

WWEMA 116TH ANNUAL MEETING SPEAKER BIOS

[Brian Bates, MBA, BSc., Chief Executive Officer, Walkerton Clean Water Centre](#)



Brian Bates returned to Walkerton to lead the team as CEO on February 22, 2022.

Brian is passionate about the water industry, with proven leadership abilities and strong business acumen. He has worked in the industry for more than 20 years, including his time serving as Manager of Training and Development at WCWC from 2019 until 2020.

Most recently, he worked as Senior Director, Product Management, at Evoqua Water Technologies where he provided municipal and industrial clients with a wide range of solutions.

Brian has also been involved in postsecondary education in Ontario. He served as Director, Product Development and Institutional Research at Fleming College where he was responsible for all new program development and transformed the college's processes to increase new program offerings, enrollment and student engagement.

Brian earned a B.Sc. degree in Environmental Resource Sciences from Trent University and an MBA from the University of Phoenix.

[Caitlin Berretta, Director of U.S. Government Affairs, Xylem, Inc.](#)



Caitlin Berretta serves as the Director of U.S. Government Affairs at Xylem, Inc.. In this role, Caitlin is responsible for leading Xylem's lobbying efforts with the U.S. Congress and federal agencies. In her previous role, she built Evoqua's first Government Affairs program with a large focus on water funding, PFAS chemicals and water reuse.

Caitlin received her Bachelor of Science and Master of Engineering degrees in Environmental Engineering from the University of Florida and brings over 15 years of experience across a broad background of sectors, including water treatment, power, and clean energy. Caitlin also serves as Chair for the WWEMA Regulatory and Legislative Committee.

[Tim Connor, Senior Chemical Engineer, U.S. EPA Office of Wastewater Management, Water Infrastructure Division](#)



Tim Connor is a Senior Chemical Engineer in the Office of Wastewater Management (OWM) in EPA's Office of Water. For the past ten years, Tim has served as lead for the successful domestic preference programs of the Clean Water State Revolving Fund. Prior to joining OWM, Tim led engineering and economic analysis development for EPA's water quality standards and industrial effluent guidelines programs.

Before joining EPA, Tim was a defense contractor and a drilling engineer. Tim holds a B.S. in Chemical Engineering from the University of New Mexico and a M.S. in Environmental Science Engineering from Clemson University.

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[Thomas Decker, Owner, Thomas E. Decker Consulting, LLC](#)



Tom Decker heads up ingeniously named Thomas E. Decker Consulting, LLC and provides market strategy and business management expertise to water and wastewater sector companies, organizations, and utilities. Prior to becoming “the best boss he’s ever worked for”, Tom was a vice-president and geographic area leader for Brown and Caldwell; a vice-president, regional business group manager, and principal program manager for CH2M HILL; a vice-president and business development director with the Parsons Corporation; and a partner and director of marketing for the Infrastructure Business of Black & Veatch. He has served on the board of directors of the Water Environment Federation and the American Academy of Environmental Engineers and Scientists and is a past-president of the Missouri Water Environment Association.

During his long and eventful engagement in the water and wastewater field, he has led world-wide and national business development operations; directed numerous growth initiatives including geographic expansions as well as mergers and acquisitions; orchestrated direct sales efforts for engineering and construction projects; developed strategic plans for business units, departments, and service lines; managed business unit operations; facilitated planning efforts for water and wastewater utilities; served as program manager for large capital improvement programs; and even operated wastewater treatment plants. Because of his expansive background, he has a hands-on, comprehensive grasp of the business of water. He frequently addresses a variety of trade and professional groups on the issues and trends impacting the water and wastewater marketplace. He is a registered professional engineer in multiple states and is a Board Certified Environmental Engineer by the American Academy of Environmental Engineers and Scientists.

[Timothy M. Dunham, Acting Associate Deputy Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation \(FBI\)](#)



In August 2024, Timothy Dunham was named the acting Associate Deputy Director of the FBI, responsible for the administration of all corporate business operations to include compliance and accountability programs, information management, information technology, cyber security, diversity and inclusion, resource planning, finance and facilities, human resources, security, and training. Prior to this assignment, Mr. Dunham served as executive assistant director of the Human Resources Branch (HRB), overseeing the Human Resources, Training, and Security divisions.

Mr. Dunham also served as assistant director of the Training Division, where he oversaw matters concerning all FBI-sponsored training, including programs for new special agents and intelligence analysts and the National Academy; special agent in charge of Washington Field Office’s Criminal and Counterintelligence divisions; deputy assistant director in the Criminal Investigative Division; and section chief of the Leadership Development Program in HRB. Prior to these assignments, Mr. Dunham also held various positions of increasing responsibility in the Albany and Chicago field offices, the Counterintelligence Division and Counterterrorism Division at FBI-HQ, and the Brussels and Stockholm Legal Attaches. Mr. Dunham joined the FBI as a special agent in 2002. Prior to joining the FBI, he practiced law in Richmond, Virginia.

[Steve Dye, Senior Director of Government Affairs, Water Environment Federation \(WEF\)](#)



Since 2011, Steve Dye has played a central role within the Government Affairs Department of the Water Environment Federation (WEF), first as Legislative Director, and currently as Senior Director of Government Affairs. Steve represents the Federation before Congress and Executive Branch agencies, monitors key legislation and regulatory policies, develops and executes legislative and regulatory strategies and proposals, and maintains WEF’s excellent reputations before public and private interests in the water sector. Steve brings nearly 30 years of government affairs experience with expertise in a wide range of water policy issues. Steve worked on water policy and infrastructure funding matters in Congress for 10 years for US Senator Barbara Boxer of California and US Representative Frank Mascara of Pennsylvania. He then lobbied for municipal, corporate, and non-profit entities – including WEF – in the water sector prior to joining WEF’s staff in 2018. Steve holds a bachelor’s degree in History from the University of California, Santa Barbara.

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[Chad Fisher, Pressure Booster Product Manager, Engineered Systems, Gorman-Rupp Pumps](#)



Chad Fisher is the Pressure Booster Product Manager at Gorman-Rupp, with over 13 years of experience in inventory management, production scheduling, sales, and customer service. He also has 10+ years of finance and sales experience from the auto industry. Chad graduated Summa Cum Laude from Mount Vernon Nazarene University with a Bachelor's in Business Administration. To stay at the forefront of product management and innovation, Chad has completed a series of Stanford Online certifications that enhance his expertise in product strategy, demand creation, and customer insights:

Certifications

- Demand Creation: Launching and Growing Your Product
- Product Management
- Mastering Product Management: Building Your Strategy
- Product Marketing: Meeting the Needs of Your Customers
- Product Costing: Understanding the Financials of Your Product
- User Research: Informing Product Decisions with Customer Insights

[Jon Freedman, Global Head, Policy & External Stakeholder Engagement, Veralto-Water](#)



Jon Freedman is based in Washington, DC, where he leads Global Policy & Stakeholder Affairs for Veralto – Water Quality. Previously, he led Global Government Affairs & Policy for Veolia's worldwide water treatment technology business, and he also led Global Government Affairs & Policy for GE Water and for GE-Hitachi Nuclear Energy. In addition, he led the creation of GE's global sustainability initiative (Ecomagination). He also created GE's water strategy and helped implement it by leading the acquisition of a global NYSE-listed water company that was renamed GE Water.

Jon currently serves on the Board of Directors of the WaterReuse Association, where he is an Officer and Chairs the National Policy Committee. He also serves on the Board of Directors of the International Desalination & Reuse Association, where he is First Vice President. Previously, Jon sat on the boards of The Wharton School's Initiative for Global Environmental Leadership (2012-2020), the US EPA's Financial Advisory Board (2020-2022), and several other organizations. Jon has authored numerous articles and speaks frequently on water issues globally. He also just wrapped up his 12th and final year as an adjunct faculty member at the University of Pennsylvania, where this spring semester he taught 75 Wharton MBA students in a course called The Business & Governance of Water. Jon holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Virginia, a law degree from William & Mary Law School, and an MBA in Finance from The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania

[Valdis Kruminis, Ph.D., P.E., ENV SP, Senior Environmental, Water and Environmental Programs, Rural Utilities Service, Rural Development Agency, USDA](#)



Valdis Kruminis is the senior national engineer for the USDA, Rural Development, Water and Environmental Programs (WEP). He holds a BS in agricultural engineering from Penn State, a PhD in biological resources engineering from the University of Maryland, and PE licenses in Florida and New Jersey. Val has 30 years of environmental engineering experience in academia, consulting, with a wastewater utility, and now in government, where he provides policy and guidance to WEP's state engineers.

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[Tracy Mehan III, Executive Director, Government Affairs, American Water Works Association \(AWWA\)](#)



Tracy Mehan, III is Executive Director, Government Affairs, for the American Water Works Association (AWWA). He was an independent consultant and served as Interim President of the U.S. Water Alliance and national Source Water Protection Coordinator for the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities. He is also an Adjunct Professor at the Antonin Scalia Law School at George Mason University and Carnegie Mellon University's Heinz College. He was Principal with The Cadmus Group, Inc., an environmental consulting firm, from 2004 to 2014.

Mehan served as Assistant Administrator for Water at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency from 2001-2003. He served as Environmental Stewardship Counselor to the 2004 G-8 Summit Planning Organization (2004). Mehan also served as director of the Michigan Office of the Great Lakes (1993-2001) and as Associate Deputy Administrator of EPA in 1992. He was director of the Missouri Department of Natural Resources from 1989 to 1992. Mehan is a graduate of Saint Louis University and its School of Law. Mehan served on the Water Science and Technology Board and now the Committee on the Mississippi River and the Clean Water Act for the National Research Council of the National Academies. He was also an independent expert judge for the City Water Conservation Achievement Award program (2006 & 2011) sponsored by The U.S. Conference of Mayors and its Urban Water Council.

Mehan is a member of the Environmental Law Institute (ELI) and a regular book reviewer for ELI's flagship publication, The Environmental Forum. Mehan served on EPA's Environmental Financial Advisory Board (2014-2018) as well as the boards of the U.S. Water Alliance and the Great Lakes Observing System. He is also a member of the Advisory Board of the Center for Environmental Policy, School of Public Affairs, American University and a past member of the board of the Potomac Conservancy (2006-2014).

[Sean O'Donnell, United States Environmental Protection Agency Inspector General](#)



Sean W. O'Donnell was sworn in as the Inspector General of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on January 27, 2020. The mission of the Office of Inspector General is to promote economy and efficiency at the EPA and the U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board, as well as detect and prevent waste, fraud, and abuse related to the programs and operations of those two agencies. To this end, Mr. O'Donnell oversees a nationwide workforce of attorneys, auditors, special agents, and support personnel who support the Office's mission by providing evidence-based reports to the agencies, the public, and to Congress.

Prior to becoming the Inspector General, Mr. O'Donnell spent 15 years at the U.S. Department of Justice, most recently as a prosecutor in the Criminal Division's Money Laundering and Asset Recovery Section. Over his career at the DOJ, he handled a wide range of criminal and civil matters, such as commercial and governmental fraud, corruption, and national security matters. In total, Mr. O'Donnell's work in fighting fraud helped return approximately \$3 billion to the U.S. Treasury and brought numerous individuals and corporations to justice. Mr. O'Donnell received numerous awards and honors at the DOJ, including the Attorney General's Award and the Executive Office for United States Attorneys Director's Award.

Early in his career, Mr. O'Donnell clerked for U.S. Circuit Judge Raymond Gruender on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit and U.S. District Judge Harry Lee Hudspeth on the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Texas. He also spent time in private practice, working on intellectual property and antitrust litigation, among other matters. Mr. O'Donnell is active in his community, having served on his city's redistricting and ethics commissions. His contribution to youth sports in his community has been recognized through awards and other accolades.

Mr. O'Donnell has a bachelor's degree in economics from Texas A&M University, a bachelor's degree in mathematics from the University of Washington, and a master's degree in economics and a law degree from the University of Texas at Austin.

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Sharina Perry, Founder/Inventory—Utopia Plastix; CEO, Managing Partner—Utopia Model Companies



Sharina Perry is an entrepreneur with more than 25 years of experience establishing and running national businesses. Sharina is the founder and inventor of Utopia Plastix, a plant-based alternative to petroleum-based polymers. Sharina is also the originator and developer of The Utopia Model, a sustainable ecosystem business model. She is well regarded as an innovator, strategist, and unconventional thinker. She is often praised for her exceptional capacity to foster creative thinking, effective execution, and deliberate leadership. Aside from her successful career, Sharina holds a significant number of leadership, management, and business development certifications. Sharina holds an expert certification in Sustainable Strategies and Circular Economics. Her education includes, but is not limited to, The University of Oklahoma and Cambridge Judge Business School. Sharina also owns registered global patents and trademarks.

Sharina serves on the Oklahoma Governors Minority Business Council as chair of the Business Engagement Committee. Sharina was also a key committee member for the initiative leading to the passage of HB 2365; the first Supplier Diversity Program within the state of Oklahoma focused on aiding in the advancement of minority and underserved small business owners.

In 2023, Sharina was appointed to the Oklahoma District Export Council by the US Secretary of Commerce. Sharina serves on the Advisory Board of the University of Oklahoma Price College of Business Multicultural Business Program. She also serves on the Executive Board for Hough Ear Institute. Sharina was instrumental in contributing her knowledge, insights, and expertise when the City of Oklahoma City convened community leaders and stakeholders when creating an economic resilience and recovery plan post Covid. Sharina is a founding committee member for the Oklahoma City Innovation District. Sharina led the drafting of the resolution passed unanimously by the OKC Council to bring Public, Private and Educational Institutions together to address STEM and Workforce Development within the historically black area on the east side of Oklahoma City.

Throughout her illustrious career, Sharina has received numerous awards and accolades and has been recognized worldwide. Sharina was listed as Forbes's Top 10 Women To Watch in 2023 (globally). Sharina was also featured in September 2023 on the iconic Nasdaq Billboard in NYC Times Square as the Inventor of the Year.

Sharina is a TEDx and International Keynote Speaker. Sharina has also been awarded:

- 2024 Top Sustainable Strategies and Circular Economics Expert by IAOTP (International Association Of Top Professionals)
- 2024 Most Innovative Plastic Alternative CEO
- 2023 Most Innovative Plastic Alternative CEO
- 2023 Oklahoma Innovator of the Year
- 2023 Metro's Most Influential
- 2023 Distinguished Service Visionary Award
- 2021 Vanguard Award for Environmental Excellence
- 2022 and 2023 Oklahoma's Most Powerful and Innovative Women
- 2022 Most Influential Young Professionals
- 2022 Businesswoman of the Year
- 2023 Woman of the Year
- 2022 Supreme Excellence Dignitary Award
- 2022 Brainz 500 Global Influential Leaders
- 2023 Top Inventor of the Year by the International Association of Top Professionals
- 2022 Top 5 Climate and Green Influencers
- 2023 Black Corporate Leader in Climate and Clean Tech
- 2022 Featured as an Eco-Hero by Woman's Day Magazine

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[Janet Riley, President, Janet Riley Strategies](#)



Janet Riley is an expert crisis communications strategist, media spokesperson and trainer. Today, she operates a consulting practice in Washington, DC, leveraging five years leading communications at Maple Leaf Foods, one of Canada's largest meat companies and world's first carbon neutral food company, and 28 years serving as the meat industry spokesperson at the North American Meat Institute in Washington, DC.

Janet has served as the face of the meat and poultry industry in response to some of the industry's most challenging crises, including the first U.S. case of BSE in 2003 an array of food safety, animal welfare and environmental issues. She is also well known as the "Queen of Wien," a nickname she earned while serving as President of the National Hot Dog and Sausage Council. She has authored numerous papers on crisis management, trust-building and food safety, as well as a book chapter on historic efforts to educate consumers about food safety. She

earned her master's degree in organizational development and leadership at Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia and her bachelor's degree in journalism at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois.

[Kara Rutherford, MSc., Director of Strategic Growth & Planning, Walkerton Clean Water Centre](#)



Kara Rutherford leads the Strategic Growth and Planning at the Walkerton Clean Water Centre (WCWC). In this role, Kara leads the Strategic Growth and Planning department, where she oversees comprehensive market research projects, including voice of customer initiatives and competitor analysis. Her team is dedicated to evaluating the needs of current water professionals and identifying emerging trends, which inform new program development, delivery strategies, and long-term strategic planning. Kara also plays a pivotal role in managing government communications and the planning process, ensuring that WCWC's objectives align with regulatory and stakeholder expectations.

In addition to her strategic role, Kara manages the Human Resources department, where she applies her past HR experience to enhance workforce development and organizational culture.

Kara holds a Human Resources diploma from Fleming College and earned both her Bachelor of Science and Master of Science in Psychology from Trent University.

Before joining WCWC, Kara successfully owned and operated a research company that specialized in voice of customer research for strategic planning and market growth initiatives. Her experience includes conducting in-depth research for mid- and large-size engineering firms, with a focus on industrial and municipal wastewater treatment and storm-water management. Kara has also published research on workplace mental health injuries and return-to-work. Additionally, she brings over five years of experience in Human Resources and Marketing to her current role.

[Logan Stringfellow, Vice President, ClearWater, Inc.](#)



Logan Stringfellow is the Vice President of ClearWater Incorporated, a leading manufacturer's representative in the water and wastewater market. He began his career at ClearElectric, specializing in electric motor and pump repair, where he gained invaluable hands-on experience in the industry. While pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Exercise Science and Management Information Systems, Logan worked in aftermarket sales for ClearWater, laying a strong foundation for his expertise in client relations and sales strategy.

After earning his degree, Logan transitioned into a project management role at ClearWater, where he successfully built an electrical construction team, significantly expanding the company's service offerings. His leadership and vision have been instrumental in driving growth and innovation within the organization. Currently, he serves as Vice President at both ClearWater

and ClearElectric, where he continues to leverage his diverse skill set to enhance operational excellence and foster meaningful partnerships in the water and wastewater sector.

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[Claudio Ternieden, Executive Director, WWEMA](#)



[Mark Turpin, President, Duperon Corporation](#)



Mark Turpin is president of Duperon Corporation. Under Mark's leadership, Duperon has been recognized with Corp Magazine's Most Valuable Professional in Michigan (2023); Michigan Manufacturer's Association's MFG Innovation Excellence award (2021), as well as its Top 10 "Coolest Things Made in Michigan" (2021); Michigan's 50 Companies to Watch Distinguished Alumni Award – Most Engaged Workplace (2019); Michigan Banner's Heart of the City Outstanding Business Award (2019); Saginaw Future Inc.'s Economic Excellence Award (2019); Succession Success Award – Best of Michigan Business Awards and Gala (2017); Water & Wastes Digest's Top Project Award (2016). Mark has been a member of WWEMA since 2008, serving on the Board of Directors from 2012-2019. He was WWEMA Treasurer from 2014-2016; Chair-elect in 2016; Board Chair in 2017. In 2023, he was re-elected to serve a third term on the board of directors. Mark is also a member of the Saginaw Economic Development Corporation.

Additionally, Turpin has been a long-standing member of WWEMA's Marketing & Member Services and Legislative & Regulatory Committees; member of numerous subcommittee's; Chair for several subcommittees including, most recently, the dues restructuring subcommittee.

Mark has been Danita's husband for 38 years. Asking her to marry him was the single best decision of his life. Mark and Danita have two sons, Zachary and Connor. Zach completed his PhD and is a Patent Examiner with the US Patent Office specializing in MRna IP. Connor completed his Bachelors at Michigan State University and is working in Marketing Data Analytics at Magline.