

A&WMA Sections & Chapters Council

Attend the Fall Council Meeting, October 2-4 in Buffalo!

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View of the Canalside Area in Buffalo, New York, site of the Fall Sections and Chapters Meeting

Chair's Message

By Mike Hult



Greetings to my fellow A&WMA Sections and Chapters Leaders! I hope you enjoy the excellent articles and information that Stephanie Phillips has diligently collected and compiled for this edition of the Conduit. For my message, I'd like to focus on the upcoming A&WMA Sections and Chapters Council Fall 2026 Hybrid Meeting, taking place October 2-4, 2026, in Buffalo, New York. This year's Fall Meeting will be hosted by the A&WMA Niagara Frontier Section, with meeting space generously provided by Phillips Lytle LLP at their offices at One Canalside, 125 Main Street, Buffalo, NY.

The Fall Meeting is one of our most valuable opportunities to come together as Section and Chapter leaders to exchange ideas, strengthen connections, and discuss practical ways to support our local units and the broader A&WMA mission. Whether you are a long-time leader or newly engaged with your Section or Chapter, your participation is important. The Council's work is most effective when we have broad representation, candid discussion, and a shared commitment to helping our local units thrive.

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Chair's Message - Continued

Our Buffalo agenda is designed to balance strategic discussion, practical planning, and peer-to-peer learning. We will begin the weekend with a social event on the evening of Friday, October 2nd. Then on Saturday, October 3rd, we transition to the main business portion of the meeting with welcome remarks and introductions, followed by the Chair's Report, approval of prior meeting minutes, and updates from A&WMA leadership. We will then turn to important Council business, including analysis of annual reports and discussion of how we can better identify which Sections and Chapters may need support, as well as which units are doing well and may be able to share successful practices with others.



A major focus of the meeting will be continued discussion of the Leadership Academy Outreach.

This effort is intended to help engage those who may benefit from Leadership Academy participation, support individuals who need assistance attending, and explore ways to bring a portable and condensed Leadership Academy to local units. The meeting will include discussion of proposed recommendations, specific actions, funding needs, and potential next steps.

Niagara Falls showing Goat Island, a visit to the island is planned on Sat., Oct. 3rd

On Sunday, October 4th, we will focus on logistics coordination, geospatial membership data analysis, and best practice sharing. I especially want to recognize the work of Vice Chair Travis Tokarek, who has been advancing important outreach efforts for Sections and Chapters, including the development of geospatial membership analysis. This work will help provide a clearer picture of A&WMA membership by location and support more targeted, data-informed outreach by Sections and Chapters. Understanding where our members are located and where opportunities may exist for engagement, collaboration, or renewed activity will be a valuable tool for strengthening our local network.

The meeting will also include roundtable discussion among Sections and Chapters, with a focus on what is going well and where help may be needed. These conversations are often among the most useful parts of our Council meetings because they allow leaders to learn directly from one another. Many of our best ideas come from local experience, and Buffalo will provide an excellent forum for sharing those ideas.

In addition to the meeting itself, the Niagara Frontier Section has planned opportunities to enjoy Buffalo and the surrounding area. Attendees are invited to participate in a private tour of Frank Lloyd Wright's Martin House on Friday, October 2nd, followed by dinner at the Anchor Bar, home of the original Buffalo wing! On Saturday afternoon, attendees may also join an optional visit to Niagara Falls, followed by dinner at Pizza Plant Italian Pub.

The meeting hotel is the Courtyard by Marriott Downtown/Canalside, located at 125 Main Street, Buffalo, NY, near the meeting room and planned activities. Additional meeting details and registration information are available on the [A&WMA event page](#).

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Chair's Message - Continued

I encourage each Section and Chapter to send a representative, either in person or virtually. Your participation helps ensure that the Council reflects the needs, successes, and priorities of our local units across the Association. I look forward to seeing many of you in Buffalo this October as we continue our work to support strong, active, and connected Sections and Chapters.

Air & Waste Management Association (A&WMA)
A&WMA Public Education Committee

Seeking Environmental Professionals

Share Your Story. Inspire Future Environmental Leaders.

The A&WMA K12 Committee invites environmental professionals to partner with secondary students. Help students explore environmental careers in a video interview format we'll post to social media.

Share Your Experience

Help students explore environmental careers through real-world experiences.

- ✓ Inspire future professionals
- ✓ Expand career awareness
- ✓ Support student learning
- ✓ Create a lasting impact

Interested in Participating?
Scan the QR code or email:
airqualityeducation@gmail.com

Fall 2026

Environmental Professionals Needed for Student Career Video Interview Project

By Melina Krawchick, Education Committee

The A&WMA Public Education Committee is seeking environmental professionals to participate in a new student-led career interview project with secondary students.

Through brief, in-person or online interviews, students will learn about career pathways in environmental science, engineering, air quality, waste management, sustainability, and related fields. By sharing your experience, you can help students better understand environmental professions, inspire the next generation of environmental leaders, and help bridge the gap between education and careers. By sharing your journey and experiences, you can serve as a role model and help students explore opportunities in environmental science, engineering, and other STEM fields.

The time commitment is minimal, approximately one hour, and students will conduct the interviews and handle all editing.

This project supports STEM education and provides students with valuable exposure to real-world environmental careers.

Interested professionals can scan the QR code on the accompanying flyer or contact airqualityeducation@gmail.com for more information.

A&WMA's Technical Council Invites You to Contribute and Help Steer the Association's Technical Priorities and Future Initiatives

By Chih Chao, Technical Council Chair

Technical Council's goal is to be the chief architect of the successful ACE Technical Program and to enrich Webinar and Specialty Conference ideas by providing support and assistance in their implementation. The collective effort of the council leadership includes 4 groups, 10 divisions, 25 underlying technical coordinating committees (TCCs) and 2 inter-committee task forces (ITFs), see our Technical Council Organizational Structure. In collaboration with the Education Council, Sections and Chapters Council, and Young Professional Advisory Council, the Technical Council has organized successful ACE technical programs that addressed current technical issues, helped to plan many successful Specialty Conferences, and supported timely Webinars.

Looking down the road, the Technical Council faces the challenge of developing suitable technical programming that reflects the dynamic changes in the need for a sustainable and resilient environment. We welcome new individuals to join our TCCs' work, to inject inspirational ideas, and to drive actions that promptly serve A&WMA's members' needs. This is particularly true in the age of fast-paced AI applications, energy transition, emerging contaminants, and severe climate impacts.



After the recent TCC officers' rotations and elections, many officer positions are available. For example, the chair, vice-chair, and/or secretary roles in the Visibility and Radiative Transfer (APV), Public Participation (PUB), On- and Off-Road Mobile Sources (OMS), and Transportation Policies and Sustainability (TPS) TCCs are open for participation. The only requirements for these positions are an interest in the topic and a willingness to work with others to support the A&WMA. Accepting these roles can be a great learning experience for developing leadership and organizational skills, which enable you to expand your network, provide mentoring, and enhance your career.

We encourage you to take part in our future. If you are interested in or have someone in mind to join the TCC work in any capacity, contact Chih Chao, Technical Council Chair, at meister.chao@gmail.com, or Roger Wayson, Technical Council Vice-Chair, at roger.wayson@aecom.com.

The Conference Ecosystem: A Field Guide to Optimizing Your Technical Event

By Travis Tokarek, Sections and Chapters Council Vice Chair



To the untrained eye, a technical luncheon or annual conference is merely a gathering of professionals. But to the astute behavioral ecologist, the conference hall is a rich, complex biome teeming with distinct species, each driven by unique migratory patterns, survival instincts, and symbiotic needs. After observing this ecosystem as chair of six conferences and numerous workshops, I have compiled a brief field guide to the social dynamics of the A&WMA technical event habitat. Enjoy!

The Consultant (*Billabilis horus*) The Consultant is a highly migratory creature whose movements are strictly dictated by the seasonal cycles of regulatory reporting, particularly the frantic periods preceding GHG and emissions inventory deadlines. When they do appear in the conference habitat, they are usually found performing complex social displays (networking) in the hopes of attracting their preferred symbiotic partner: The Industry Rep.

The Industry Rep (*Complianceus paranoiacus*) The Industry Rep is a cautious forager, constantly scanning the horizon for incoming threats in the form of new bylaws, policies, or regulations. They are entirely unconcerned with the Consultant's song and dance. Instead, they are desperately tracking the most elusive creature in the biome: The Government Official.

The Government Official (*Regulatorus publicus*) The Government Official is one of the most strategically important species in the biome. However, they are notoriously difficult to coax out of their bureaucratic burrow.

To successfully introduce this species into your conference ecosystem, you cannot simply leave an invitation at the edge of the forest. You must employ an Internal Advocate, a domesticated member of the herd who understands the complex internal politics of the pack. In addition the bait must be set many weeks, or even months, in advance as their decision-making process is glacial.

Keep an eye out for distinct subspecies. **The Policy Analyst (*Draftus perpetuus*)** is highly intelligent and genuinely wants to engage with your technical community, but has been "in consultation" on a guidance document since the previous fiscal year. While making excellent panelists, they are known to say a great deal while committing to very little, a skill honed across countless stakeholder engagement sessions. There is also the prized **Senior Official (*Bureaucratus magnificus*)**, a keystone species whose mere presence reorganizes the behavior of the entire herd. Finally, a warning: handle them with care, and under no circumstances place them on a panel with someone who has an ongoing action with their agency, lest you trigger a devastating display of territorial tension.

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The Conference Ecosystem... Continued

The Prof (*Tenurus ambitiosus*) The Prof is a hyper-focused, highly vocal creature whose primary survival instinct revolves around securing funding, publishing papers, and elevating their research profile. Unlike the Consultant or Industry Rep, the Prof is largely unconcerned with upcoming regulatory shifts. Instead, their courtship displays consist of promoting their research to anyone wandering into their territory.

The Exhibitor (*Apparatus peddlerus*) Scattered throughout the biome, usually congregating in high-traffic corridors, are the Exhibitors. Nestled in their brightly colored, highly structured nests (booths), they wait patiently for passersby. The most dominant subset is the Instrument Manufacturer, who uses shiny, flashing gadgets to lure in curious onlookers, particularly the Collectoris trinketus, an attendee driven by a primal urge to hoard branded stress balls and novelty pens.

The Sponsor (*Fundus essentialis*) The conference ecosystem simply could not survive without the life-giving nourishment provided by the Sponsor. This vital creature comes in two distinct variants. The Loyal Sponsor is a returning migratory staple. Because they reliably renew their support year after year, they must be treated as the undisputed royalty of the biome, showered with praise, premium logo placement, and the best grazing spots. Conversely, the New Sponsor is highly skittish and inquisitive. To successfully capture a New Sponsor, one must calmly present a glossy post-event report from the previous year to soothe their nerves.

The Fledglings: Students and Young Professionals At the edges of the watering hole, congregating together, you will find the Academicus shyus (Students). They are highly skittish and easily startled by aggressive networking. To integrate them into the herd, you must offer low-hanging fruit (bursaries) and provide them a safe, elevated rock from which to display their plumage (research posters).

Nearby are the **Young Professionals (*Novus eagerus*)**. They have boundless energy but often very limited resources. The clever event organizer can easily domesticate the YP by trading habitat access for basic labor. Place them behind the registration desk or have them lead a session; they will thrive on the responsibility and inadvertently learn the social behaviors of the older, established members of the herd.

The Apex Speaker (*Keynotus majesticos*) Finally, there is the challenge of capturing the Apex Speaker. Many organizers observe these majestic creatures from afar, convinced they are too grand to be approached. My advice? Throw a net over them. Do not be afraid to simply send the invitation. More often than not, they are perfectly happy to wander into your ecosystem and share their roar with the crowd.

With your Apex Speaker secured, your conference biome is finally complete. A thriving technical event is a delicate balance of nature. Nurture the fledglings, respect the government officials, and always carry spare drink tickets. But above all else, never stand between a migrating flock of Consultants and the lunch buffet. Good luck out there in the wild!



Upcoming Conferences and Webinars

For more information and a complete list of upcoming events, please visit:

https://www.awma.org/calendar_list.asp

September 22 - September 24, 2026	The Science of PFAS Conference
October 2 - October 4, 2026	Sections & Chapters Council Meeting
October 13 - October 15, 2026	Guideline on Air Quality Models: From Guidance to Practice
October 28 - October 29, 2026	42nd International Conference on Thermal Treatment Technologies and Hazardous Waste Combustors
November 10 - November 13, 2026	Atmospheric Optics: Aerosols, VISIBILITY, and the Radiative Balance
3 rd and 4 th Quarter Webinars	Upcoming Webinars

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