while maintaining uninterrupted water service. Participants will also gain insight into the site's historical significance and the unique challenges of executing a project of this scale and complexity.

3:45 pm – 4:15 pm

2.4 Dual Use GAC Filtration for Iron and PFAS Removal

James Christopher, PE, BCEE, Tetra Tech

The City of Kalamazoo evaluated replacing spent iron filter media with granular activated carbon (GAC) to address both iron removal and newly regulated PFOS and PFOA in groundwater-supplied treatment facilities. A pilot study was conducted at one of the City's largest pumping stations to assess whether GAC could effectively remove oxidized iron particulates while adsorbing PFAS to below regulatory limits under existing hydraulic and backwash constraints. Testing compared the existing 30-inch media depth with a deeper 4.5-foot GAC bed to evaluate PFAS removal efficiency, empty bed contact time, turbidity performance, and operational feasibility. An additional pilot adsorption column using pre-filtered water was included to evaluate PFAS removal performance if retrofit of the gravity filters proved impractical. The presentation summarizes the pilot design, operating conditions, sampling program, and results, including PFAS and turbidity removal, projected media life, and implications for full-scale implementation.

1:45 pm – 2:15 pm

3.1 How Genesee County Used AI-Based Digital Twin Modeling to Optimize Lake Huron Water Treatment

Joe Shepley, USALCO

Water utilities are increasingly exploring AI-based tools to improve treatment performance and manage operational costs. Genesee County, Michigan implemented a digital twin decision-support system to help operators optimize treatment at its Lake Huron surface water plant. The system integrates predictive modules for TOC monitoring, disinfection performance, DBP formation, and corrosion control, along with a chemical dosing simulator that allows operators to evaluate treatment scenarios in minutes. Since implementation, the utility has improved understanding of organic carbon impacts on treatment performance, reduced system DBP levels by 10 percent, and optimized chemical dosing. This presentation will highlight the role of operator engagement and predictive modeling in improving treatment plant decision-making.

2:20 pm – 2:50 pm

3.2 Growth Might Be Back? Can Infrastructure Keep Up?

Susan Knepper, OHM Advisors

Molly Maciejewski, Ann Arbor Public Works

In 2024, the City of Ann Arbor began a Water Distribution Plan and model update to assess long-term system performance and resiliency. At the same time, the City was developing a Comprehensive Land Use Plan, redefining population projections, density targets, and redevelopment priorities. Concurrently, the City's Water Treatment Plant (WTP) Facility Plan was already well underway and further advanced, grounding treatment capacity decisions in defined regulatory and operational realities. These overlapping but independently initiated efforts underscored a key challenge: growth policy can shift quickly, while water infrastructure requires decades to plan, fund, and construct. By integrating evolving growth projections directly into hydraulic modeling and infrastructure planning, the City aligned its land use and water distribution plans in real time. This presentation highlights how coordinated policy and infrastructure planning can reshape capital investment strategies, strengthen cross-department collaboration, and position utilities to proactively – and realistically – support community growth.

2:55 pm – 3:25 pm

3.3 Design and Delivery of the Grand Rapids-to-Caledonia Wholesale Supply: A Case Study in Multi Agency Planning, Design and Transaction Execution

Mark Parsley, Fishbeck

Caledonia Township successfully transitioned the north half of its water system from groundwater to a wholesale surface water supply from the City of Grand Rapids on March 10, 2026, following extensive multi agency coordination. Early planning began with the 2020 Preliminary Evaluation and shared hydraulic modeling, supported by the Grand Rapids Utility Finance Team's development of a wholesale rate setting framework with Caledonia Township and the City of Grand Rapids. Fishbeck and VK Civil led coordinated design efforts for the booster station, transmission improvements, and receiving system, while the City aligned the project within its FY2024 DWSRF planning and 2025 Comprehensive Master Plan. The 2026 VK Civil led Transition Plan established the operational, water quality, and regulatory steps that enabled a safe and stable cutover to Grand Rapids water. Looking ahead, a $2 million federal community grant will help fund the 2028 Kraft Trunkline, which will enable the south system transition using the same structured, collaborative model demonstrated in the 2026 effort.

3:45 pm – 4:15 pm

3.4 Master Planning the Next Century of Service for the Saginaw Water System

Dave Baar, Fishbeck
Matt Charles, Hazen and Sawyer
Mike Grenier, City of Saginaw

Our presentation will walk attendees through the City of Saginaw's comprehensive Water Treatment Plant Master Plan, developed to address aging infrastructure, regulatory pressures, and long-term system resilience. Presenters will explain how the City, Fishbeck, and Hazen partnered to evaluate treatment, site, and phasing alternatives using a structured multi-criteria decision-making process. The session will highlight how condition assessments, risk evaluation, and treatment-technology comparisons informed the decision to reinvest at the historic existing site. Key recommendations – including advanced treatment integration, phased construction at an operating plant, and improvements to system redundancy – will also be discussed. Attendees will gain practical planning frameworks and tools they can apply directly to their own reinvestment and master-planning initiatives.

1:45 pm – 2:15 pm

4.1 Community Water Fluoridation in Today's Environment: Tools for Michigan Water Systems, Health Professionals, and Communities

Angie Goodman, Lansing Board of Water & Light
Sandy Sutton, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services

Community Water Fluoridation (CWF) remains one of the most effective public health measures, yet many communities face increasing technical, regulatory, and communication challenges. To support Michigan communities, a statewide committee developed a CWF Toolkit for water systems, health professionals, and local decision-makers. The toolkit includes Michigan-specific guidance on operations, regulations, communication, and governance. This session will highlight key resources and lessons from the toolkit's development. Attendees will gain practical tools to help confidently support and manage fluoridation programs in their communities.

2:20 pm – 2:50 pm

4.2 Building Trust, Replacing Lead: When Big LSLR Plans Hit Ground-Level Challenges

Elin Betanzo, Safe Water Engineering

Large-scale lead service line replacement (LSLR) programs promise major public health benefits, but their success depends on trust, field-ready systems, and consistent execution – not just engineering plans. This presentation examines lessons learned from implementing an ambitious, community-centered LSLR program in Highland Park, Michigan, where political constraints, limited budgets, and operational gaps challenged even the best-designed plans. From these challenges, we outline eight key lessons for utilities launching or scaling LSLR programs. The presentation concludes with recommendations for what to have in place before mobilization, including readiness-tested recordkeeping and SOPs, outreach planning and budgets, contractor training, and resident-facing transparency tools. Collectively, these insights offer a practical roadmap for utilities seeking to build trust, safeguard public health, and successfully execute large, complex LSLR programs.

2:55 pm – 3:25 pm

4.3 After 20 years of planning, you land a major industrial user. Now what?! PART 2

Ken Jewison, PE, Stantec
Marguerite Davenport, City of Marshall

With most construction now complete, this session revisits the City of Marshall's MAJOR Campus megasite through a post construction lens, focusing on what it actually took to turn an accelerated vision into functioning infrastructure. Building on the planning and pursuit story, Part 2 examines the realities of delivery – where early assumptions were tested, designs evolved, and competing priorities collided in real time. Attendees will hear an honest account of the challenges encountered during execution, including significant design modifications, construction conflicts, and the unavoidable role of politics in high profile public infrastructure projects.

3:45 pm – 4:15 pm

4.4 Water Quality Review of Rural Systems in Chambo, Chimborazo, Ecuador

Mark De Haan, Life Giving Water International
Rowan Jansen, Calvin University

Since 2018, three communities in the canton (= county, more or less) of Chambo, Ecuador have partnered with SWIE's partner organization, CODEINSE, to improve their water sources, distribution networks, and water treatment methods. Building on the successes of those projects, Chambo's water department requested a water quality study of all15 rural communities in Chambo, which was completed in March of 2026 with help from students from Calvin University. This presentation will provide an overview of the testing methods, the water quality that was observed, the current practices of treatment, and potential recommendations to the canton.

4:20 pm – 4:50 pm

5.1 The BC Wellfield Trilogy, Part III: The One Where We Finally Finish the Wells, Chase Down the TTHMs, Restore Public Confidence, and Retire Our Record for Longest Conference Presentation Titles

Aaron Davenport, PE, Jones & Henry Engineers
Perry L. Hart, Jones & Henry Engineers

Following last year's audience favorite MI-AWWA presentation, "Drill, Baby, Drill…The Continuing Saga of Battle Creek's Wellfield Rehabilitation Project and Inadvertently Proving Why It Was So Critical," Perry Hart and Aaron Davenport return with the exciting conclusion of this groundbreaking project. Join them as they share insights from the construction and proceeding into production of 21 new 16-inch diameter, Type-I drinking water wells. They'll take the audience through the challenges and triumphs that have shaped this massive wellfield rehabilitation project. Perry and Aaron will present pre and post project water quality data and share best practices, lessons learned, and the City's approach to managing the total trihalomethanes (TTHMs) crisis. This session promises to be both insightful and entertaining, a must-see for water professionals, engineers, and anyone invested in groundwater protection and sustainable water management.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2026

7:15 am – 8:25 am

6.1 Annual Business Meeting and Awards (Breakfast Included)

8:25 am – 9:25 am

6.2 Continuity Under Construction: Wyoming's Regional Emergency Interconnect Plan

Ariana Wade, Fishbeck (Moderator)
Jaime Fleming, City of Wyoming
Zach Gogulski, Fishbeck
Lindsay Sagroski-Munsell, City of Grand Rapids
Aaron Vis, City of Wyoming

Redundancy is built into every step of water treatment and supply, however construction activities commonly affect redundant processes. This was the case with the City of Wyoming's third transmission main project, temporarily limiting the City's treated water supply to eleven water system communities to a single pipe. With coordination between neighboring water systems, Fishbeck used hydraulic modeling to develop a creative, novel emergency plan to supply the Wyoming water system from Grand Rapids and Holland Board of Public Works utilizing existing interconnects and water facilities. This presentation will highlight the key steps of the evaluation process, discuss the vital communication and collaboration efforts made throughout the project, and summarize the final results and findings.

9:30 am – 10:00 am

6.3 The Dos and Don'ts of Responding to Environmental Enforcement Communications

Dan Bock, Fahey Schultz Burzych Rhodes PLC

Environmental permitting and compliance are part of the job for water works professionals. Unfortunately, even excellent professionals sometimes receive violation notices or other enforcement communications related to state and federal laws or permit requirements. When that happens, having a plan for how to respond is essential to achieving a successful resolution.

10:15 am – 10:45 am

7.1 AWWA Project 108: Tools and Recommendations for Water Systems to Prepare for Upcoming Microbial and Disinfection Byproducts Rule (MDBPR) Changes

Morgan Saunders, EIT, Arcadis
Catherine Pallotta, Arcadis

To comply with anticipated updates to the Microbial and Disinfection Byproducts Rules (MDBPR), Michigan utilities may need to adjust their secondary disinfection protocols to ensure a numeric minimum secondary disinfection residual is maintained throughout the system. Utilities may also be required to adopt more rigorous monitoring practices to expand monitoring throughout the entire distribution system, including difficult-to-maintain locations, and proactively address any deficiencies. This presentation will discuss work undertaken as part of AWWA Project 108, and presents a comprehensive, user-oriented framework, validated through utility surveys, case studies, and expert input, designed to help Michigan utilities navigate these upcoming requirements. The framework equips water systems with a structured approach for evaluating, selecting, and implementing effective strategies for residual maintenance and DBP management including a stepwise decision tree and strategy toolbox to guide systems to solutions best suited for their specific utility. Attendees will leave with actionable tools and a deeper understanding of how to proactively prepare for the upcoming MDBPR numeric minimum residual requirements.

10:50 am – 11:20 am

7.2 Evaluating Flocculation Technologies for Great Lakes Water Systems – Lessons Learned

Knicko Mojica, CDM Smith
Andrea MIller, Great Lakes Water Authority

CDM Smith conducted a 13-month pilot study that evaluated the feasibility of adopting hydraulic flocculation as an alternative for existing mechanical flocculation methods for the Great Lakes Water Authority's (GLWA) Lake Huron Water Treatment Plant (LHWTP). The study compared hydraulic flocculation performance to the LHWTP's existing pretreatment process by tracking filter effluent water quality throughout Lake Huron's seasonal water quality changes. The results of this pilot study guided the full-scale design of flocculation improvements at the plant.

11:25 am – 11:55 am

7.3 Characterization of Water Quality in Drinking Water Source Intake and Process Units of Five Treatment Plants Operated by Great Lakes Water Authority

Harrison Hee, Great Lakes Water Authority

A study conducted by the Great Lakes Water Authority Research team analyzed water quality parameters at the three primary source water intakes serving the five GLWA drinking water treatment plants, which draw water from intakes located in either Lake Huron or along the Detroit River (Belle Isle and Fighting Island intakes). Samples were collected on a weekly basis for a 12-montn period to evaluate spatial and seasonal variability. Statistical analyses showed significant differences for some parameters while not showing any significant differences for others between water intake sources. Seasonal patterns were also observed across multiple plants, with fall months exhibiting lower TOC and DOC concentrations than other seasons. Improved characterization of these trends can support treatment optimization, inform DBP control strategies, and enhance the ability of utilizes to anticipate seasonal shifts and identify emerging water quality trends.

10:15 am – 10:45 am

8.1 Restoration of Process Pipe Hydraulic Capacity

Brian Rubel, PE, Tetra Tech

Nathan Kane, City of Adrian

Adrian's water treatment plant recently observed a loss of hydraulic capacity. A study was conducted to determine the cause resulting in a theory that lime scale was that cause. A process to remove lime scale was developed and that work subsequently undertaken. This effort was successful at removing the scale and restoring the plant's hydraulic capacity.

10:50 am – 11:20 am

8.2 AMI Is More Than a Meter Swap: Preparing Owners for the Operational Shockwave

Robbie Waddell, DLZ Michigan

Sandra Monroe, DLZ Michigan

This session compares two AMI upgrade efforts supported by DLZ: Toledo, Ohio, a large-utility replacement and retrofit program of roughly 120,000 meters, and Grand Blanc Township, Michigan, a smaller program of roughly 8,500 meters that is transitioning to a cellular AMI network. The presentation explains why AMI should be treated as an Owner capacity program, not a meter exchange, because it shifts staff workload toward exception handling, investigations, customer inquiries, field follow-ups, training, and internal data support. Attendees will learn the pre-planning actions that most reduce disruption, including pre-deployment audits, meter-to-cash integration readiness, and disciplined vendor and installer oversight with clear quality-control checkpoints. The discussion summarizes customer-facing practices that protect momentum, including proactive notifications, clear installation expectations, opt-out policy decisions, and prepared responses to privacy and RF concerns. Participants will leave with practical, scalable strategies for rollout pacing, quality control, and Owner readiness that apply to both small and large utilities.

11:25 am – 11:55 am

8.3 Proactive Water Loss Prevention Technologies

Mark Beatty, Utility Technologies

The benefits of proactive leak monitoring and logging system with night logging can be implemented through a distribution system. The advantages of pressure logging to detect pressure transients and pressure loses on a full time immediate feedback basis will be explained. We'll show how to set up district metering zones in order to calculate water loss in multiple areas of a distribution system. GIS and Asset Management systems can be used to integrate all of the monitoring, metering and logging systems into a useable water loss management program. Various methods of collecting data from these systems including drive-by, Fixed networks, LoRaWan, and NB-IoT will be presented.

2:45 pm – 3:15 pm

9.3 PFAS, Lead, and Fluoride Public Communications: How to Stand Firm on Shifting Sands

Mike McGill, WaterPIO

We live not only in the Instant Information Age but also in the Instant Disinformation Age. A utility's customers are receiving information – and disinformation – they believe is important without having to ask for it. As a result, expectations have risen among water and wastewater customers for their utilities to consistently communicate with them about how they are ensuring their quality of life. When water quality controversies arise, a utility must quickly communicate to reassure the public that it is on top of the issues, or it could suffer long-term damage to its reputation. This presentation will provide attendees with the latest developments concerning PFAS, lead, and fluoride, and how to conduct public communications that keep or instill confidence in their chosen compliance paths.

3:30 pm – 4:00 pm

9.4 Achieving Higher Filter Loading Rates through Deep-Bed Filter Media Optimization

Jason Assouline PE, Carollo Engineers

A pilot study was conducted to assess retrofitting existing shallow-bed filters with deep-bed media in order to achieve higher loading rates. The duration of the pilot (approximately 18 months) allowed the study to assess seasonal variation of water quality to determine the robustness of the alternative filter configurations. Across all phases of testing, 95th percentile effluent turbidity remained below 0.1 NTU in each pilot column for all loading rates, exceeding regulatory requirements and operational goals.

Hydraulic results confirmed that deep-bed configurations provide significantly improved UFRVs compared to the existing shorter-bed media configuration, due to greater particulate storage capacity and slower headloss accumulation. These findings demonstrate that retrofitting existing filters with deeper media can reliably support loading rates of 8–10 gpm/sf, enabling this WTP to meet future capacity needs without new filter construction.

1:35 pm – 2:05 pm

10.1 Forest to Mi Faucet

Mike Smalligan, Michigan DNR

An article in Opflow "Conserving Forests to Protect Water" (May 2004) reported that every 10% increase in forest cover in your source water protection area decreases utility treatment costs by 20%. Does your utility own your entire source water protection area? Do you have any control over land use in your source water protection area? Forest to Mi Faucet is a project to connect 20 conservation organizations in Michigan with their local water utilities to help implement their source water protection plans. Come to this session to meet friends who want to help utilities educate your customers about the importance of land use on water quality and protect forests in your source water protection area.

2:10 pm – 2:40 pm

10.2 From Recharge to Risk: Understanding Groundwater Vulnerability

Cheryl Louden, Lansing Board of Water & Light

Carol Luukkonen, U.S. Geological Survey (USGS)

The U.S. Geological Survey and the Lansing Board of Water & Light analyzed groundwater geochemistry and aquifer characteristics to identify areas potentially susceptible to surface contamination. Tritium concentrations from 27 wells were used to classify groundwater recharge age, with additional wells classified using statistical methods. Wells with modern recharge exhibited higher sodium, chloride, and chloride-to-bromide ratios, suggesting greater surface connectivity and potential anthropogenic influence from sources such as road salt. Groundwater models identified aquifer geometry – particularly the thickness of confining layers and depth to sandstone – as key predictors of recharge age and geochemical indicators. These findings support wellhead protection planning, pumping strategies, and identification of areas for future well development in the Lansing area.

2:45 pm – 3:15 pm

10.3 Mount Clemens Connection to GLWA – Funding & Operational Approach

Alex Fleet, Wade Trim

Eric Hansen, Fishbeck

The City of Mount Clemens' existing 8 MGD water filtration plant services portions of 3 communities and the Selfridge Air National Guard Base – however it is in need of major upgrades or replacement. In lieu of replacing the plant, the City will connect to a Great Lakes Water Authority transmission main, build a new pump station and 2 MGD ground storage tank as well as local transmission main to distribute the new water to the system. The project is a design-build delivery with $42M in DWSRF funding, requires permitting from all levels (federal to local), a water source transition plan and heavy community coordination and engagement.

3:30 pm – 4:00 pm

10.4 Shining a Light on Hidden Disabilities

Abigail Bergmann, C2AE

How does mental health affect the work we do and vice versa. Is there a commonality in how our brains function in the work we have chosen? ADHD, Kinetic learning, a desire to understand the how and why. Longterm struggles vs struggles that come and go. Everyone struggles at some point.

1:35 pm – 2:05 pm

11.1 Squeezing the Pot: Maximizing Value Through CMAR Engagement

Carmelle Tremblay, PE, Wade Trim

Freddy Betancourt, PE, Wade Trim

Tampa Bay Water and Hillsborough County partnered to construct a 26-mile 60-inch diameter potable water pipeline through the Brandon Urban Area in southern Hillsborough County, Florida via the Construction Management at Risk (CMAR) delivery method. To counter the escalation of costs of such a large-scale project, and to leverage the advantages of the CMAR project delivery method, several cost saving initiatives were identified through multiple value engineering workshops. The accepted value engineering recommendations included consolidation of individual trenchless crossing designs into a larger single construction package, using horizontal direction drilling to minimize microtunneling lengths, and altering proposed target depth and approaching angles to reduce excavation and shoring costs for shafts at different crossings. This presentation will walk through the benefits of the CMAR project delivery for trenchless applications, the identification of the cost saving alternatives, and the coordination efforts and checkpoints during design between the CMAR and project Engineer to minimize risk while maximizing the value of the available budget. The adopted changes resulted in savings of approximately 10% of costs (about $8M savings) associated with trenchless components of the project with respect to the projected Guaranteed Maximum Price at 60% design completion.

2:10 pm – 2:40 pm

11.2 The Art of the RFQ: Crafting a Request for Qualifications That Attracts Top-Tier Talent

Robert Rabeler, PE, ACEC Michigan/ASCE Michigan

This comprehensive guide equips water utility owners with actionable strategies for developing effective Requests for Qualifications (RFQs) that attract top-tier engineering and design talent. Grounded in a 2022 study showing that QBS-selected projects achieve lower total costs and faster construction speeds, the session demonstrates how to move beyond generic templates to define strategic project goals and tailored evaluation criteria. Attendees will learn to streamline the procurement process through transparent scoring systems, realistic timelines, and early risk mitigation. By illustrating real-world examples, the presentation identifies how to avoid common pitfalls while fostering innovation and collaboration with design professionals. Participants will leave with the tools necessary to leverage QBS for more predictable costs and a higher likelihood of project success.

2:45 pm – 3:15 pm

11.3 Water Storage Tank Maintenance and Inspections

Tarin Minkel, PE, Dixon Engineering

Jams Rowley, PE, SE, Dixon Engineering

Learn the critical components of tank maintenance and inspections, including coating service life planning, rehabilitation strategies, and regulatory compliance. This session will explore the different types of maintenance inspections, the pros and cons of each, and the specific responsibilities of operators. Attendees will leave with a clear understanding of how to plan, prioritize, and move forward confidently with their tank maintenance and rehabilitation needs.

3:30 pm – 4:00 pm

11.4 Predicting and Managing the Impact of Change on the Corrosion of Drinking Water Distribution System Materials

Darren Lytle, Hazen and Sawyer

This presentation will introduce a data-driven framework designed to predict corrosion risks in drinking water distribution systems when source water or treatment changes occur. It emphasizes the importance of understanding how shifts in water chemistry can disrupt the established equilibrium between water and distribution materials, potentially leading to adverse outcomes such as material failures and the release of harmful metals. The framework comprises three phases: analyzing current and anticipated water quality, characterizing pipe scale properties through elemental analysis, and comparing water quality changes to scale layer composition. Key water quality parameters, including pH, alkalinity, sulfate, chloride and corrosion inhibitors, are highlighted as critical factors influencing corrosion processes. An example case study demonstrates how the framework can be applied, enabling water utilities to proactively identify and mitigate potential corrosion-related issues.

4:05 pm – 4:35 pm

12.1 City of Dearborn Lead Service Line Inventory: From PDSMI to CDSMI and beyond

Rhett Gronevelt, OHM Advisors

Tim Hawkins, City of Dearborn

Dearborn's aging water system includes many lead service lines that must be identified and replaced by 2037 under new EPA and EGLE regulations. The City first submitted a Preliminary Distribution System Materials Inventory (PDSMI) in 2020, then completed a full line-by-line CDSMI in 2024. With support from an $848,000 DWAM Grant, Dearborn conducted in-house inspections, digitized 33,000+ records, built a predictive model, and created a public lead-information website. These efforts reduced unknown service line materials from 17,405 to 8,845 and improved overall system transparency. By avoiding thousands of physical verifications, the City has already saved more than $5 million and continues to use remaining grant funds to further refine data and guide future replacements.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2026

8:30 am – 9:00 am

13.1 EGLE's Drinking Water and Enviromental Health Division Update

Eric Oswald, Michigan Depart of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE)

9:00 am – 9:30 am

13.2 The Future of Cross-Connection Control Compliance in Michigan

Gary McLaren, HydroCorp

Cross-connection control programs required by EGLE are evolving as utilities adopt new technology and data tools. These innovations help shift programs from reactive enforcement toward proactive protection of potable water systems. Smart water meters capable of detecting reverse flow are providing early indicators of potential cross-connection hazards. At the same time, specialized software used during on-site surveys is improving the accuracy and documentation of field findings. Attendees will gain practical insight into how these tools and administrative strategies can strengthen compliance and improve protection of their public water systems.

9:30 am – 10:00 am

13.3 Strategic Approaches to Difficult Water Rate and Budget Conversations

Anne Cron, APR, HDR

Anna Deaton, HDR

Even at the best of times, talking about money is difficult. For water utilities facing regulatory pressures, aging infrastructure, rising costs, workforce challenges, and public scrutiny, securing

public and governing body approval for rates and budgets is critical. While asking for more funding can feel incredibly challenging, water infrastructure investments protect public health, strengthen communities, support local economies, and safeguard the environment. This presentation shares practical, field-tested strategies to help utility leaders make the business case for infrastructure investments through real-world tools and lessons learned. Drawing on case studies from utilities in Minnesota, New Orleans, and Los Angeles County, the session demonstrates how early engagement, transparency, and tailored communication can shift conversations from backlash to understanding, including innovative approaches such as value-based messaging, employee and community partnerships, gamification, equity-centered outreach, and conveying urgency without fear. Importantly, the session acknowledges hard realities – showing that success may mean building trust and improving timing rather than immediate approval – and offers scalable strategies that help utilities of any size align financial needs with community values and approach rate and budget conversations with confidence.

10:30 am – 11:00 am
13.4 Policy Update from Midwest Strategies
Mike Compagnoni, Midwest Strategies

11:00 am – 12:00 pm
13.5 Episode 1: The Village of Pellston Water System Origin Story
Susan Knepper, OHM Advisors (Moderator)
Christiaan Bon, Michigan Depart of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE)
Alisha Busuttil, OHM Advisors
Lisa Foughtm, Michigan Depart of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE)
The Village of Pellston, Michigan, relies entirely on private wells, which were found to contain PFAS above state and federal limits in 2020. Investigations identified the Pellston Regional Airport as a source. Together Emmet County, EGLE, and the Michigan PFAS Action Response Team (MPART) led remediation efforts. To provide a long-term solution, the Village secured multiple grants – including WIIN, AP, $32 million from BIL Emerging Contaminants, and $11.8 million from EGLE RRD – covering the full cost of planning, designing, and constructing a municipal water system without debt. This panel – Episode 1: The Origin Story of the Pellston Water System – highlights contamination, collaborative problem-solving, and funding, with Episode 2 to focus on the design and implementation challenges under grant timelines.

12:00 pm – 12:15 pm
13.6 Closing Remarks and Giveaways
Angie Goodman, Lansing Board of Water and Light
Cheryl Louden, Lansing Board of Water and Light

CONTINUING EDUCATION

It is possible to earn a total of (1.4) continuing education credits or (14) professional development hours. Final EGLE approval of CECs is pending agenda approval. Check website for final credits possible.

Earning CECs is dependent on scanning in and out of sessions. Please familiarize yourself with the scanning process prior to arriving onsite. Information will be available on the microsite at *mi-water.org/mi-ace.*

CONFERENCE APP

Download the conference app and plug into all that happens at MI-ACE. Track your anticipated CECs, meet speakers, connect with exhibitors, receive conference notifications, and engage for a chance to win one of several prizes.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Conference registration includes the following meals and events: Wednesday continental breakfast and lunch, Thursday full breakfast, Friday continental breakfast, and evening receptions on Tuesday and Wednesday. Refreshments and conference breaks will also be provided throughout the event.

TICKET	JUNE 8– AUG 21	AUG 22 – ONSITE
Attendee Registration		
Full Conference: Member	$565	$600
Full Conference: Non-member	$655	$690
Full Conference: Retiree member	$340	$375
Full Conference Small System: Member	$340	$375
Single Day: Member	$355	$390
Single Day: Non-member	$445	$480
Awardee	$0	$10
Speaker Registration		
Full Conference Speaker: Member	$380	$415
Full Conference Speaker: Non-member	$470	$505
Single Day Speaker	$0	$15
Exhibitor Registration – includes a 7'x10' and Wednesday registration for 2 people		
Exhibitor: Member with a 7'x10' booth space, full conference	$1,060	$1,130
Exhibitor: Member with a 7'x10' booth space	$730	$765
Exhibitor: Non-member with a 7'x10' booth space, full conference	$1,250	$1,320
Exhibitor: Non-member with a 7'x10' booth space	$830	$865
Additional Exhibitor: Member (Wednesday only) with purchase of booth space.	$355	$390
Additional Exhibitor: Non-member (Wednesday only) with purchase of booth space.	$445	$480
Guest Registration		
Conference Guest	$285	$320
Awardee Guest	$40	$45
Special Event Tickets		
Fuller Lunch	$25	$25
Women on Water (W.O.W.)	$20	$20
Thursday Night Lawn Party	$75	$75

CANCELLATION AND SUBSTITUTION POLICY

Substitutions:

If you are unable to attend, you may send a substitute in your place. Please email substitution requests to *info@mi-water.org*. Note that registration rates are based on membership status; if the substitute's membership status differs, additional fees may apply.

Cancellations:

If you must cancel your registration, please notify MI-AWWA by emailing *info@mi-water.org*. Refunds are issued according to the following schedule:

1. Cancellations received by 4:00 pm on August 21 – You will receive a full refund, minus a $35 processing fee.
2. Cancellations received after 4:00 pm on August 21 but before 4:00 pm on September 4 – You will receive a 50% refund of the registration fee paid. (Please note: there are no refunds for purchased meals or special activities.)
3. Cancellations received after 4:00 pm on September 4 or conference no-shows – No refunds will be issued.

LODGING INFORMATION

The Radisson Plaza Hotel in Kalamazoo will serve as the official host hotel for MI-ACE 2026, with all conference sessions, networking events, and activities conveniently located within the hotel. Staying on-site allows attendees to make the most of the conference experience while enjoying easy access to educational sessions, the Exhibit Hall, receptions, and valuable networking opportunities throughout the event.

Located in downtown Kalamazoo, the hotel offers comfortable accommodations along with a variety of on-site amenities, dining options, and gathering spaces designed to keep attendees connected and engaged during the conference.

Group Rates

(Available through August 20, 2026, or until the room block is full)

- Standard Room (Single/Double): $182/night + applicable taxes
- Upgraded Room (Single/Double): $232/night + applicable taxes

To make a reservation, please call the hotel's in-house reservations line at 269-343-3333. Be sure to identify yourself as attending the MI-ACE Conference with MI-AWWA to receive the discounted group rate.

Guests may also reserve their room online through the conference booking link located at *www.mi-water.org/mi-ace---lodging*.

PARKING INFORMATION

- Self-Parking: $13.00 per day
  Connected to the hotel via skywalk for convenient access
- Valet Parking: $23.00 per day + gratuity
  Available daily from 7:00 am – 11:00 pm