



A&WMA Sections & Chapters Council

May 2026

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The CONDUIT

Chair's Message: Growing A&WMA Through Connection

What keeps someone coming back to A&WMA after attending a first meeting or event? What inspires a member not only to renew, but to volunteer, lead, and invite others to join? While programming, technical content, and professional development all matter, the answer often comes down to something more personal:



people stay where they feel welcomed, valued, and connected.

As chapter and section leaders and volunteers, we have a powerful opportunity to shape that experience. If we want to increase membership and strengthen engagement, we should think about

potential and current members not simply as contacts on a list, but as colleagues and friends in a professional community.

That idea is not about being less professional. In fact, it is about strengthening the very qualities that make professional organizations thrive: trust, responsiveness, inclusion, and shared purpose. The same principles apply in A&WMA. A first-time attendee is much more likely to return when someone greets them, introduces them to others, and helps them feel included. A young professional is more likely to get involved when someone takes the time to explain how to volunteer or serve on a committee. A longtime member is more likely to stay engaged when they know their experience and contributions are appreciated. In other words, engagement grows one interaction at a time.

For chapter and section leaders, this means membership growth is not only about outreach or promotion. It is also about hospitality. It is about creating a culture in which people feel that they belong. For volunteers, it means recognizing that small actions can have lasting effects. A personal invitation, a welcoming conversation, or a simple follow-up after an event can make the difference between someone drifting away and someone becoming an active member of A&WMA.

There is a lesson here from an environmental consulting firm I worked for several years ago. The firm had set out to reduce its technical malpractice insurance costs. In doing so, it learned that technical quality alone was not the whole story. The firm began placing greater emphasis on building stronger, more trusting relationships with clients by communicating clearly, listening well, and treating clients as true partners. The guiding insight was simple: friends do not sue friends.

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Chair's Message... Continued

Over time, the firm saw fewer disagreements, fewer lawsuits, lower insurance rates, and stronger business growth through repeat work and referrals.

That story is worth reflecting on because it highlights an important truth: strong relationships reduce friction and build loyalty. In the same way, strong member relationships make organizations healthier and more resilient. People are more likely to participate when they feel known. They are more likely to volunteer when they are asked by someone they trust. They are more likely to remain members when their experience feels personal rather than transactional.

As we look ahead, think intentionally about how we welcome people into A&WMA and how we keep them connected once they arrive. Are we making it easy for new members to find their place? Are we reaching out to those we have not seen in a while? Are we creating opportunities for members to contribute in meaningful ways? These are the everyday actions that build strong chapters and sections.

So let us commit to leading in a way that is both professional and personal. We can start with ACE, and our upcoming Section and Chapter events. Greet people warmly, invite them into the conversation, follow up, and help them build connections that last. If we do that consistently, we will do more than grow membership. We will strengthen engagement, deepen our sense of community, and build an even stronger A&WMA for the future.

Mike Hult, A&WMA Sections and Chapters Chair



Attend ACE 2026 in Austin!

The A&WMA Annual Conference provides valuable opportunities to learn, connect, and stay ahead in a rapidly evolving environmental industry, and this year promises to be better than ever! Whether your focus is on air quality, sustainability, waste, PFAS, alternative energy, or regulatory policy, this conference has learning opportunities for you.

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The Keynote Plenary Session will feature high-level government environmental officials alongside industry executives discussing current and alternative energy solutions.

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Attend ACE 2026 in Austin! ... Continued

The Critical Review will cover Satellite Data to Support Air Quality Assessment and Management and featured events include the sold out exhibit hall, UT Austin Energy Center Tour, Opening Reception, Women's Luncheon, YP Networking Reception, and more.

Over 55 sessions and panels cover the latest environmental topics, with focused events for students and young professionals to help you:

- Learn about emerging science and technology
- Stay current on regulations and policy
- Discover practical solutions
- Foster cross-sector collaboration



Make valuable connections!

The conversations that happen between presentations — during networking events, panel discussions, the exhibit hall, and informal meetings — often lead to new ideas, partnerships, and long-term professional connections.

Attending ACE is a great investment for your company and career. **Register now and book your hotel at the JW Marriott Austin. Sign up for events and tours by May 31. www.awma.org/ACE2026**

Make your plans to be there on Sunday for the Sections & Chapters Council Meeting from 9 am to 4:30 pm to receive updates on the Association, how to lead your section or chapter, share ideas and discuss future opportunities.

A&WMA's Technical Council – Leading to the Future!

There are four A&WMA Councils: Young Professionals Advisory Council, Sections & Chapters, Education Council, and Technical Council (aka Tech Council). As stated in the Operations Manual, "The mission of the Technical Council is to assist the Association in accomplishing its mission and objectives by supplying expertise in the development of technical programming for the Association's Annual Conference, specialty conferences, workshops, joint society-sponsored meetings and seminars, webinars, and other such events." The power of the council can be traced back to the dedication and tireless efforts of our members. We always encourage more members to get involved to keep our Association strong and current.

Tech Council incorporates members of the Association with specialized/technical expertise in a wide range of subjects to provide guidance in environmental issues pertinent to the Association's mission.

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A&WMA's Technical Council... Continued



In addition to the considerable effort to develop each year's Annual Conference & Exhibition (ACE), Tech Council helps to provide ideas and speakers for webinars, planning for specialty conferences, providing resources for joint society-sponsored meetings and seminars, conducting and reporting on state-of-the-art studies, and providing technical review capability to governmental and other organizations when requested.

Leadership of Technical Council consists of the following:

- Technical Council Executive Committee,
 - Technical Council Chair
 - Technical Council Vice Chair
 - Technical Council Secretary
 - Technical Council Group Coordinators
 - Immediate Past Chair of Technical Council
- Division Chairs
- Division Vice Chairs
- TCC Chairs
- Standing Committee Chairs
- ITF Chairs

Each of these officers serves defined time periods and generally advances through the committees as they become experienced in the responsibilities of the officers.

Tech Council always strives to incorporate valuable ideas and expertise from others. This integration includes the value of other Councils, Chapters, student chapters, and our international members. Without information from all, A&WMA would not see the total picture.

Within the Technical Council there are 4 major groups:

- Atmospheric Processes and Measurements (Air Group)
- Environmental Management (EM Group)
- Industry, Nanotechnology, Government, and Military (INGM Group)
- Sustainability, Climate Change, Resource Conservation and Waste Management (SCRWM Group)

Within each Group, there are Divisions, and within each Division, there are Technical Coordinating Committees (TCCs). There are also Inter-Committee Task Forces (ITFs), for example, the ITF on Environmental Justice.

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A&WMA's Technical Council... Continued

The TCCs are at the heart of the technical resources of the Association. Interested members of the Association can join one or more TCCs by volunteering to share their expertise with others and develop the various technical activities of the Association. Most of the Divisions/TCCs will hold meetings during the lunch hours on Monday and Tuesday of upcoming ACE, check the ACE Final Program for times and places. Tech Council highly encourages all ACE attendees to come to these meetings – no reservations needed! If not attending ACE, you can still participate by contacting Tech Council leadership. Taking active roles in Tech Council often results in lasting connections. With over 60 leadership positions available, there are numerous opportunities for A&WMA members to become officers and gain experience in organizing groups, planning sessions, and peer reviewing papers, to enhance their skills and further their career.

Recently, the Tech Council has been working very hard on planning activities for the upcoming technical program for ACE 2026, which will be held in Austin, TX, on June 21 – 24, 2026. The theme for ACE 2026 is “Energizing the Future”. The Tech Council, working with headquarters, completed the Call for Abstracts, developed a planning schedule, reviewed abstracts, and reviewed final papers/presentations to build the ACE Technical Program. We will have 43 platform sessions, 15 panel sessions, 10 technical posters, and 29 student posters.

There will be two mini-symposiums during the conference, one focused on Energy and other Hot Topics and one focused on PFAS, each with panel and platform sessions in the eight session time periods throughout the conference. The Critical Review this year is "Data Fusion in Air Pollution Exposure Assessment: Methods, Applications, and Future Directions". Prof. David Allen, an AEESP Distinguished Lecturer, will present a special lecture on “Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Energy Supply Chains”. The Critical Review is “Data Fusion for Air Pollution Exposure Modeling” presented by experts in the field. Finally, the Keynote Plenary Session on “Energizing the Future” will feature Scott Mason, the Regional Administrator for the US EPA South-Central Region, Tonya R. Miller, the Commissioner of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, and Brian A. Korgel, the Director of the University of Texas Energy Institute. The Plenary Session will be moderated by Jeff Saitas, the President of Saitas and Seales.

If you need more information or have questions, feel free to contact the Technical Council Chair, Chih Chao (meister.chao@gmail.com) or me, Roger Wayson, at roger.wayson@aecom.com. We look forward to hearing from you.

Roger L. Wayson, Vice-Chair of Technical Council

Save the Date: Southern Section 2026 Conference



The newly formed Tennessee Chapter is hosting the 2026 Southern Section Conference in Chattanooga, TN on September 16-17, 2026. The conference theme is Data Centers and Artificial Intelligence Impact on Environment, Energy, and Workload.

The Conference Committee is seeking:

- Speakers
- Exhibitors
- Sponsors
- Volunteers

Contact Richard Wales for details at rtwales2014@gmail.com or call 760-964-0872

Richard Wales, PE, QEP, Conference Chair, Southern Section Chair, and Tennessee Chapter Chair

South Atlantic States Section has Special Funds for its Young Professionals to Attend A&WMA Events

If you are a member of the Air and Waste Management Association, a Young Professional (i.e., less than 35 years old), and a member of the South Atlantic States Section (i.e., North or South Carolina, Maryland, Virginia, or Washington, DC) you may be eligible for special funding to attend A&WMA events such as Specialty Conferences or the Annual Conference and Exhibition (ACE). You can still apply for funds to attend the 2026 ACE in Austin this June. Funds may be used for registration, travel or per diem. For more information contact:

Ricky Tropp at artropp@yahoo.com

These funds are not available to students, for which other funds may be available.

YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

West Coast Section Goes All Out at the 2026 Science and Engineering Fairs

The 2026 Ventura County Science Fair was held in Camarillo, CA with judging on March 18th and the awards ceremony on March 27th. WCS/CIC Director, prior WCS/CIC Chair, and A&WMA Past President Sara Head, Yorke Engineering, and CIC Director and prior CIC Chair Laura Kranzler, Ventura County Air Pollution Control District (VCAPCD), did the judging and Sara presented the awards at the ceremony. This Science Fair included 442 students and 300+ projects from 24 middle and high schools across Ventura County. Sara and Laura evaluated 44 projects across 4 categories (Earth & Environment (Air, Water, Soil Pollution), Environmental Engineering, and Alternative Energy). They selected 9 award winners with a total of \$600 for projects dealing with air quality, GHG emissions, and energy topics as well as soil and water quality as shown in the table below.



Judge Sara Head with most of the Ventura Co. awardees



Judge Don Price with Ventura Co. 1st place high school winner, Christopher Kricorian

2026 Ventura County Science Fair Award Winners						
Grades	Category	Project Title	Single or Group	Name(s)	Rank	Award
High School	Environmental Engineering	Creating Sustainable Bricks from Recycled Materials to Optimize Urban Viability and Accessibility	Single	Christopher Kricorian	1st	\$100
	Environmental Engineering	Developing and Determining the Effectiveness of a Mycelium-Based Air Filtration in Removing Particulate Matter from Indoor Air	Single	Ariana Joel	2nd (tie)	\$75
	Earth & Environment	Fungi Beats Plastic: Do Mushrooms Help Break Down Plastic?	Group (3)	Alyssa Feril, Rachel Haigani, Sawyer Scholle	2nd (tie)	\$75 (\$25 each)
	Environmental Engineering	Keeping Ventura County Clean: Determining Biodegradation Kinetics of Benzene, Toluene, and Xylene to Support our Wastewater Treatment Plants	Single	Neev Goudar	3rd (tie)	\$50
	Environmental Engineering	The Role of Urban Infrastructure Innovation in Reducing Traffic Congestion and Air Pollution in Los Angeles	Single	Jude Morris	3rd (tie)	\$50
Middle School	Alternative Energy	Hydrogen as an Alternate Fuel	Single	Akshaj Bansal	1st	\$80
	Earth & Environment	The Effect of Polyvinyl Alcohol the Dissolvable Film in Tide Pods on the Cognitive Function of Zebrafish	Single	Ammon Grano	2nd	\$70
	Environmental Engineering	Sticky, Stretchy, Sustainable: Engineering a Strong Bioplastic Wrap	Single	Mariah Hendricks	3rd (tie)	\$50
	Alternative Energy	Shaded by Soot: Measuring the Impact of Dust and Smoke on Solar Output	Group (2)	Efren Gavia, Thomas Barretto	3rd (tie)	\$75 (\$25 each)

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West Coast Section Goes All Out... Continued



The San Diego Chapter (SDC) of the WCS participated in the 72nd Greater San Diego Science & Engineering Fair (GSDSEF), held this year at the Balboa Park Activity Center on March 18, 2026. The GSDSEF is open to all San Diego and Imperial County Students in 6th through 12th grade and had more than 400 projects and students participating this year. SDC Past Chair Peyton Wilson with BlueScape Environmental and SDC Director Julie Mitchell with Yorke Engineering served as special award judges for the “Air and Waste Management Achievement” award, which honors work that addresses important environmental challenges. Julie and Peyton evaluated 20 high school student projects that addressed air quality, water quality, waste management, or other environmental problems. They selected one award winner of \$500, 11th grader Ihan Sung, for his project on Renewable Ammonia Electrochemical Synthesis. Ihan Sung’s project was also a 4th place winner in the Chemistry category at the California Science & Engineering Fair.

The 75th annual California Science & Engineering Fair was held on Saturday and Sunday, April 11-12, 2026, on the campus of California Lutheran University in Thousand Oaks, CA. This year there were 882 participants from 356 schools throughout the State who presented 725 projects in competition for awards totaling over \$30,000. A&WMA WCS provided a sponsored award of \$1,000, with four awards of \$250 each to the senior and junior divisions of the Earth and Environmental Sciences and Environmental Engineering categories (see https://csef.usc.edu/Current/Awards/SponsoredAwards_2026.pdf).

The WCS Science & Engineering Fair awards are given in the name of Steve Menkus, a long-time (48 year) A&WMA member, leader of the WCS, and passionate supporter of students who passed away in 2021. The In Memoriam for Steve can be found on-line in the April 2021 edition of EM magazine and on the WCS website (<https://wcsawma.org/images/downloads/inmemoriam.pdf>).



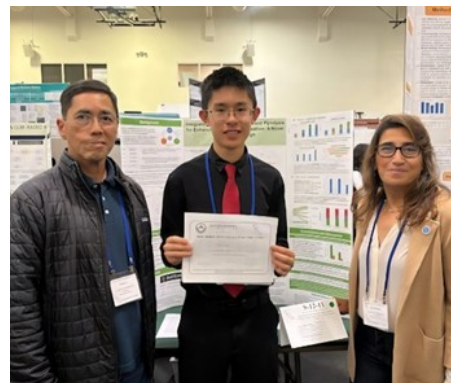
The WCS judges included WCS Director and science fair organizer, Simin Mehrabani with Davenport Engineering, Dick Baldwin, founder of the CIC, A&WMA Past President, and former Air Pollution Control Officer of the VCAPCD, Don Price, former Chair of the CIC and retired from the VCAPCD, Richard Countess, retired and prior Director of the CIC, Odette Alsen, WCS Vice Chair with ThermoFisher, Lauren Godinez with Geosyntec, and Azar Dabiri and Tran Vo, both retired from South Coast AQMD.

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West Coast Section Goes All Out... Continued

The four winners were:

- Arya Bhatt, San Diego County, Project Title: Context Aware Real Time Air Quality Prediction Using Machine Learning (pictured below on the top left with judges Simin and Dick)
- Shreyas Garg, San Bernardino County, Project Title: Electrostatic Cyclone: The Ultimate Indoor Pollution & Duster Buster (pictured below on the top right with judges Odette and Don)
- Roshan Saxena, Santa Clara County, Project Title: Hybrid Spatiotemporal Framework for Marsh Climate Forcing: Biogeochemical Thresholds, Flux Prediction, Site Optimization (pictured below on the left bottom with judges Richard and Lauren)
- Aidan Peng, Santa Clara County, Project Title: Integrating Furfural Production and Pyrolysis for Enhanced Biomass Valorization: a Novel Biorefinery Design (pictured below on the right bottom with judges Tran and Azar)



Additional winners and photos of WCS California Science & Engineering Fair awardees dating back to 2018 are available on the WCS website at https://wcsawma.org/Science_Fair.

The WCS, CIC, and SDC thank our judges (and their employers) for their time to judge and for the support of students.

Sara Head, Simin Mehrabani, and Peyton Wilson

Upcoming Conferences and Webinars

For more information and a complete list of upcoming events please visit: https://www.awma.org/calendar_list.asp.

June 21 - June 24, 2026

[ACE 2026](#)

September 22 - September 24, 2026

[The Science of PFAS Conference](#)

October 13 - October 15, 2026

[Guideline on Air Quality Models](#)

2nd Quarter Webinars

[Upcoming Webinars](#)

Need help with events? Conference Direct will help you source venues nationwide and negotiate the best contract terms. [Check out their capabilities brochure.](#)

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