

WATER WORKFORCE WEBINAR SERIES

Future Water Leaders Bridging the Gap Between Utilities and Schools

Office of Wastewater Management

Office of Water
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
August 14, 2025

We will start in a couple minutes. Thank you.



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Webinar Logistics

- This webinar is being recorded
- Participants will be in listen-only mode
- To submit a question, use the Q&A function



Water Sector Workforce at EPA

• Reminders:

- Check out our website for resources and updates: <u>https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-water-infrastructure/water-sector-workforce</u>
 - Workforce Initiative
 - Past Workforce Webinars
 - Workforce Case Studies
- Stay tuned for information on our next webinar. If you are registered for this webinar you are automatically on the email list for future webinars!

Having Audio Difficulties?

- Call in to any of these phone numbers:
- +1 669 254 5252
- +1 669 216 1590
- +1 646 828 7666
- +1 551 285 1373

Webinar ID: 161 835 6733

Opening Poll: Please indicate the sector that you work in:

- Utility
- State or Local Government
- Federal Government
- Consultant
- Academia/Educator
- Military/Veterans
- Other



Future Water Leaders Bridging the Gap Between Utilities and Schools

Jim Horne, Sustainable Utilities Program Manager, U.S. EPA Office of Wastewater Management















CREATING THE WATER WORKFORCE OF THE FUTURE

WEBINAR SERIES

Bridging the Gap Between Utilities and Schools

Have you wanted to increase the connection between your utility and the schools in your community? Do you want to teach your local students about the work you do and the importance of water and wastewater services your utility provides? Ever hoped that you could recruit your next amazing operator from your local high school? Find out how to build these learning and career pipelines for your system!

This webinar will feature an innovative program headed by the Environmental Finance Center (EFC) at Wichita State University in partnership with various EFCs to develop a national network of career guidance counselors that will connect a range of students to career exploration opportunities in various water careers. These counselors will use a toolkit of resources developed by Wichita State as well as other teaching resources to help them reach elementary, middle, and secondary students to help them understand basic water treatment concepts linked to fulfilling careers in the water treatment industry.

This webinar will highlight the resources and tools available through the Future Water Leaders and Work in Water programs developed by the EFC Network. Join us as we explore the Educator's Resource Hub, The Counselor's Guide to Great Water Careers, and resources that help utility professionals connect with their local students.

ATTENDANCE IS FREE Register now at:

[https://www.zoomgov.com/webinar/register/WN e2hf04t8R0-vfYz6j6Haag]

AUGUST 14, 2025 2:00 – 3:30 PM ET

Moderators:

O Jim Horne, U.S. EPA

Speakers:

- Tonya Bronleewe, Director, Wichita
 State University Environmental Finance
 Center
- Analisa Munhall, Program Manager,
 Wichita State University Environmental
 Finance Center

This webinar series is supported by:























Future Water Leaders

Bridging the Gap Between Utilities and Schools

August 14th, 2025



Multi-Environmental Media EFCs

REGION 1

University of Maine (NEEFC)

REGION 2

Syracuse University (SU-EFC)

REGION 3

University of Maryland, Low Impact Development Center Inc. (LID Center)

REGION 4

University of North Carolina, Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN)

REGION 5

Michigan Technological University (GLEIC)

REGION 6

University of New Mexico (SW EFC)

REGION 7

Wichita State University

REGION 8

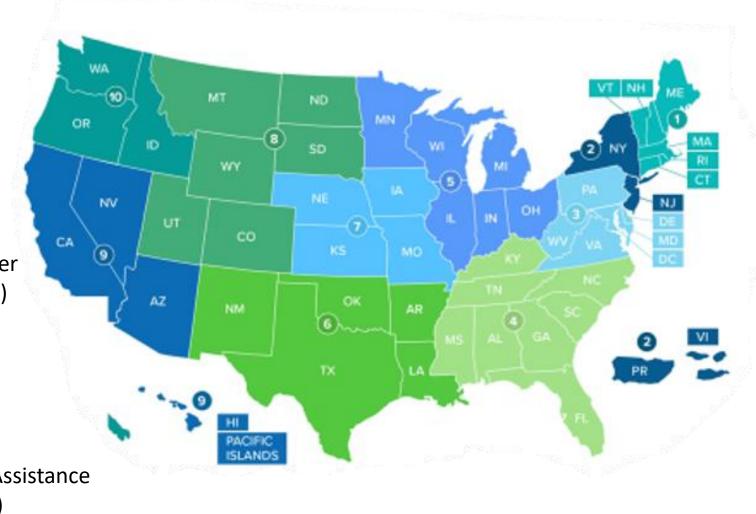
National Rural Water Association (NRWA)

REGION 9

EFC at Sacramento State

REGION 10

Rural Community Assistance Corporation (RCAC)





EFC WSU Mission

To build capacity for addressing environmental challenges

Building programs and tools to bring talented young people into water careers

University & non-profit-based



Works collectively & as individual centers

Serves the U.S.

All states, tribes, territories & the Navajo Nation

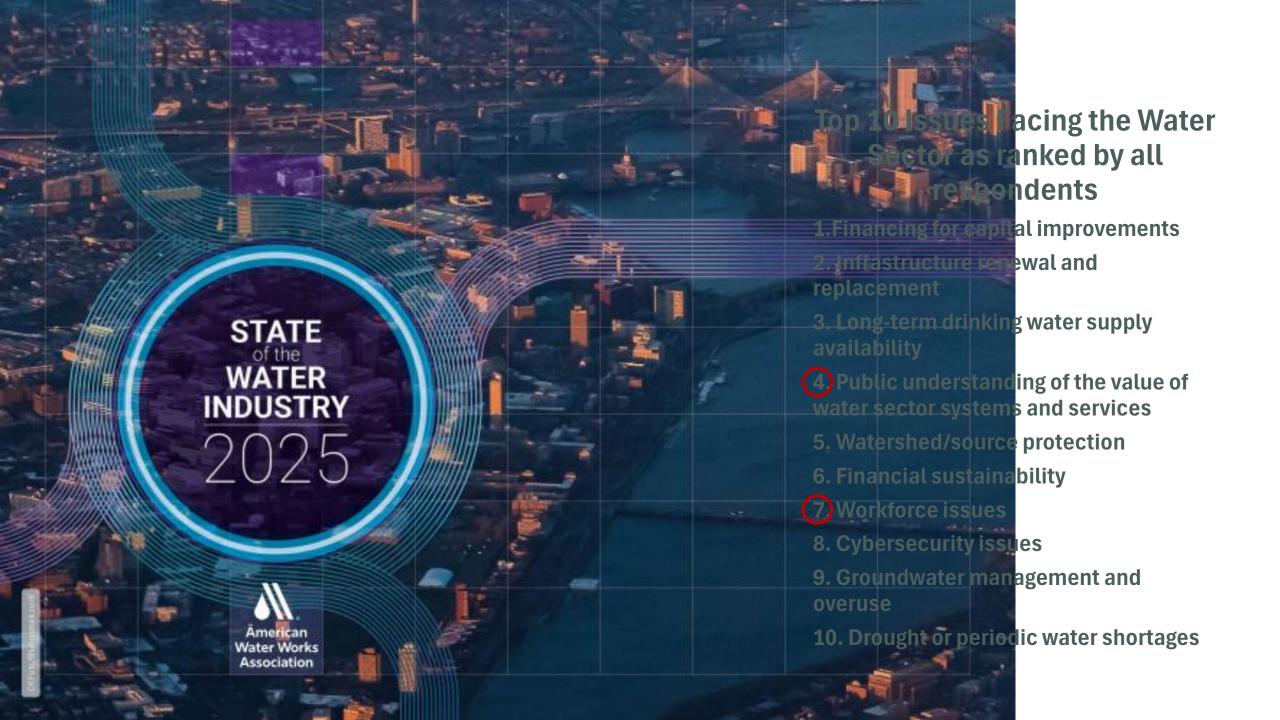
Assists public & private sectors through training, direct professional assistance, production of durable resources, and innovative policy ideas





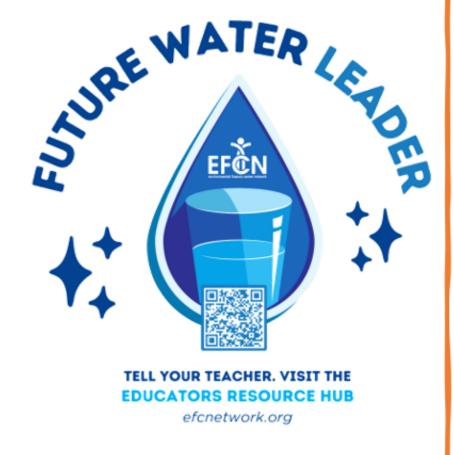








Only a few people on Earth, out of billions, can take the limited fresh water and make it safe enough to give to everyone else.



What You Can Expect To Learn Today:

- How To Increase Public Understanding & Connect With Schools
- How And Why Are Water And Wastewater Internships Valuable





Prepare Before You Go Talk To Schools

22,284 gallons of water used per day by Tampa Bay schools

2 Million gallons of water used per day to care for the animals at the San Antonio Zoo

300 Milion gallons the National Hockey League Uses per season – it takes 12,500 gallons to make ice for each rink

Why do you find the job rewarding

What do you like more about working for the utility

Great network of professions – you're not alone out there

Always learning new things – professional development opportunities

High Tech

WORK in WATER Advancing water careers

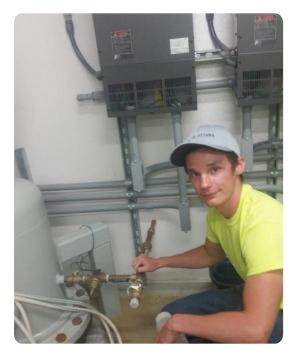








Internships



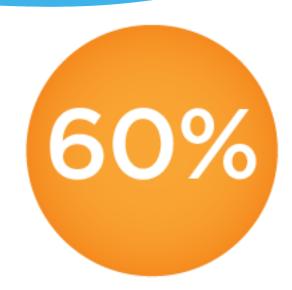




Students Said



They learned about a career they might be interested in



They would tell their friends to attend Work in Water next year



The Work in Water Program is important







wichita.edu/workinwater

(EFC

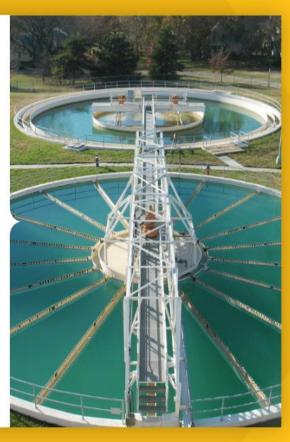
Work in Water

Build the next generation of water workforce with Work in Water!

This unique and adaptable program introduces students to the vital role water and wastewater systems play in their community. It allows students to explore water careers through real-word experiences and conversations with the people that are working to ensure their homes, school, and local businesses have access to safe, clean, and reliable drinking water and water recycling resources.

The Work in Water experience connects students with their community, the utility with schools, and teachers and counselors with resources and opportunities to promote careers in the water industry.

- School Counselor's Guide to Great Water Careers >>>
- Bring Work in Water to Your Utility >>>
- Bring Work in Water to Your School >>>
- Free Water Job Career Profiles >>>
- Supporting Inclusive Water Utilities Online Training
 Videos >>



Future Water Leaders







GOAL: develop a national network of educators and career guidance counselors that will accelerate the pipeline to careers in the water utility sector.

Educator's Resource Hub Counselor's Guide to Great Water Careers Utility Resources









Syracuse EFC Showcases Water Treatment Lesson Plans and the Resource Hub to New York Educators

Learning Objectives:

- 1. Understanding the importance of water.
- 2. Human-water interactions: Water governance, structures, community, ethics, civic engagement
- 3. Understanding water systems: drinking water, stormwater, wastewater
- 4. Understanding the value of water workers
- Career and educational pathways in the water industry: college, technical school, non-college careers
- Connections within the water industry: professional associations, networking, collaboration
- 7. Connecting student to careers in the water industry
- 8. Fostering water leadership in students: students as teachers, community outreach and education, support for local utilities

Educator's Resource Hub



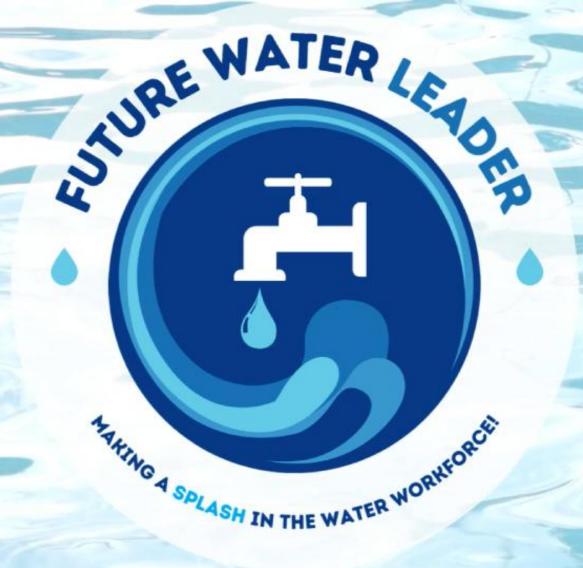
1,885 Hub Visits So Far

1,885 Hub Visits So Far

Share Link With Educators You Know!

Share Link With Educators-resource-hub/

https://efcnetwork.org/resources/educators-resource-hub/



"I'm happy to stir up interest here at Sedgwick High!"

-Katie Lynch, School Counselor USD 439



Work in Water was a good use of the students' time

They would recommend Work in Water to other teachers/counselors

The resources in this guide will help you:

- identify students who might have interest in a career in the water industry
- provide students with resources about water careers
- build curriculum, lessons, or events that introduce students to water professionals and careers

137 Guides Downloaded So Far! Share with Counselors in Your Schools



SCAN ME

Future Water Leaders

A School Counselor's Guide to Great Water Careers











JOB PROFILE

Wastewater Operator



What does a Wastewater Operator Do?

Wastewater operators provide a vital service in a community: removing wastewater from homes and making it safe to return to the environment.

Wastewater operators are the backbone of any community. Without wastewater operators, sewage would not be removed from homes, schools, hospitals, and businesses and/or would be dumped into local waterways causing harm to everyone and everything that interacts with that water. Diseases would be prevalent in our communities. Wastewater operators are responsible for keeping our communities and ecosystems healthy!

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Operate equipment in wastewater treatment plants

Collect, test, and record wastewater samples

Learn wastewater treatment processes to protect public health NATIONAL AVERAGE SALARY

\$27,164 - \$58,568

Profile of a Wastewater Operator

Where do wastewater operators work?

Wastewater operators work for wastewater utilities. It is the business of a wastewater utility to ensure that sewage is removed from homes, businesses, hospitals, schools, and industries in a community. Then, wastewater operators treat and sanitize the water so that it can be returned to the natural environment.

Wastewater utilities are diverse in size and complexity. Some utilities use a lagoon while others operate mechanical treatment plants. Some systems may have a combination of the two types. Smaller utilities may serve communities of a few hundred people, while others serve large cities with millions.

Small or large, all water utilities must know and meet the water quality standards set by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

You're a good fit if you like to:



work for the good of the community

do something different every day



work inside and outside

use different technologies



use tools and heavy machinery

respond to emergency situations



work independently and in a team

LICENSES/EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

High school diploma or GED

Work at a water utility for 2 years

Take the state certification exam



Scan to learn how to be a wastewater operator in your state.

DIVE INTO YOUR FUTURE!

Explore Careers in the Water Sector:
Great careers right out of high school

Talk with your teachers and guidance counselors about the possibilities.





JOBS IN THE WATER SECTOR

For more info about each job:

LAB TECH

Play a crucial role in safeguarding public health and environmental protection.





ENGINEER

Helps with finding sustainable solutions for the community.





WATER OPERATOR

Learn water treatment systems & processes to protect public health.





MANAGEMENT

A Water Systems Manager is responsible for the long-term strategic management of the water system.





WASTEWATER OPERATOR

Learn wastewater treatment processes to protect public





COMMUNITY OUTREACH COORDINATOR

Responsible for communicating with and educating the public about water-related issues



Talk with your teachers and guidance counselors about the possibilities!







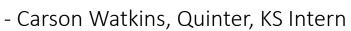
With lots of retiring operators, it is really hard to find a person to train let alone a certified operator. Being able to get these two young men and work them through the summer is very valuable to PWWSD #20. It gives us a chance to try them out while they are getting a chance to learn the process of how water treatment works with lots of good hands-on experience...Both boys have enjoyed this opportunity to come to the water plant and learn the processes and lab testing they learned about in the classroom."

-Sherry Miller, PWWSD #20 Manager



More thoughts on Water

"This internship has changed my perspective in different ways, like what I can do with a career. It showed me different paths to go down. The internship has shown me lots of different perspectives, it's definitely a need and needs to be pushed more. Water is very important and keeps a community going, keeping the people safe, providing clean drinking water. It also showed me a lot more goes on then you think, also providing me with a lot of hands-on technical work that goes into it.







"I've learned that there's so much more to the field than just how water gets to people's homes. There's an entire system behind it that involves a lot of planning and maintenance. How water is treated to how it's transported throughout the community using different sizes and types of pipes. There's a lot more behind the scenes than I ever realized."

- Logan Basgall, Derby, KS Intern

Resources for Utilities

efcnetwork.org/resources/resources-for-utilities/



Welcome to Resources for Utilities!

Are you ready to help your water/wastewater utility find interns? Not sure how to start the process?

Take a look at our generic templates to help get the conversation going. These documents can be adapted to suit the needs of your utility. They can help create conversations between utilities, counselors, and educators.

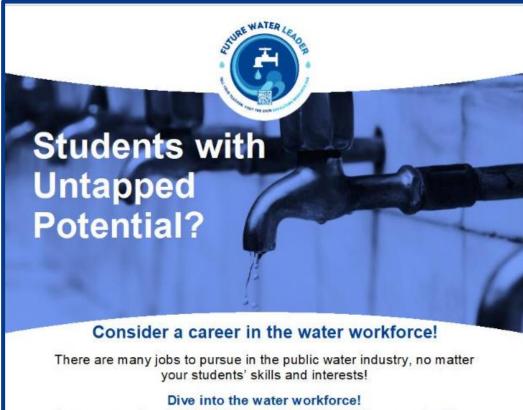
Templates:

- · Internship Guidelines
- · Internship Questions
- · Internship Sample Schedule
- Why Hire An Intern
- Untapped Potential for Students
- · Untapped Potential for Utilities
- Untapped Potential for Counselors

Links to websites:

. The Work in Water Experience for Utilities





Learn more about potential careers and internship opportunities.



STEM Careers

Public water jobs are overflowing with STEM.



Degree or Non-Degree

Both can find success in a water career.



Make a Difference

Water jobs benefit people and the environment.



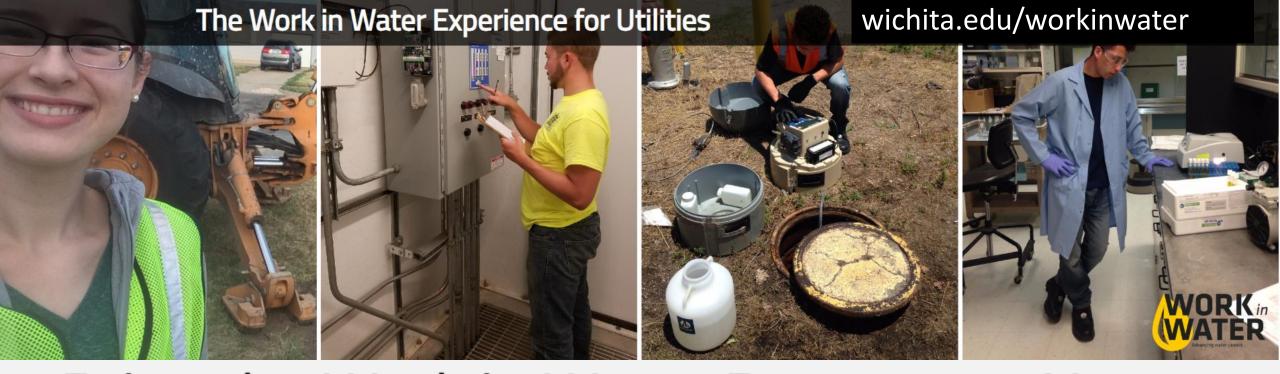
Scan the QR code to learn more. www.efcnetwork.org



Editable

Find it in the Future Water Leaders "Resources for Utilities"

Share with Counselors



Bring the Work in Water Program to Your Utility

Learn how to implement the Work in Water Program at your utility. These resources explain how to get buy-in from your decision-makers, how to engage with schools, explore Work in Water resources, and the details of the Work in Water curriculum.



Intern Tasks

"Some of the tasks I've helped with are reading water meters, replacing water meters, replacing water meter pits, read water well readings, and learning about POE, as well as learning about chlorine in the water. My favorite tasks so far are replacing water meters/ meter pits, because I like the hands-on aspect."

- Carson Watkins, Quinter, KS Intern

"I've really enjoyed working on main breaks because restoring water service is important and rewarding. I also like sewer line cleaning; it keeps the day moving fast and gives a sense of accomplishment."

- Logan Basgall, Derby, KS

Internship Takeaways

- No One Size Fits All
- Be Flexible
- Funding
- Don't Give Up
- Variety of Tasks is Key!



From Utility Leaders

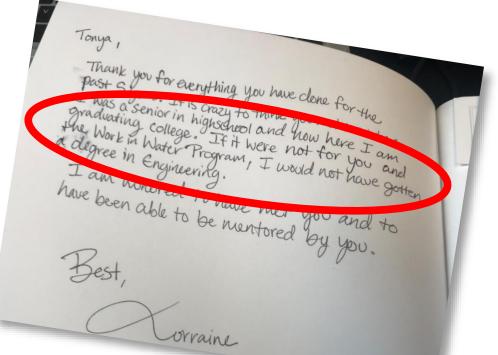
"Internships provide a great opportunity for our staff, especially those who typically work behind the scenes, to share their knowledge and mentor the next generation. It's a mutually beneficial experience that builds connection within the team."

"Summer internships are a great way to introduce people to the essential work our staff do to keep the community running smoothly. Plus, having an extra set of hands during the busy season never hurts!"

- Dillan Curtis, Derby, KS

"It definitely has had a positive impact for our team. We needed extra help with all our water projects that we had planned for this summer. Summer is such a busy time to move water meters, fix leaks, replace fire hydrants and you need to get that stuff done before winter so having an extra hand has been very nice... being able for them to get firsthand knowledge in the field I think is very key for them to learn if this is a career they want to pursue, to me that would be the biggest benefit."

- Garret Press, City of Quinter









Internships
Work!

Meet Lorraine



KANSAS RURAL WATER

association



"My career aspirations, I have not yet decided. But water Management has a lot of great careers and job opportunities."

- Carson Watkins, Quinter, KS Intern

"I want to pursue a career in the Utilities field. It's hands-on, interesting, and it feels good knowing you're helping people and making a difference in your community."

- Logan Basgall, Derby, KS Intern

FREE

ASSISTANCE

How can the EFC assist your utility?

- Setting up an internship program
- Salary studies
- Recruitment & succession planning
- Identifying, planning, and finding infrastructure project funding
- Utility asset management

- Training & professional development
- Utility rate-setting and financial planning
- Utility leadership training for key decision-makers
- Customer outreach and communication
- Emerging contaminants
 - Lead service lines









ENVIRONMENTAL FINANCE CENTER

QUESTIONS?

Thank you for joining us today!



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Analisa Munhall analisa.munhall@wichita.edu





Scan to save our contact info to your phone!

These projects have been funded wholly or in part by the United States Environmental Protection Agency under assistance agreements to Wichita State University Environmental Finance Center. The contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the Environmental Protection Agency, nor does the EPA endorse trade names or recommend the use of commercial products mentioned in this document.

Q&A Session

Webinar slides and recording will be sent to registrants in the next week.



Closing Poll

On a scale of 1-10, with 10 being the best score and 1 being the worst, how would you rate today's webinar?

Thank you!













