

## Strategic Plan

*Proposed Final Draft*

### NACWA's Core Ideology & Envisioned Future (10 Year Planning Horizon)

The term Core Ideology described the Association's consistent identity that transcends all changes related to its relevant environment. It consists of two elements – Core Purpose – the Association's reason for being – and Core Values – essential and enduring principles that guide the Association. Envisioned Future conveys a concrete yet unrealized vision for the Association through a Big Audacious Goal that provides a clear and compelling catalyst that serves as a focal point for the future.

#### Core Ideology

Core Purpose:

Be the leading advocate for responsible national policies that advance clean water.

Core Values:

- Integrity and credibility in all we do.
- Scientifically, economically, and socially informed environmental policy.
- Visionary and results-oriented leadership embracing innovation and diverse input.
- Collaboration as a preferred strategy.
- Fiscal responsibility.
- Environmental stewardship.

#### Envisioned Future – Big Audacious Goal

NACWA's advocacy has contributed directly to a sustainable environment in which a balance has been achieved between the protection and use of the country's water resources, resulting in profound benefits to the economy, the environment, and the public.

#### Most Relevant Assumptions

In order to make progress an organization must constantly anticipate the strategic factors likely to affect its ability to succeed, and to assess the implications of those factors. This process of building foresight about the future helps NACWA to constantly recalibrate its view of the relevant future. The following areas represent the categories of assumptions most relevant to NACWA's strategic direction.

- The need to promote science-based decision-making remains.
  - ✓ Appropriately informed decision-making will remain critical.
  - ✓ There is a need for greater focus on risk assessment, including ecological risk.

- Regulatory, legislative, and judicial pressures are expected to increase, while local financial capacity to respond (e.g. make upgrades in response to new regulations) will remain static (at best).
  - ✓ The sector will be challenged by an active regulatory regime over the next four years.
  - ✓ New and different types of regulatory requirements will pose new operational and compliance challenges for utilities.
  - ✓ Litigation activity is anticipated to increase, and NACWA may need to be the lead litigant in certain contexts.
  - ✓ Congressional dynamics (split Houses) will make legislative initiatives challenging and potentially more resource intensive.
- The *Water Resources Utility of the Future*, a key to utility sustainability, will require nurturing and support.
  - ✓ The altered business model – including renewable energy, resource recovery, decentralized systems, and water reuse – will need policy, regulatory, and possibly legislative backing, and may require litigation.
  - ✓ The regulatory system must provide for better “risk sharing” to avoid creating disincentives to innovation in the sector.
- Community and watershed sustainability expectations will increase and are important to utility leadership and sustainability opportunities.
  - ✓ Climate change impacts and the national policy response for mitigation and adaptation will affect utility operations.
  - ✓ Integrated Water Resources Management (across the full water cycle) requires a new collaborative framework among all users and managers in a watershed.
  - ✓ There will be increasing incorporation of community (social) values into utility decision-making and investments.
  - ✓ Customers will be critical to clean water success as a voice for increased infrastructure funding and recognition of the value of clean water.
  - ✓ Further strengthening of the coalition of voices for clean and safe water is needed to effectively promote the true value of water and clean water services.
- Core utility needs remain unmet.
  - ✓ Infrastructure funding remains an important need.

- ✓ Globalization will continue to influence the utility operating costs.
- Changing demographics are driving important cultural shifts that affect utility operations.
  - ✓ Expectations of new entrants to the work force must be met.
  - ✓ The risk of loss of institutional knowledge as retirements take place presents unique challenges.
  - ✓ Communications needs and expectations shifting to new media approaches and more transparency.
  - ✓ The need to acquire new skills and experiences as the nature of the clean water business model evolves (e.g., more capacity for collaborative engagement and partnership building).

## Outcome Oriented Goals, Objectives & Strategies (3-5 Year Planning Horizon)

The 3-5 year planning horizon represents what would typically be considered to be the Strategic Plan itself. It includes outcome-oriented goals; objectives providing specific, measurable targets; and, strategies for achieving the goals. The following thinking represents Goal Areas for the next three to five years. They are areas in which NACWA explicitly states the conditions or attributes it wants to achieve. These outcome statements define what will constitute future success. The achievement of each goal will move the organization toward realization of its vision. Actions and initiatives in support of each objective are added via NACWA's annual Association Business Plan. NACWA's Board assesses progress toward achieving the Objectives at each Board meeting utilizing a report provided by the National Office staff.

### GOAL AREAS

#### Legislative, Regulatory & Judicial Advocacy

##### Goal:

*Water policies, laws, regulations and judicial actions support clean water research, rely on valid science, protect public health, support flexibility and innovation to optimize clear environmental benefit, embrace the value of watershed approaches, and recognize economic and triple bottom line considerations, as a result of NACWA's collaborative efforts and implementation of its advocacy program.*

##### Legislative Objectives:

1. Identify and develop short-term and long-term opportunities within the legislative process that promote NACWA's clean water policy agenda.
2. Promote policies that support greater regulatory flexibility, prioritization, and innovation by clean water utilities to meet Clean Water Act obligations more affordably.

3. Promote policies that support innovation, resiliency, and sustainable water resources management by clean water utilities.
4. Promote policies that ensure a meaningful Federal funding partnership exists to provide local communities support to meet Clean Water Act obligations.
5. Promote policies that support watershed-based approaches to meeting water quality challenges.

**Legislative Strategies:**

1. Advocate for legislation that promotes and codifies Integrated Planning, allows for extended NPDES permit terms, and strengthens tools for effective wet weather management.
2. Advocate for legislation that incentivizes greater adoption of green infrastructure, promotes energy efficiency and resource recovery, including energy generation, water recycling, and nutrient recovery, and supports utilities' sustainability and resiliency efforts.
3. Ensure that Federal funding programs such as the Clean Water State Revolving Fund program continue to receive robust annual appropriations and sustainable support, and that federal tax-expenditure programs that support investments in clean water infrastructure (such as tax-exemptions for municipal bonds remain available).
4. Advocate for legislation that promotes watershed-based approaches to meeting water quality challenges such as water quality trading, better management of agricultural nutrient run-off and stormwater run-off, and that promotes watershed-based permitting within the Clean Water Act.

**Regulatory Objectives:**

1. Ensure that decisions concerning water quality improvements are based on valid science, encourage flexible implementation approaches, consider community financial capability, and better allow for innovation by the clean water community.
2. Ensure that any applicable regulations developed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) or other federal agency embrace a more holistic approach to environmental protection, consider impacts to all environmental media and avoid one-size-fits-all approaches.
3. Ensure that existing sustainability practices, including asset management, energy and water efficiency, resource recovery and pollution prevention, are better recognized in both regulatory and non-regulatory contexts (e.g., renewable energy standards).

**Regulatory Strategies:**

1. Advocate for reasonable, science-based regulatory initiatives at EPA that are designed to meet water quality standards and encourage innovation.

2. Build upon EPA's 2012 Integrated Planning Framework to increase flexibility and ensure that local governments and utilities have greater control over the clean water investments they make, including allowing consideration of investment prioritization on a watershed level.
3. Identify, and raise awareness of, competing environmental priorities in the development of new environmental mandates impacting the clean water community, ensuring affordability considerations are part of EPA's decision-making process.
4. Identify and explore strategic partnerships with key stakeholders, including nonpoint source interests, to pursue more holistic and non-regulatory approaches that encourage and enable action to address key water quality challenges.
5. Leverage existing and new relationships with state and regional organizations to ensure greater consistency among EPA Headquarters and the regional offices.

#### Judicial Objectives:

1. Clean water agency interests are preserved through NACWA's defense of utilities' legal rights and the use of valid science in judicial proceedings having the potential to establish national precedent, including NACWA initiation of litigation where appropriate.
2. Clean water enforcement actions do not unfairly burden utilities and at the same time achieve meaningful water quality improvements, and NACWA Member Agencies have the legal resources including tools, strategies, information, and support to defend themselves in enforcement proceedings.
3. Involvement in judicial proceedings complements and advances NACWA advocacy efforts in the legislative and regulatory areas, is consistent with NACWA's national advocacy priorities, and is done collaboratively with other organizations and interests as appropriate.

#### Judicial Strategies:

1. Develop and protect sound judicial precedent and the use of valid science through participation – including initiation where appropriate – in key clean water and environmental litigation nationwide in both federal and state courts.
2. Assist members in defending against unreasonable enforcement actions through direct advocacy with EPA enforcement officials; development of information, communication, and strategic resources; and litigation participation as appropriate.
3. Communicate with members, state associations, and other stakeholder organizations to ensure NACWA is aware of critical clean water litigation and coordinating efforts with other interested parties to ensure an efficient and beneficial use of legal resources.
4. Pursue collaborative legal advocacy efforts with other organizations and interests where legal objectives are in alignment.

5. Identify legal and judicial opportunities to further advance NACWA Member Agencies' national advocacy goals, with focus on litigation matters that bolster regulatory and legislative priorities.
6. Produce publications and analyses for NACWA Member Agencies to support their understanding of critical issues and protect their legal rights.

## Membership Development & Engagement

### Goal:

*NACWA's membership development and retention initiatives support its strategic direction.*

### Membership Objectives:

1. Increase NACWA's membership consistent with key strategic goals through projecting a strong and wide-ranging representation within the sector during advocacy activities; aligning the membership with key advocacy tactical needs; and, maintaining membership levels needed to provide the financial means to effectively pursue NACWA's advocacy agenda.
2. Better project NACWA return on investment to retain members and provide an effective platform for recruiting new members.
3. Expand and diversify NACWA's membership to include other entities and organizations that are aligned with the Association's strategic interests.
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5. Ensure that the next generation of water resources managers is engaged in NACWA, and that those managers' involvement in the sector is promoted.

### Membership Strategies:

1. Increase opportunities for current Member Agency management and next generation utility leaders to participate and engage in Association initiatives and activities.
2. Initiate communications that quantify and highlight the ways in which NACWA membership benefits its Member Agencies through cost avoidance, cost-savings, information and analysis, and/or additional funding realized.
3. Implement issue-driven, targeted initiatives to secure new Member Agencies.
4. Engage state and regional organizations in Association advocacy issues and objectives to build coalitions and extend NACWA's reach.