

Strategic Plan

May, 2007

Overview

When NACWA's Board of Directors developed and adopted a new *Strategic Plan* in 2004, they made a commitment to an ongoing process of thinking strategically. In the months and years since the *Plan's* adoption it has become a touchstone to guide Association initiatives, as well as the impetus for change. Notably, the change in the Association's name from the Association of Metropolitan Sewerage Agencies to the National Association of Clean Water Agencies was one of the first actions inspired by the 2004 *Strategic Plan*.

NACWA's *Strategic Plan* is viewed by the Board as a dynamic document – one that must be responsive not only to the needs and desires of its membership, but also to the environment external to the Association. It was with this in mind that the Board of Directors appointed a Workgroup of its Strategic Planning Committee to review the *Plan* in the context of evolving positions and priorities and to measure progress toward achieving the five-year goals created in 2004. The Strategic Planning Workgroup began its task in January, 2007 and culminated its work with the adoption of the new *Strategic Plan* which follows by NACWA's Board of Directors in May, 2007.

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

The term Core Ideology describes 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. It consists of a Big Audacious Goal – a clear and compelling catalyst that serves as a focal point for effort – and a Vivid Description – vibrant and engaging descriptions of what it will be like to achieve the Big Audacious Goal.

Core Ideology

Core Purpose:

Be the leading advocate for responsible national policies that advance clean and safe waters and a healthy, sustainable environment.

Core Values:

- Scientifically and economically informed environmental policy.
- Visionary and results-oriented leadership embracing innovation and diverse input.
- Environmental stewardship.
- Fiscal responsibility.
- Integrity and credibility in all we do.
- Collaboration as an effective strategy.
- Continuous professional development.

Envisioned Future

Big Audacious Goal

When people say, "environmentalist," they think of us first.

A Vivid Description of the Desired Future:

The Environment

- The quality of the nation's waters continues to improve.
- The environment is significantly improved as a result of NACWA's advocacy efforts.

The Community

- The public recognizes the efforts of both NACWA and its members as having a significant positive impact on the environment.
- Investment in clean water infrastructure is valued and understood by the public.
- Decision-makers and the public value the input and opinions of clean water professionals and seek their advice.
- Ratepayers support clean water agency projects because they are pragmatic and produce tangible results.

- The public actively participates in conservation and pollution prevention programs.
- Environmental awareness/stewardship is taught in schools.

Clean Water Agencies

- Clean water agencies lead change by forming partnerships to further common goals and achieve sustainable approaches to manage water resources.
- Clean water agencies responsibly plan, design, construct and operate the infrastructure necessary to provide clean water and support a healthy environment.
- Clean water agencies seek meaningful collaboration with the public, providing them with transparent, timely and comprehensive information.

The Association

- NACWA's policy input is accepted as balanced and responsible.
- NACWA leads change by forming partnerships to further common goals and achieve sustainable approaches to manage water resources.
- NACWA is recognized and respected for its prominent role in the passage of laws, the promulgation of regulations, the creation and implementation of policies, and the development of sound judicial precedent through its participation in important environmental litigation.
- The association's membership will have expanded and diversified to include other entities and organizations that complement NACWA's interests.
- NACWA leads collaborative efforts to achieve national watershed goals (including those focusing on wastewater, drinking water, water reuse, groundwater, stormwater, and agricultural run-off).

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. Additional Supporting Assumptions for NACWA's Strategic Plan are contained in Appendix A.

- Financially and environmentally sustainable infrastructure
 - Infrastructure funding will continue to be a key priority.
 - There will be more focus on environmental systems and sustainability.
- The need for integrated water resource management (wastewater, drinking water, water reuse, stormwater, and groundwater) to achieve water quality goals
 - A new framework is necessary to foster watershed approaches to clean water issues.
- Climate change
 - Climate change will increasingly impact how utilities conduct business.

- Globalization’s impact on changing economics
 - Environmental sustainability will be a local, regional, national and international theme.
- Need for nonpoint source control strategy (air, agriculture, forestry) to allow attainment of water quality goals
 - To achieve water quality goals a national strategy must address nonpoint sources, stormwater, emerging contaminants, and other issues of concern.
- Collaboration
 - A new framework is necessary to foster watershed approaches to clean water issues.
- Valid science
 - The role of science and risk management will be increasingly important in final decision-making.
- Changing demographics
 - Within clean water agencies there will be an increasing need to have new and diverse skills and experiences to effectively respond to future challenges.

Outcome Oriented Goals and Strategic Objectives (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 and strategic objectives. 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. The Goal Areas are not in priority order. Strategic Objectives provide direction on how the Association will accomplish its articulated goals.

Goal Areas

Goal Area: Legislative/Regulatory/Judicial Advocacy

Water policies, laws, and regulations are funded and based on valid science, economic feasibility, public health, watershed priorities, and environmental benefit as a result of NACWA’s advocacy program.

Strategic Objectives

1. Aggressively pursue legislation and other mechanisms to advance an integrated watershed-based approach to achieve national environmental goals.
2. Increase opportunities to work with and form strategic partnerships, where appropriate, with other clean water, environmental, conservation, and public health organizations.

3. Enhance sustainable sources of funding for infrastructure, research, and other clean water priorities.
4. Increase visibility, access, and influence with regulators, legislators and other stakeholders.
5. Serve as a catalyst and resource for enhanced political involvement of members and rate payers at the national, state, and local levels.
6. Effectively communicate and emphasize the importance of valid science and sound economic analysis in laws, policies, and regulations.
7. Ensure that the interests of NACWA member utilities are understood and protected in the judicial arena.

Goal Area: Valid Science

NACWA's actions support clean water research that acknowledges national priorities and results in the practical application of valid science and environmental policy.

Strategic Objectives

1. Increase the use of independent peer reviewed research to advance NACWA's regulatory and legislative agenda.
2. Increase NACWA's influence in setting the research agenda of the Environmental Protection Agency, Water Environment Research Foundation, American Water Works Association Research Foundation, National Science Foundation and other research organizations.

Goal Area: Utility Management

NACWA's activities and initiatives promote effective and sustainable public water sector utility management and operations.

Strategic Objectives

1. Maintain and enhance the development of high quality, timely, affordable, accessible, and relevant information.
2. Explore new opportunities and delivery mechanisms to provide critical utility management information and resources to the water sector.

Goal Area: Organizational Framework, Evolution, and Membership

Ensure that NACWA's organizational framework and membership structure supports its strategic direction.

Strategic Objectives

1. Enhance existing relationships and increase opportunities for strategic partnerships to advance NACWA's goals.
2. Increase NACWA's traditional membership base.
3. Explore opportunities to expand and diversify membership to include other entities and organizations that complement NACWA's strategic direction.
4. Increase member participation by creating new opportunities to engage in association initiatives and activities.

Supporting Assumptions for NACWA's Strategic Plan

Demographics

1. The population is aging; many are on fixed incomes with fewer dollars available to spend and less willingness to spend it on infrastructure.
2. There will be an increasing demand for a clean and safe environment.
3. There will be more public involvement in the activities of clean water utilities and a greater desire on the part of the public to be informed.
4. Utilities will experience a 'brain drain' in their workforces resulting in a loss of institutional memory necessitating the need to develop new programs to better recruit, train, and retain employees.
5. Environmental justice will become an increasing consideration making it difficult to site new facilities, regardless of available funding.
6. There will be a cultural shift in oversight and management of utilities resulting from workforce demands for more balance between work and family. Increasingly, utilities will need to accommodate employee needs with flexibility, job sharing, childcare, and wellness centers.
7. Shortages in the available workforce will drive advancements in technology.
8. The public will need to be more informed with regard to their interaction and impact on the environment.

Legislation/Regulation

1. Environmental regulations will continue to become increasingly restrictive and regulatory uncertainty will increase.
2. There will be new issues subject to regulatory oversight.
3. Security considerations will influence many agendas and compete for scarce resources.
4. The relationship between clean water agencies and the Environmental Protection Agency will need to be more collaborative at the national and regional levels.
5. There will continue to be an ineffective relationship between EPA headquarters and regions.
6. Clean water agencies will need to increase their efforts to inform and advise regulators and elected officials.
7. Clean water agencies will create opportunities and lead change within the legislative arena.
8. There will be a growing need for coalitions on selected issues, with selected activists.
9. Litigation will follow policy and will drive policy via case-by-case decision-making.
10. Emotion will increasingly influence policies and regulations.
11. States will follow the federal government, but put their own interpretation on the issues.
12. Enforcement will continue to drive policy.
13. Infrastructure funding will continue to be a key priority.
14. To achieve water quality goals, a national strategy must address nonpoint sources (including all media air/water), stormwater, emerging contaminants and other issues of concern.
15. Executive level politics will continue to drive legislative and regulatory agendas.
16. NACWA will increasingly need to use its credibility to influence the legislative and regulatory agendas.

17. NACWA will increasingly need to identify and respond to the agendas of other stakeholder groups.
18. As a result of declining federal and state research funding, clean water agencies will increasingly have to fund the research agenda.
19. A new framework will be necessary to foster watershed approaches to clean water issues.
20. There will be more focus on environmental management systems and sustainability.
21. Climate change will have ramifications for the water sector.

Global Business/Economic Climate

1. Clean water agencies will continue competing for local, state, and federal resources with local dollars being the primary source.
2. Clean water agencies must do a better job of anticipating the business needs of their communities.
3. The movement towards voluntary international standards will continue. (e.g. International Organization for Standardization and International Water Association).
4. Trade agreements will have more impact in the future.
5. Companies moving offshore will change the industrial base.
6. Local infrastructure will be stressed as population increases in certain regions.
7. In other regions, local economies will become depressed as industry and population leave, which may fuel resistance to rate increases.
8. Environmental sustainability will be a local, regional, national, and international theme.
9. Conflicts with U.S. border water rights will continue to affect policy.
10. Security issues will continue to impact the way clean water agencies do business.
11. The industry will increasingly experience multi-lingual challenges with domestic and industrial users.
12. Local governments will look to utilities for increased payments in lieu of taxes.
13. There will be more scrutiny of public agencies and questions of trust with regard to expenditures, policies and practices.
14. Demand for a skilled workforce will remain high, jobs will become more specialized, and cross-training will be essential.
15. International demand for construction materials will continue to impact costs.
16. More demand for qualified contractors will increase public sector infrastructure costs.
17. Climate change will increasingly impact how utilities do business.
18. Use of electronic information technology by all clean water stakeholders will increasingly impact NACWA members, regulators and legislators.

Science/Technology

1. The following factors will continue to support the need for innovation and new technologies: public accessibility to new information; new regulations and public expectations; economics and limited availability of energy; increasing salt levels; water conservation (increasing the concentration of influent pollutants); additional drinking water regulations; and science itself.
2. The increased emphasis on security will yield better screening methods for bioterrorism and toxic substances.
3. Continued growth along with a diminishing water supply will drive new technology for direct and indirect reuse.
4. There will be a change in the issues that drive reuse/discharge. New control strategies will be needed for emerging pollutants.
5. Public perception of biosolids will result in higher levels of treatment and drive new technologies.

6. There will be a need for new technologies to address air and odor issues.
7. The role of science and risk management will be increasingly important in final decision-making.
8. Residual pharmaceuticals, personal care products, and endocrine disruptors will require additional technical understanding and treatment technologies.
9. Developments in nanotechnology will need to be examined in the context of water quality.
10. Low impact, sustainable technologies will need to be a research and development focus to better inform decision-making.
11. Demand for energy recovery from wastewater treatment processes will increase.

Professional Competition/Structure

1. Privatization of public utilities will continue to be an issue.
2. The infrastructure of agencies will continue to age.
3. Within clean water agencies there will be an increasing need to have new and diverse skills and experiences (i.e. urban planners, agro economists, etc) in response to future issues.
4. Recognition of issues will result in the need to build and maintain relationships across political and association boundaries.
5. NACWA will continue to compete for revenues with other organizations. (e.g. dues, grant funds, conference registration, publications)
6. The movement towards integrating operations (e.g. water, wastewater, water reuse and stormwater) under a watershed mantle will continue.
7. Better collaboration between utility equipment manufacturers and others regarding industry needs will be necessary.
8. There will be a continued need to respond to new security challenges.
9. A shortage of skilled trades and professionals will impact utilities.

Mega-Issue Questions

The 5-10 Year Planning Horizon identifies Mega Issues and is a part of the strategic planning process. Mega Issues represent choices the organization will need to make in defining the ultimate direction of its long-range plan. These issues represent potential impediments to achievement of the Envisioned Future, and form a basis for dialogue about the choices facing the organization.

These questions can serve as an ongoing “menu” of strategic issues that can be used by NACWA’s Board of Directors to create regular opportunities for strategic dialogue about the future issues facing the organization. Mega issues should be routinely revisited and refined.

1. How will NACWA support and facilitate the long-term and sustainable funding of the nation’s water infrastructure?
2. How does NACWA ensure that national policy and regulations are directed at achieving the greatest environmental benefit in the watershed?
3. How will NACWA create the opportunity to reauthorize or replace the Clean Water Act in support of a more integrated water resources approach?
4. What role should NACWA play in creating a more positive dynamic among the Association, other environmental organizations and EPA?
5. How does NACWA finance a high-impact advocacy outreach program in support of its initiatives?
6. How can NACWA best support funding for an increased research agenda?
7. How can NACWA assist its members in promoting and sustaining their role as environmental leaders?