

Association Profile: The Nevada Water Resources Association

By Jeff Johnson

Originating more than 70 years ago as a focus group on water resources for the Nevada State Engineer's Office, the Nevada Water Resources Association (NWRA) provides a collaborative approach to addressing current and emerging water issues within the state. With a growing membership of more than 300 individual members and 26 corporate partners, NWRA is committed to providing education, training, and networking opportunities that pools collective knowledge and resources to increase stewardship of Nevada's water resources.

Water for Many Uses

A primary focus of NWRA has been the concept of uniting the individuals, organizations, agencies, and industries that rely on the state's water resources. Nevada's geography shapes perspectives on water resources. In the south, the primary focus is the Colorado River and groundwater resources to serve a populous area, while the northern portion of the state focuses more on agricultural activity. Agriculture is an important industry in the state, not only for the food and fodder it produces, but also for the green vistas and environmental benefits agriculture brings to many areas throughout the state.

Dialogue and Education

With a focus on education rather than advocacy, NWRA fosters free and open dialogue for all of Nevada's water users to learn and discuss current and emerging issues related to water resources, scientific research, and public policy. This concerted effort to set aside difference and emphasize dialogue and education provides a constructive path forward, and is one of NWRA's greatest strengths. NWRA invites all sectors across Nevada to participate equally in conversations about water issues, fostering an environment where all opinions are heard and where everyone can walk away with more knowledge about water.

The concept that Nevada's water resources serve many uses drives the NWRA's training and conferences. NWRA has provided basic and advanced training in a variety of water-related issues and disciplines. Taught by experts, the courses provide a solid foundation for anybody wanting to understand the history and complexity of water rights in the state of Nevada.

In addition to courses on water rights, NWRA has been expanding its symposiums and panels to include the latest issues in water resources, such as best practices in well maintenance, artificial recharge and lithium mining. As mining has been a mainstay in Nevada since the 1860s, NWRA expanded its educational programming and hosted a Mine Water Management Symposium, at which professionals discussed the complexities of water management for mining operations. Considering the Silver State's rich mining history and the recent uptick in lithium mining activities, this issue is of great importance to not only water professionals, but to all Nevadans who benefit from this industry.

Fostering Partnerships

At the same time, NWRA is expanding its education efforts, partnering with other groups who have aligned goals. Recently, NWRA partnered with the Nevada Water Environment Association (NWEA) to produce *The Water Spot*, a publication dedicated to water resource issues in Nevada. Bringing water and wastewater professionals together, NWRA and NWEA are fostering collaboration between our discrete, but related disciplines.

Preparing for Nevada's Water Future

Looking to the future, we are motivating and preparing the next generation of water stewards. As part of our efforts to encourage participation and peak interest in water resources, the NWRA allows college students from the northern and southern parts of Nevada to sit as active members on our board. We believe that this experience gets college students involved at a younger age to network and develop expertise. While most participants are studying geology, engineering, or water resource management, NWRA does not want this to be a limiting factor. We encourage students in chemistry, geology, or public policy to participate—all of them can bring value to the table.

As we look at the likelihood of drought conditions extending to 2020, cooperation is the best way to discuss best practices and technology that could help Nevada stay ahead of emerging issues. Cooperation is what the NWRA was founded on, and it is what we strive to continue in the future.

Jeff Johnson is the past president of the Nevada Water Resources Association. He is the manager of Water Resource Special Projects for the Southern Nevada Water Authority (SNWA). For more information on the NWRA, please visit the website NVWRA.org.