

FROM THE RMSAWWA CHAIR

Communication is Crucial to What We Do

Brett Pugh, RMSAWWA Chair, Project Manager, Burns & McDonnell



Hello, and welcome to the winter issue of the *Rocky Mountain Water* magazine. These are exciting times as we head into a new year. A new year means new plans, goals and resolutions. I hope you were able to carve out some time to list your goals for 2026. Give yourself some grace – they won't all happen in the first few weeks! Go back to that list to stay focused. Small steps will get you there.

Despite the dry fall in Colorado, I was able to enjoy some early-season skiing with my family. Please take time to think about the work that goes into snowmaking. There are many similarities to what we do in the municipal drinking water industry: watching the weather, managing water supplies, maintaining equipment, keeping workers safe, communicating with stakeholders and customer satisfaction. How else can we compare snowmaking to the water industry? Challenging climate, managing with few resources, and regular training. Did we just identify potential new members for the Rocky Mountain Section (RMS)? Some ski resorts are even using reclaimed water for their snowmaking, echoing how we are seeing the growing importance of reuse and innovation in our industry. As the Rocky Mountain Section version of the *No Water* campaign states, "No Water, No Skiing." It struck me as another example of how water is central to the quality of life of many people, not just us who work in the industry daily. Water is pivotal for commerce, our recreation and of course, staying safe and healthy.



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Communication is crucial to what we do. All members of the water industry play a role in communicating the value of water to all stakeholders. We must be effective in explaining why water bills are increasing, why more funds are needed to address aging infrastructure, growth and capital projects, why more people are needed in the water sector, how deliberate plans have been developed as the basis for higher monthly bills, and provide the justification for increased funding. Water is often a silent industry. Water is generally not on the minds of the public at large, almost taken for granted.

Our role in the industry is to help explain the value of water, the cost of operations and maintenance, including keeping operators safe and up to date with their training. All of these aspects take time and money to keep active.

This is where the Rocky Mountain Section can help with your communication needs. Kari Larese at Highlands Ranch Water leads the RMS Communications Committee. Its purpose is "To enhance the credibility of water professionals in the Rocky Mountain Section states by promoting RMSAWWA activities and events, assisting water providers with their public information

activities, maintaining and updating the RMSAWWA website, and providing content for conferences and publications." Kari does tremendous work for the section, for which I want to thank her on behalf of our members.

Don't forget to leverage the vast resources at awwa.org. Members have access to resource topics, webpages, technical reports, publications and professional development through AWWA. There are additional benefits of membership not directly related to this magazine, committee activities or conferences.

The Section also has resources to help. Erin Ridolfo and Maci Burgart coordinate the Section's social media and can help with your committee's needs. And they have big news to share! RMSAWWA has a fresh new look and a completely redesigned website created with our members in mind. From streamlined navigation to easier access to trainings, events, and resources, our new digital home supports the water community more effectively. We hope you enjoy exploring the new site.

2026 will see an update to the Rocky Mountain Section's Strategic Plan. We have engaged leading associations to moderate the development of a three-year Strategic Plan. Their scope includes an initial scoping meeting, a full-day retreat in January and the development of a draft strategic plan ahead of the Board of Trustees' winter planning meeting in February. These initial steps will be led by a steering committee made up of board members and our Executive Director, Devon Buckels. Tom Clark from AWWA's Section Services will act as a special advisor. Input from the Board of Trustees will be used to finalize the strategic plan by spring. Please look for an update in the next issue. We are excited for this process and to share its results with the members.

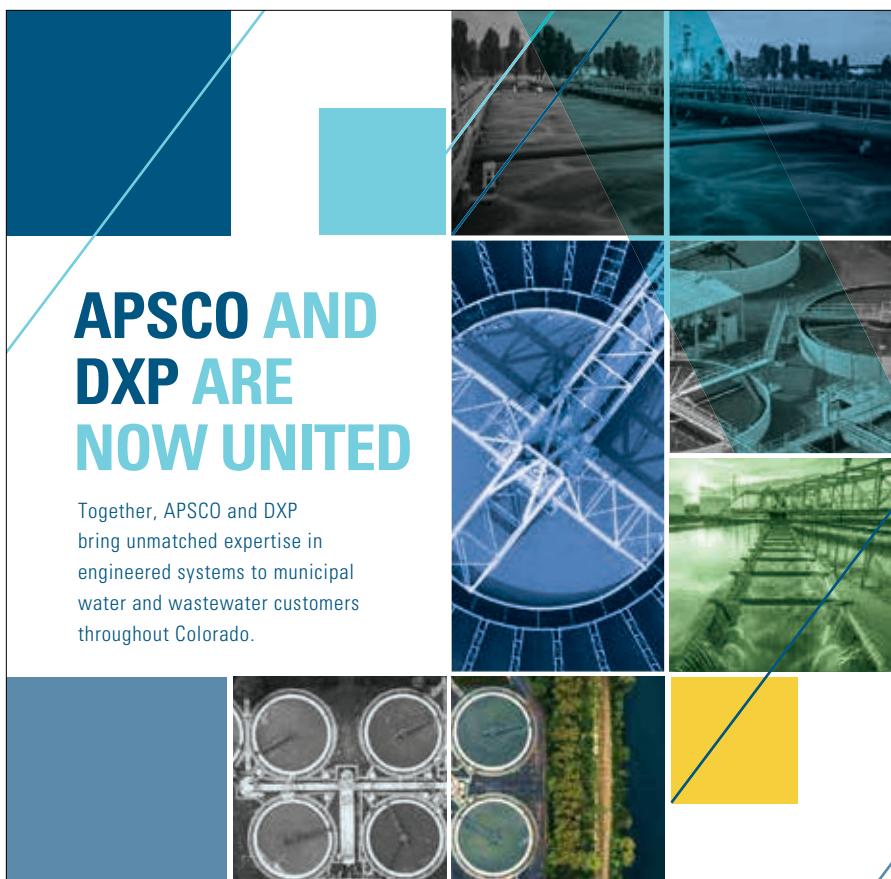
The RMS Finance Committee presented the 2025-2026 budget in November and received approval from the Board of Trustees. It was another successful year, with a record number of attendees, over 1,500 at the Rocky Mountain Water

Conference and strong attendance at the Western Colorado Water and Wastewater Conference in Grand Junction in October. I hope you were able to make it.

Our board wants the section to grow, which is achieved with new members. We need to both recruit and engage those new members. There are many roles within our committees. One of the larger

lifts is planning for the Rocky Mountain Water Conference, and it has many roles. We want you to participate and bring a friend. Please share with them what you are learning, what you get to do and who you meet through participation.

Please reach out with any questions or comments. RMS is here to support your growth in the water industry. •



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