

FROM THE RMSAWWA CHAIR

The Future Flows from Here

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It is with a mix of pride, excitement and not a small amount of nostalgia that I sit down to write my final article as chair of the Rocky Mountain Section. Serving as the Section Chair has been an honor. I am grateful and humbled that I was elected as an officer of the Section, and I hope the membership has found value in what the board, staff, committee chairs and our ever-eager volunteers accomplished together this year. I have benefited immensely from the experience, forming lasting relationships and learning from all of you across Colorado, Wyoming and New Mexico.

This year is significant, as we celebrate 100 years of the Rocky Mountain Section of AWWA. Founded in 1926, our section has stood for a century as a nonprofit, scientific and educational membership association dedicated to managing our water. It bears repeating the section's mission to provide solutions for our members to effectively manage water, the world's most important resource, and connect you with the full suite of AWWA resources and opportunities. Together, our work is driven by a powerful vision: **A better world through better water.** As we look back on who we are and what we have built, I cannot help but wonder where the next 100 years will take us. What will the water industry look like in the year 2126?

The answer to that question lies right in the theme of this issue: Innovation and Technology. The pace of change is accelerating, and here in our region, we are

seeing advancements coming into broader knowledge. As we look ahead, here are but a few emerging innovations that are reshaping the water sector today across our three states:

- **Direct Potable Reuse:** Driven by increasing water scarcity and challenging source water conditions, advanced purification processes are making direct potable reuse a safe, sustainable and critical reality for long-term supply resilience.
- **Brackish Water Desalination and Advanced Reverse Osmosis:** A vital technology for New Mexico's Strategic Water Supply, helping to treat and utilize alternative water sources to expand our usable supply.
- **Advanced PFAS Destruction:** Moving beyond simply capturing "forever chemicals" to actual destruction through innovative technologies.
- **AI-Driven Watershed and Wildfire Resilience:** Utilizing remote sensing, satellite data and predictive analytics to proactively manage forest health, monitor early wildfire threats, and mitigate post-fire runoff and sediment erosion in vital drinking water watersheds.
- **Satellite Leak Detection:** Using satellite imagery and advanced algorithms to identify hidden distribution system leaks across vast, remote geographies.
- **Localized Drought Response:** Secure, transparent digital ledgers for tracking temporary water use agreements, which is particularly relevant in agricultural-heavy areas adapting to drought.

• Atmospheric Water Harvesting:

Leveraging emerging decentralized technologies to extract drinking water directly from the air, offering supplemental solutions for our most arid, drought-prone communities.

Navigating these new technologies requires a strong, unified foundation. That is why it was such a privilege to work alongside our dedicated board of trustees and section staff as we developed our new five-year strategic plan. Built around three main goals – **Organizational Alignment, Knowledge Creation and Exchange, and Water Policy Leadership** – this plan is officially in motion. I am proud to report that we are making tangible progress on each of these fronts. I am excited to see how aligning our efforts around these strategic goals will enhance our services, and where this direction will lead the section, with your continuous input and engagement.

As I sign off, my final message to you remains the same as my first: **Get Involved, Bring a Friend.** Membership is what drives us as an organization. We want to harness your experience, dedication and passion to help us achieve our goals. There are so many ways to get involved, whether that is joining one of our committees, presenting a paper, or simply bringing a colleague to their first conference or section event.

Thank you again for this opportunity and for your dedication to our shared mission. Here is to the next 100 years! •

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