



THE STATE OF THE WATER SECTOR 2026

A Dialogue on Emerging Trends in US Water Policy

March 24, 2026

Join Reservoir Center partners, Members of Congress, and the nation's foremost water leaders for a powerful day of dialogue, strategy, and action — shaping the decisions that will define the future of water in America and beyond.

WELCOME

American Society of Civil Engineers, United for Infrastructure, and Xylem

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

The State of the Water Sector: A View From Washington

As Washington navigates shifting federal priorities, few voices carry more weight on water policy than Senator Boozman's. In this opening keynote, Senator Boozman will offer his assessment of where the water sector stands — covering the federal funding landscape, rates and affordability pressures, PFAS remediation, the promise of AI and innovation, and what resilience means for water infrastructure in an era of growing uncertainty.

Senator John Boozman (R-AR) is Arkansas's senior U.S. Senator and the dean of the state's Congressional delegation. John has been a consistent champion for Arkansas's farmers, ranchers and loggers as well as an instrumental voice in the fight for an equitable farm bill. John serves as Chairman of the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry, enabling him to play a key role in influencing policy that relates to the agriculture economy, nutrition programs and quality of life in rural America. John also serves on the Committee on Appropriations, which is responsible for allocating federal funds, and the Committee on the Environment and Public Works, where much of the nation's infrastructure policy is developed.



SPEAKER

Aspen National Water Strategy

The Aspen National Water Strategy was released in February, representing the culmination of 2 years of work from representatives across the water sector. This strategy offers a shared framework for action—one that aligns proven practices with innovation, technical expertise with community knowledge, and long-term national goals with local needs. Most generally, the strategy lays out the essential shifts needed across the water sector over the next decade to achieve water security for the US.



Martin Doyle

Director of the Water Policy Program
Nicholas Institute for Energy, Environment, & Sustainability at Duke University



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SPEAKER

The Power of Partnerships: A spotlight on NOAA and Innovation

The NOAA Administrator's keynote will focus on how advanced water prediction—powered through CIROH, the national research partnership between NOAA and The University of Alabama—is transforming our ability to anticipate and respond to water challenges. He will discuss how improved forecasting of streamflow, floods, droughts, and water quality, along with better tools for translating forecasts into actionable decisions, can help communities strengthen their resilience. His remarks will highlight how CIROH's collaborative research across 28 institutions is improving hydrologic modeling, operational forecasting, and community readiness, ensuring the nation is better equipped for a future shaped by increasingly complex water risks.



Tim Petty

Assistant Administrator of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and Deputy Administrator,
NOAA

PANEL

Unlocking the EPA

Former senior leaders of EPA's Office of Water pull back the curtain on what it actually takes to run one of the most consequential divisions in federal government. From managing career staff and navigating White House and OMB relationships to setting budget priorities and building a team, Anna Wildeman and Bruno Pigot share candid insights — and a few stories — from the inside.



Moderator

Carol Haddock
ASCE



Anna Wildeman

Senior Vice President,
Stakeholder Engagement &
Sustainability for Municipal Water,
Veolia



Bruno Pigott

Executive Director
WateReuse Association



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SPEAKER

Closing the Water Access Gap, Forever: A National Roadmap to Bring Water and Sanitation to Every Community in the United States

More than 2.2 million people in the United States still live without a working tap or toilet at home. Closing the U.S. water access gap requires more than alignment—it requires a shared, actionable plan. The Vessel Collective came together to develop a national strategy to clarify what's possible now, what requires further groundwork, and how efforts across the sector can add up to meaningful progress. Engaging dozens of organizations in its development, leaders across the U.S. WASH Sector are excited to unveil a plan forward, highlighting strategies around visibility, capacity building, and government commitment, so that we can end water insecurity for all Americans, forever.



Kabir Thatte

Vice President of Policy & External Relations
DigDeep

LUNCH

Enjoy lunch and networking at the Reservoir Center



COHOSTS

Engage with us by
submitting your
questions online.



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PANEL

Leadership in Changing Times: A Waterside Chat with Secretary Serena McIlwain

The decisions facing water leaders today are different in kind, not just degree. Climate volatility is rewriting the hydrology we planned around. AI infrastructure is arriving as a major new claimant on water supply. Aging systems face financing gaps that traditional rate structures cannot carry. And communities are demanding that equity and resilience be built in from the start.

Meeting this moment requires something that government is uniquely positioned to provide: the authority to act at scale, the public trust to bring communities along, and the long-term accountability. This conversation will focus on the value of leadership, the evolving landscape of challenges underway in the water sector, and solutions to emerging trends that governmental institutions are uniquely qualified to tackle.



Moderator

Radhika Fox
Principal, North Star
Strategy



Serena McIlwain
Secretary of the Environment
Maryland

SPEAKERS

Rapid Current: Building the Water—AI Nexus: Managing the Impacts of the AI Revolution

Leaders in water and AI innovation will deliver rapid-fire insights on the intersections of artificial intelligence and water infrastructure — from data center demand to homegrown innovation hubs keeping cutting-edge technology in the U.S. Join this forwardlooking conversation on how AI and industry partnerships are reshaping the future of water systems in real time.



Josh Mahan
Director of Government and
Industry Relations,
Xylem Inc.



Brenton McCloskey
Director of Strategic Development
and Communications,
The Water Center at Penn



Bryan Stubbs
President and CEO
Cleveland Water Alliance



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Waterside Chat: A View from the States

As water infrastructure demands intensify, state-level leaders are navigating a complex balancing act: mobilizing funding, setting rates, and ensuring affordability for the communities they serve. In this panel, state water leaders share frontline perspectives on the policy levers, funding mechanisms, and governance strategies shaping the future of water infrastructure investment.



Moderator

Ben Grumbles

Executive Director
Environmental Council of
the States (ECOS)



Richard Jackson

Director
Department of Energy and
Environment - DC



Julie Moore

Secretary
Vermont Agency of Natural
Resources



Amanda Lefton

Commissioner
New York State Department of
Environmental Conservation

SPEAKER

Exploring the Golden State of Reuse

In this dynamic, field-based presentation, waterloop founder Travis Loop shares his firsthand journey across California's cutting-edge water reuse landscape, traveling from San Diego to Sacramento and visiting 15 facilities in five days to see how communities are transforming wastewater into a resilient water supply. Featuring original, on-location footage, the session offers an immersive, journalist-driven perspective on the issues involved in water reuse.



Travis Loop

Founder | Producer | Host
waterloop



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Engage with us by
submitting your
questions online.