



# Getting to 'Yes:' Engaging the Public in Decision-Making

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- Educating yourself first
- Then educate others
- Messaging
- Meetings



# EDUCATION STARTS AT HOME

## Elected & appointed officials

- What do you know about what your municipality owns, how much it costs, and how it operates?
- Operators, staff and superintendents are in-house experts—listen to them
- Together, inform the public



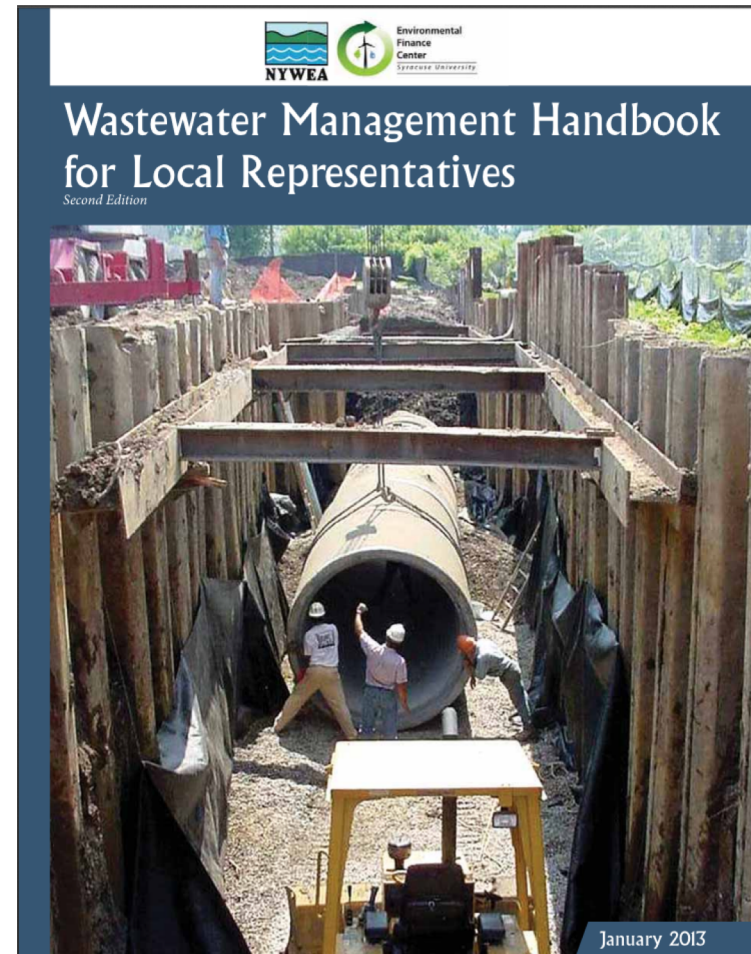
# BOARD EDUCATION

## Water & wastewater infrastructure for beginners

- Educate all members
- First, 'Walk and Talk'
- Overview of processes
- Overview of SPDES & DMRs
- Consensus and support...
- "We had no idea...wow"

# BOARD EDUCATION (Con't.)

- ❑ Next meeting, Sit-down training...
- ❑ Protecting Your Investment
- ❑ Asset Management 101
- ❑ Planning & Capital Planning
- ❑ Adequate Service & Revenues
- ❑ Result: Board is on board!



# Educating others



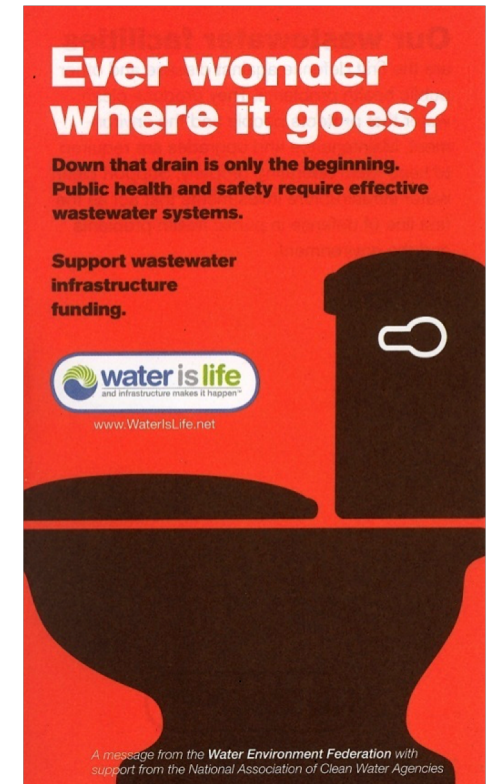
*Mission statement*

*Articles*

*Bill Stuffers*

*Door hangers*

*Events*





# Educating others

## Public Education Plan

Message #1 – Value of  
Infrastructure/services

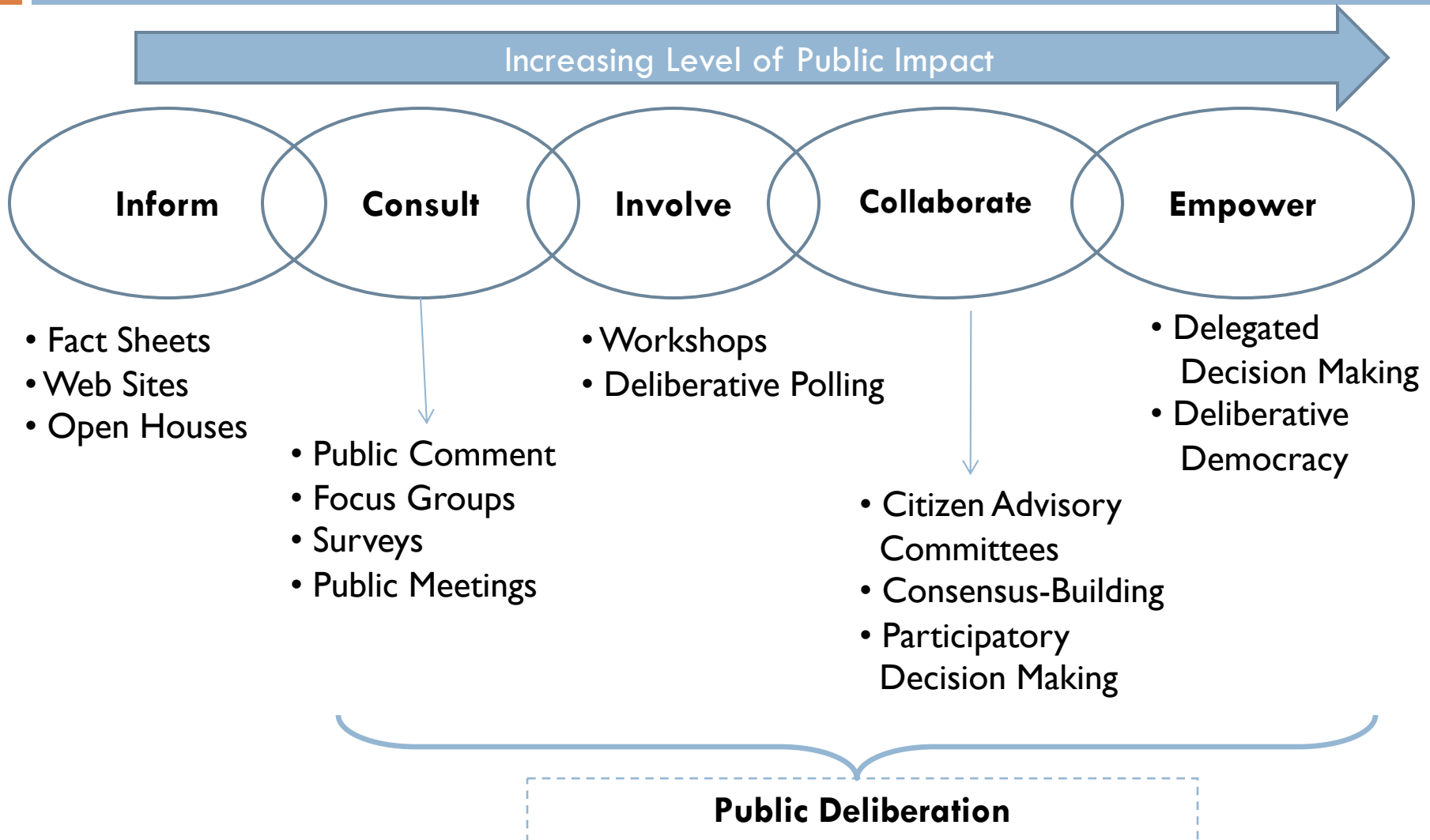
Message #2 – We have plan  
to protect that investment!

**Buried but  
not forgotten.**

Wastewater systems are unseen lifelines serving our communities.  
Support initiatives to protect and improve clean water infrastructure.



# Many ways to engage the public



# Benefits for Ratepayers

- Educates and informs
- Increases political participation
- Increases empathy and tolerance
- Increases political sophistication, political interest, and public spiritedness
- Builds trust in governmental institutions

# Messaging: Tell the Water Story





# WATER IS....





WHERE  
SAFE WATER  
BEGINS



An ornate, gilded picture frame with intricate carvings of acanthus leaves, scrolls, and floral motifs. The frame is rectangular with a wide, decorative border. The central area is a plain white square.

Reframe the Message

# Current Frame

Pumps need variable frequency drives to match the water needs and create electrical cost efficiencies.





# Reframed

Pumping water is our biggest energy use. Energy is our biggest expense. We save money by installing pumps that use less energy.



# Or, reframed

We're saving money  
by installing pumps  
that use less energy.



# Storytelling: How To Guide





# How Do We Get Others Excited About Water?





# Know Your Audience



Self-reliance

Community

Loyalty

Expense

Patriotism

# Visuals Speak





# Use Humor



## Fecal coliform bacteria machine

The ingredients of dog waste are harmful to children.

Scoop it, bag it, and put it in  
the trash

101 reasons to pick up pet waste: Number 7


This message brought to you by Canines for Clean Water  
Sponsored by the Clark County Clean Water Program  
[www.CleanWaterDogs.com](http://www.CleanWaterDogs.com)

CLARK COUNTY  
CLEAN WATER  
PROGRAM

CANINES  
FOR  
CLEAN  
WATER

CLARK COUNTY  
CLEAN WATER  
PROGRAM

Graphics courtesy of Snohomish County Surface Water Management



# Do you know how often you turn me on?

If only the water faucet could talk to us. It might remind us how often we turn to it for safe water to drink, to wash our clothes, to prepare our food, to provide us with the everyday quality of life we enjoy. It might remind us that the water pipes below our streets make so many everyday conveniences possible.

Our water bills pay to keep our community tap water safe, reliable and there for us — 24/7 without fail. For more information about what your tap water delivers, visit *[insert utility web address here]*.




Only Tap Water  
**Delivers**<sup>SM</sup>

(Place Utility  
Logo Here)

Presented in cooperation with

 American Water Works Association



When showering, make it a

Quickie.

Shorten showers – save 2.5 gallons per minute.



#DroughtSF

We're in a drought! Hetch Hetchy  
water – too good to waste.  
[sfwater.org/conservation](http://sfwater.org/conservation)



San Francisco  
**Water Power Sewer**  
Services of the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission



# GARDENS GONE WILD

Use native, water-efficient plants. It's a DROUGHT.

**BAWSCA**  
Bay Area Water Supply & Conservation Agency



Hetch Hetchy  
Regional Water System

[bawasca.org/DROUGHT](http://bawasca.org/DROUGHT)



# GO FULL FRONTAL

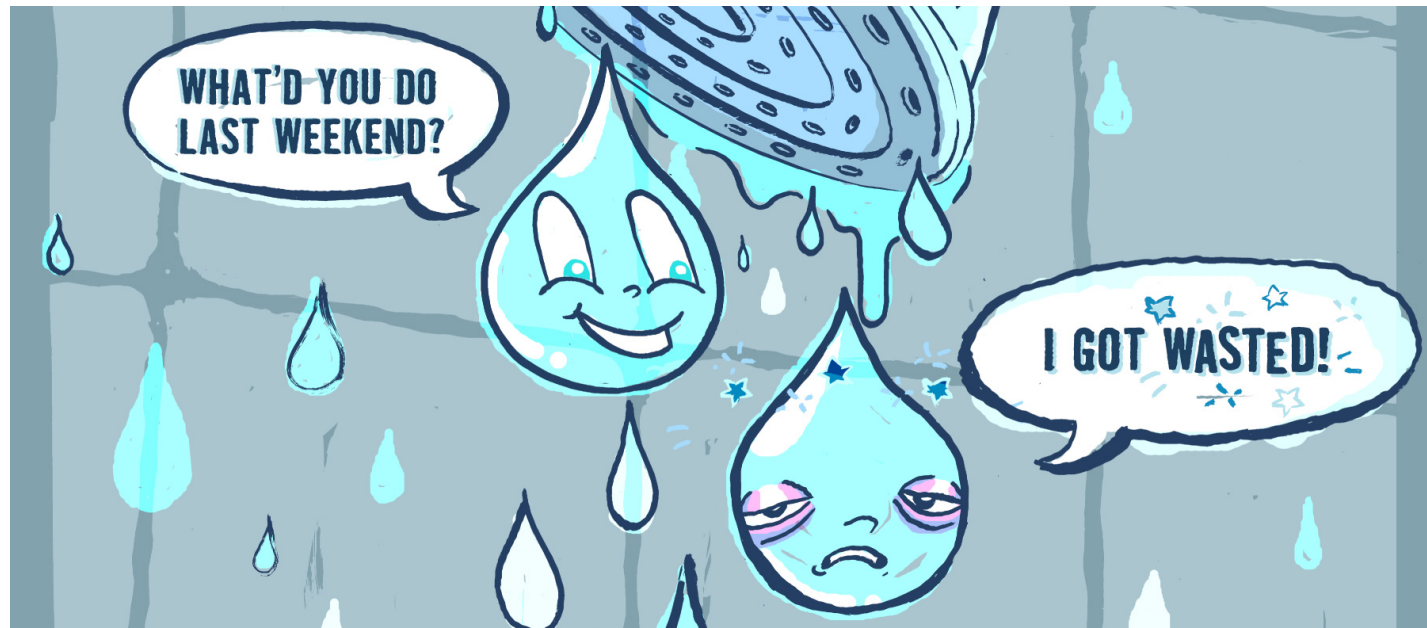
Upgrade your washer. It's a DROUGHT.

[sfwater.org/DROUGHT](http://sfwater.org/DROUGHT)



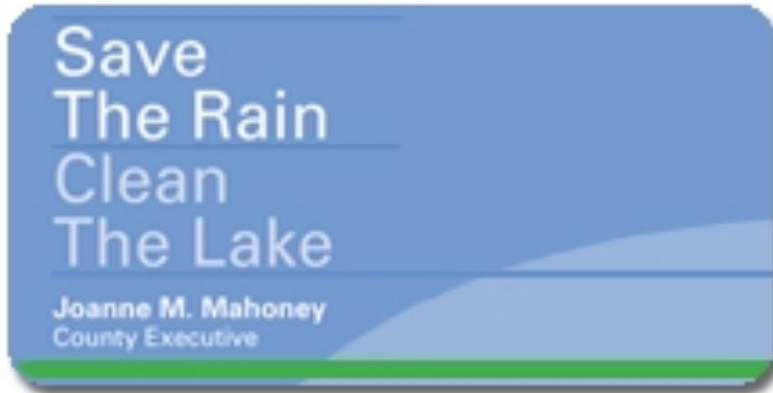
San Francisco  
Water Power Sewer  
Services of the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission

    
#DROUGHTSF





# Make it Meaningful



**WATER ECWA  
CUSTOMERS  
DRINK FROM  
THEIR TAP IS  
MORE PURE THAN  
MANY BRANDS OF  
BOTTLED WATER.**

**READ MORE**

**ECWA.ORG/PROTECT**

A close-up photograph of a polished chrome faucet. The faucet has a cross-shaped handle at the top. Water is flowing out of the spout in a clear, steady stream. The background is a plain, light color.

**MDG Sanitation Target**

Region	Target
Sub-Saharan Africa	6.6
Arab States	5.3
South Asia & Pacific	12.5
South Asia	
Latin America & Caribbean	

**Sanitation rated the greatest medical advance in 150 years**

Sanitation is the greatest medical milestone of the last century and according to a poll carried out by the British Medical Journal.

Sanitation was the clear winner among 15 milestones about children, including the development of vaccines, antibiotics, and surgery.

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# A 4-YEAR-OLD SHOULDN'T NEED A BUCKET LIST

1 in 5 children under the age of 5 die  
each day from waterborne disease.



# Meaningful Messages Work

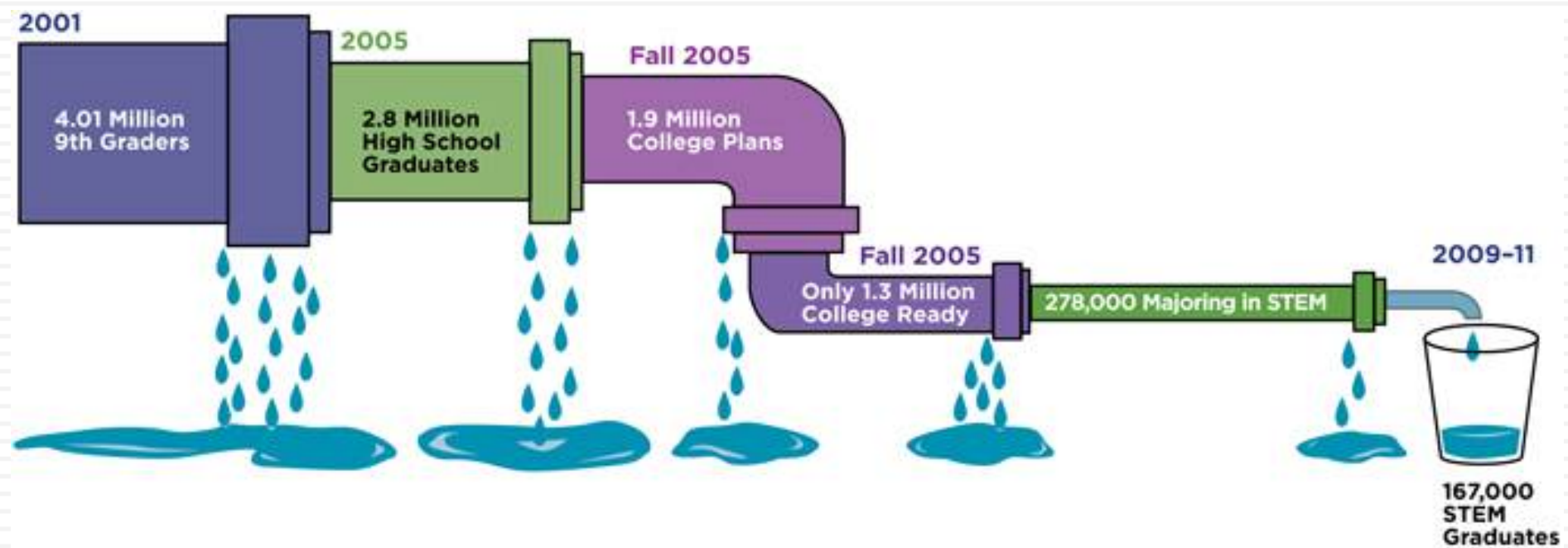


What's your story?



How and what do you communicate to your ratepayers?

# Maintaining the pipeline



# Outreach Opportunities

- Develop and deliver in-school educational programming
- Offer field trip opportunities
- Host camps
- Develop and conduct internship/employment program for high school students
- Participate in career fairs/days
- Create and market industry career pathways
- STANYS teacher trainings or in-class engagement



High school internship



Kid's Camp



In school programming





Teaching about watersheds and stormwater





Community events and festivals



# Open House at a Treatment Plant





# Open House at a Treatment Plant





# ISN'T THIS WHAT I PAY TAXES FOR!?

And other items for discussion at public meetings

# PLANNING A MEETING



The following should be considered when planning meetings:

- ☐ What is the purpose?
- ☐ Is there a stated outcome to the meeting?
- ☐ Will there be follow-up? Action items?
- ☐ What ground rules are needed?
- ☐ Who should attend?
- ☐ Is there a meeting leader?
- ☐ What subjects must be covered?
- ☐ Is there a timed, printed agenda?

# Other Concerns



- Room Set-Up
- Materials and Equipment
- Breaks
- Snacks
- Nametags





This?





Does anyone like these types of meetings?  
Anyone? Anyone, at all?







Probably the guy with a chip on his shoulder and plenty of displaced aggression...

...oh, and the media.

An alternative approach to this meeting design?







Or, this?





Or, This?





Preserve the 2 existing

# Dealing with difficult finger-waggers

**1. Don't Rush To Offer Platitudes:** “I totally understand your concerns.”

**2. Ask Diagnostic Questions:** When audience members complete their questions, consider asking them a question such as, “You mentioned that you were concerned about health risks. Can you tell me a little bit more?”

Simply asking the question makes the audience member feel heard and often softens their tone.

**3. Set The Tone For The Audience:** Audiences often get uncomfortable with conflict. As the speaker, you have influence over their reaction.

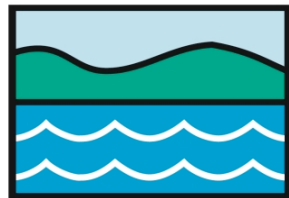
**4. Re-Direct to Post-Session:** If your efforts aren't working, offer to speak directly with him or her after the formal session.

# Thanks!

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**NYWEA**

LEADING THE WAY IN  
WATER QUALITY MANAGEMENT



Environmental  
Finance  
Center

*Syracuse University*



American Water Works  
Association