

Fall 2025

Volume 26, Issue 4



the Practitioner

Inside this issue

2025 Snow & Ice Conference & National Snow Roadeo	1-5
President's Message	6
2025 PWX	7
Region IX Dinner	8
West Slope Snow & Ice Public Works as First Responders	9-10
Annual Rockies Night	11
2026 Construction Inspection Conference	12
Past Presidents Tour	12
Young Professionals Update	13
ACEC-APWA Scholarship	13
Community Service Project	14
The Power of Partnership	15-16
News & Announcements	17-18

2025 Western Snow & Ice Conference and National Snow Roadeo Move to a Successful New Two-Day Roadeo!

The 45th annual Western Snow and Ice Conference and 39th National Snow Roadeo were held in Loveland for three days of beautiful September weather. The 2025 Western Snow and Ice Conference attendance was down some from 2024 due to financial situations of local agencies. Even with that, the conference attendance, including vendors and attendees, was over 1,450. We had the first two-day National Snow Roadeo, as registration had outgrown holding the entire event on one day. Again, this year we saw excellent registrations, with both the Loader and Skidsteer competitions nearing 100 registrants.

This year's conference had attendees from 25 states and a contingent from Medicine Hat, Alberta, Canada. During the three days of the conference there were more than 48 speakers offering 33 educational sessions. The Winter Maintenance Supervisor Certificate Program had 110 professionals attend with an additional 80 participants completing the Winter Maintenance Operators Certificate class. Again, this year, the exhibitor space inside and outside was sold out.

A very special thank you to our major sponsors, sponsors of the Coffee and Snack Breaks, and our Winter Maintenance Supervisor Certificate Workshop. Once again 4Rivers Equipment sponsored the "Blades Up Social" an annual event that needs to be experienced! A great time is had by all who attend.

This year's theme "Ready for Winter? Brrrr-ing it on!" recognizes the preparation operators put forward to serve their agencies throughout the snow and ice season, and the effort operators will put in for the upcoming winter season. This conference really gets you thinking about how prepared your agency is for the upcoming winter season, including updates on emerging technologies and a changing workforce. The Western Snow and Ice Conference is where these questions get answered.



Continued on page 2

2025 Western Snow & Ice Conference and National Snow Rodeo

Highlights from the event:

- National experts presenting opportunities to expand our knowledge and skillsets.
- Panel discussions with industry leaders holding open and frank conversations about de-icing materials, and snow equipment.
- Discovering ideas creating actionable insights on operational procedures and technologies that attendees could take back to their agency.
- Conversations and ideas sparked between old and new acquaintances bonding peers as they ask and answer questions. Networking and creating lasting connections with others in the public works field of snow operations.
- National Snow Rodeo had 324 snow operators competing from all over the U.S. and Canada.

The Opening General Session began with a moving ceremonial flag presentation from Associated Veterans of Loveland and the Windsor High School Band performing the national anthem. Opening remarks were delivered from Loveland City Manager Jim Thompson, Colorado Chapter President John Burke, APWA Region IX Director Tina Nelson, and APWA President Vic Bienes. The keynote speaker for the general session was National Football Hall-of-Fame great and Denver Broncos legend Randy Gradishar. Randy relayed a message of belief in yourself and your teammates, and told his story of improvement. He also shared some very funny stories from his football experiences. Randy followed up his talk by spending an hour talking with attendees and signing autographs on jerseys, football cards, and whatever was presented to him.

Our closing speakers were the team of Dan Schacher from the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities and Eric Spitzer from the Alaska State Patrol. They talked about their experiences working together in Alaska, but continued to emphasize the lifelong learning they receive as the world and circumstances change.

The best equipment operators across the nation, from Maine to Washington, competed in the National Snow Rodeo. We congratulate each and everyone. (See this year's winners on page 3.)

I cannot say how much we enjoy putting this conference together and we are looking forward to "The Best Week of the Year" again in 2026. Please mark your calendars for the 2026 Western Snow and Ice Conference and National Snow Rodeo in Loveland on September 30-October 2. The conference planning committee thanks everyone from those sponsoring, presenting, teaching, and attending for making the 2025 conference a success!

Pete Adler

*Chairman, APWA Western Snow & Ice Conference
and National Snow Rodeo*



Save the Date!!

September 30 -
October 2, 2026

Embassy
Suites
Loveland

2025 National Snow Rodeo Champions

First Place



Loader Winners:

First Place: **Kyler Fullmer**, Idaho Transportation Dept.

Second Place: **Anthony Craft**, Lancaster County, NE

Third Place: **Spencer Esch**, US Bureau of Reclamation

Second Place



Grader Winners:

First Place: **Christopher Bouchard**, Massachusetts Highway Assoc.

Second Place: **Casey Schroeder**, Summit County

Third Place: **Spencer Esch**, US Bureau of Reclamation

Third Place



Top Agency: **Idaho Transportation Department**

Second Place



Third Place



Tandem Axle Winners:

First Place: **Corey Reese & John Prather**, RTD

Second Place: **Kenneth Hudson & Larry Vinson**, Delaware Dept. of Transportation

Third Place: **Kyler Fullmer & Brad Steiner**, Idaho Transportation Dept.

Single Axle Winners:

First Place: **Robert Cubbage & Douglas Marker**, Delaware Dept. of Transportation

Second Place: **Albert Lee & Eric Ziegenhirt**, Riley County, KS

Third Place: **Kevin Bertrand & Troy Dussart**, City of Greenwood Village

First Place



First Place



Second Place



Third Place



Second Place



Third Place



First Place



Second Place



Third Place



Skid Steer Winners:

First Place: **Matt Lemke**, The Ranch - Larimer County Fairgrounds

Second Place: **Philip Voelker**, Town of Windsor

Third Place: **Eric Ziegenhirt**, Riley County, KS

Keynote speaker, Pro Football Hall of Famer Randy Gradishar, presented "influence Over Image". Randy shared his journey showcasing the transformative power of influence and how it can positively impact others lives.



Loveland City Manager Jim Thompson, APWA Colorado Chapter President John Burke, National APWA Region IX Director Tina Nelson, National APWA President Vic Bienes and Snow & Ice Committee Chair Pete Adler welcomed attendees at the opening session



2025 Snow & Ice Conference & National Snow Rodeo



It takes a lot of work to get ready for this conference! The Colorado Chapter would like to thank the committee and all of the volunteers who so generously share their time and resources to make the Conference and Rodeo such a big success!





2025 Snow & Ice Conference & National Snow Roaddeo



Snow & Ice photos courtesy of Brian Rowe, Pete Adler and the City of Loveland.

Message from the President



Fall is in full swing in Colorado, and it's my favorite time of the year! Not only is the weather finally getting cooler, but this time of year always reminds me of going back to school and learning something new. During my presentations at the Public Works Institute, I often remind the class about the importance of being a lifelong learner. It's the one investment that no one can take away. You can lose your job, change roles, or have some other life-changing event occur, but what you put into your mind is yours to keep and use to the betterment of yourself and others.

As I reflect on this past year, not only as President of the Colorado Chapter, but also in my new role as City Engineer leading a Division of 64 professional staff members, not a week goes by that I don't wish that I had handled something better, said something better, or more importantly, didn't say anything at all. A theme for me this year has been to do better at being curious and asking good questions, before judging the situation. I've found that if I begin every conversation and interaction assuming the other person has good intentions, my questions of curiosity will lean into building the relationship versus breaking it down.

Earlier this year, I flew out to Omaha to help my son recover from hip surgery that resulted from a car accident where a truck ran a stop sign, hit the front of his car, which resulted in his car rolling over three times before coming to rest. Miraculously, he was left mostly uninjured and was discharged from the hospital that night with only minor bruising. It wasn't until a few months later that they discovered a torn labrum in his left hip that required surgery.

During my time there, we had a lot of time to just talk and catch up on life. He's 20 years old and to the point where I'm more of a coach and mentor versus a dad and disciplinarian. In addition to just talking about dumb guy stuff and watching war movies, we had the chance to talk about the importance of building quality relationships and how to react to difficult situations.

When dealing with difficult people, we are often provided opportunities to say something we regret. This happened to me right before I flew out to Omaha. What surprised me, but shouldn't have, was that Friday evening, I received one of those terse, call me to the mat type of emails. It wasn't kind,

and my first reaction was to retaliate and let the other person know how wrong they were, and how right I was. Thankfully, I was able to deploy one

of the mindful leadership techniques. I took a few deep breaths, paused, and took some time to think before replying. In this way, I was able to push myself back into the forward-thinking cerebral cortex and out of the amygdala (fight/flight) part of my brain.

I'd love to tell you that I was able to do this quickly, like shifting gears in a Formula One race car, but I didn't. In fact, the email and the conversation that led to that email were on constant repeat mode for the next 8 hours. It wasn't until the next day that I finally pivoted, and instead of reacting to the email, I asked myself this question: "If someone else had this happen to them, how would I coach them to respond?"

I shared the situation with my son and then explained how I would coach myself on how to respond. This reflection led me to create a response with 100% ownership of my actions, behaviors, and assumptions, and then hope the other person reciprocates in kind. I had to apologize for making an incorrect assumption instead of being curious and asking questions to gain understanding. I would also own the fact I approached this person when they were having a conversation with someone else, which likely embarrassed them. And lastly, I had to make time to do this in person, not over email. So much of communication (75%) is non-verbal, and when you're reading someone else's words in an email, your own perspective of that person's intentions creates the tone of the email. Long story short, I set up the meeting, had the conversation, and did my best to repair the relationship.

Continual education and training opportunities for professionals in the Public Works industry are the key focus and mission for APWA. As we close out this year, I look forward to connecting with and continuing this journey of learning with you all.

*Kindly,
John Burke, City of Westminster*



2025 PWX

August 17-20



PWX 2025 was held in Chicago, Illinois August 17-20 at McCormick Place. There were several speakers from Colorado that contributed to the educational sessions. Throughout the conference, registrants had the opportunity to attend education sessions and the exhibit floor, network with other public works professionals, listen to expert speakers, experience interactive learning, and find out about the latest trends, products, and services available.

Colorado was proud to see Denver Water Northwater Treatment Plant, **Denver Water** receive a National award this year for Project of the Year - Environment - More than \$75 million and the **Town of Castle Rock** received the Asset Management Award.

Congratulations!

Monday afternoon of PWX is the Annual National APWA Awards Ceremony recognizing individuals and projects from across the nation. The Colorado Chapter received the PACE Award for chapter excellence for the eighth straight year!



2025 PWX Region IX Dinner

A Region 9 Dinner was held at at this year's national expo in Chicago! Hosted at Pin-stripes, the evening had everything - good food, great company, and just the right amount of friendly competition on the bowling lanes. We were thrilled to welcome 80 attendees from nearly every chapter in Region 9! The room was buzzing with laughter, new introductions, and plenty of stories swapped between friends - old and new alike. The turnout was a wonderful reminder of how strong (and fun!) our Region 9 community really is. Guests enjoyed lively conversation, prizes, and a whole lot of cheer.



A huge thank you goes out to our generous sponsors who helped make the evening possible. Their support keeps events like this rolling (pun intended!) and helps strengthen our Region and APWA as a whole.



*Kati Horner Gonzalez
Katigon Consult, Colorado Chapter Director*

West Slope Snow & Ice Conference

*Martin Schmidt
Gunnison County, West Slope Branch Chair-Elect*

For 38 years, public works professionals from across Colorado's Western Slope gather in Gunnison for the APWA Colorado West Slope Branch Snow & Ice Conference — a cornerstone event celebrating the skill, dedication, and innovation behind winter road maintenance in the Rocky Mountains.

Hosted by the APWA Colorado West Slope Branch, the conference brings together snowplow operators, supervisors, fleet managers, and industry partners for two days of hands-on learning, equipment demonstrations, and professional development. Attendees exchange real-world lessons about snow and ice control, equipment maintenance, and safety practices — all while strengthening the connections that make Colorado's public works community one of the most resilient in the nation. This year we were joined by 190 participants from 14 municipalities, 9 counties, and the state. 31 different vendors staffed by 76 staff supported the conference. The annual golf tournament saw 79 players tackle 18 holes.

Highlights include the popular afternoon Equipment Rodeo, where operators test their precision and control, as well as technical sessions with CSP, vendor exhibits, and multiple networking opportunities with peers and experts from across the region. In the end, the conference is funding around \$10,000 in scholarship and professional development opportunities on the West Slope.

The APWA West Slope Branch Gunnison Snow & Ice event reflects the spirit of collaboration that defines APWA's mission: supporting those who serve our communities every day, in every kind of weather.

For more information or to get involved in next year's conference, contact publicworks@gunnisoncounty.org.

Recognizing Public Works Professionals as First Responders

Each year, October 28 marks **National First Responder Day**—a time to honor those who courageously serve our communities in times of crisis. While most people immediately think of police, fire, and emergency medical services (EMS), it's important to recognize that **public works professionals** are also first responders. In fact, in 2003, President George W. Bush issued Presidential Policy Directive 8 (PPD-8), officially recognizing public works as first responders.

Despite this national acknowledgment and ongoing efforts at state and local levels, public works professionals still do not receive the recognition they deserve.

In an era where natural disasters are increasingly frequent and widely reported, the spotlight often remains on police, fire, and EMS. Yet, public works professionals are frequently **the first on the scene and the last to leave**, especially during recovery efforts. In many cases, emergency personnel cannot even begin their work until public works crews have cleared access routes or stabilized infrastructure. That's why I often say: **Public Works is typically FIRST IN AND LAST OUT.**

Recognizing all first responders—especially those in public works—is a personal passion of mine. I spent nearly 30 years in public works, working alongside dedicated individuals who maintain our streets, water systems, sanitary sewers, and drainage infrastructure. These professionals routinely step away from their daily duties to respond to emergencies and serve the public when called upon. I also served as a volunteer firefighter for nearly a decade in Colorado and Texas, and I've seen firsthand how much firefighters rely on public works teams to protect life, health, and welfare during emergencies.

Local governments—cities and counties—must do more to recognize public works professionals. That responsibility begins with us, those within the profession. We must better educate agency leadership so they, in turn, can inform policymakers.

Start planning now for your own 2026 First Responders Day! There are lots of [resources](#) available on National APWA's website including sample proclamations, official graphics, flyers, and social media posts!

The **American Public Works Association (APWA)** offers a wealth of resources to help public works professionals educate the public, agency leaders, and policymakers about their role as first responders. These resources also include ideas for recognizing public works teams in your community. You can access this information at:

- [Public Works First Responders - American Public Works Association](#)
- [Recognize National First Responders Day on October 28](#)

APWA has also adopted a symbol for public works agencies to display on vehicles, uniforms, and facilities—visibly affirming their role as first responders. I strongly encourage all agencies to adopt and promote this symbol.



Mental Health Matters

As with all first responders, maintaining mental health is essential. Public works professionals often face situations where they're not trained or emotionally prepared for—especially during natural disasters or traumatic incidents. And like everyone, they experience personal tragedies: the loss of loved ones, violence, divorce, financial hardship, and more.

It's vital to have resources available to cope with these challenges. But it's equally important for individuals to seek out and use those resources. I often remind people: You can't take care of your co-workers, family, or friends if you don't take care of yourself first.

Take advantage of your Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) and other support systems. Bottling up emotions can be harmful, so I encourage everyone to talk about their experiences. Sharing your story might help others open up about theirs. Together, we are stronger than we are alone.

Shawn Poe
WSB, Colorado Chapter Director



PUBLIC WORKS

FIRST RESPONDER

Why recognize public works professionals as **FIRST RESPONDERS**?

While police, fire, and EMS are often the three most recognized first responders, public works is also often silently there—providing vital support to emergency response partners, helping protect essential services, and restoring those services following an emergency situation. Consider the following:

- In 2003, President George W. Bush issued [Presidential Policy Directive 8 \(PPD-8\)](#) officially recognizing public works as first responders.
- In 2010, Mississippi, under House Bill (HB) 664, recognized public works professionals as first responders.
- In 2019, the US Senate passed Senate Concurrent Resolution 15 ([S.Con.Res.15](#)), “Expressing support for the designation of October 28, 2019, as Honoring the Nation’s First Responders Day.” Public works is specifically included.
- In 2022 New Hampshire Governor Chris Sununu signed into law SB325, formally recognizing public works employees as first responders.
- In 2022, New Hampshire passed HB 536, “An Act relative to death benefits for public works employees killed in the line of duty, and relative to workers’ compensation offsets for certain retirement system benefits.”
- Public works is often considered “the silent arm of public safety” ... usually without fanfare. Public works professionals are often the first on scene and the last to leave the scenes of disasters—no matter the peril.
- The National Incident Management System (NIMS) lists public works alongside police, fire, and public health in its documentation: [National Incident Management System, 3rd Edition \(fema.gov\)](#).

What can I do?

- Establish a public works awareness committee.
- Arrange networking sessions with fellow public works professionals to share your ideas, experiences, and your public works awareness success stories.
- Put together a short presentation/video to share with your elected officials at the local, county, state, and federal levels highlighting the vital role public works professionals have as first responders.
- Reach out to APWA’s Government Affairs staff and refer to the APWA website for the latest information.
- When discussing public works as first responders, remember to use the APWA theme, “Ready and Resilient.”
- Remind your organizations and those you serve, whether it is clearing debris after a major storm, clearing the roads during winter weather conditions, setting up protective barriers, or any other critical essential function, that **public works is always there** to ensure government operations return to normal as quickly as possible. “Public works is the silent arm of public safety!”

Please don’t hesitate to reach out to APWA Government Affairs Manager, Marty Williams by phone (202) 218-6732 or email mwilliams@apwa.org, or APWA’s Marketing Department by phone at (816) 595-5257 or email jshilhanek@apwa.org, should you have any questions or need assistance raising awareness of public works as first responders.

APWA Colorado 10th Annual

COLORADO ROCKIES

Night

Wednesday, September 17, 2025
vs. Miami Marlins

The Young Professionals hosted the Annual Colorado Chapter Rockies Night on Wednesday, September 17th.

It was another great group this year with over 50 attendees cheering the Rockies on!

The Chapter would like to thank the YP group, for organizing the event and Benesch for sponsoring the concessions ticket everyone received!



Register Now!!

2026 APWA COLORADO CONSTRUCTION INSPECTION CONFERENCE

Lone Tree Arts Center
10075 Commons Street
Lone Tree, Colorado 80124

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 28, 2026
Check-in/breakfast 7:30am
Sessions begin at 8:00am

THURSDAY, JANUARY 29, 2026
8:00am-1:00pm

Registration is open!: <https://colorado.apwa.org>



APWA COLORADO CHAPTER
2026 CONSTRUCTION
INSPECTION CONFERENCE

*Check out the
registration website
for more information
and updates!*

APWA Colorado Past Presidents

*Drew Howland, SACWSD
Photos courtesy of SACWSD*

APWA Colorado Past Presidents Tour South Adams County Water & Sanitation District

In early August, South Adams County Water & Sanitation District hosted the APWA Colorado Chapter Past Presidents event at the Klein Water Treatment Facility and Water Quality Lab. District Manager Abel Moreno, who served as Chapter President in 2009, provided an engaging overview of the District's nearly 75-year history, current water and wastewater operations, and ongoing commitment to serving the growing Commerce City community.

Guests toured the Klein Water Treatment Facility, Water Quality Lab, and the Ennis Water Softening Facility, and received a preview of the District's future ion exchange plant, which is currently under construction. These tours offered a unique, behind-the-scenes look at the processes and technology that ensure clean, reliable water for customers and highlighted the role of water services as an essential part of public works and community well-being.

The past presidents group is unique, with leaders from across the history of public works in Colorado. This gathering of the group was highlighted by past presidents Ron Hellbusch and Scott Tucker both in their 80's. It's a great reminder that the work we do will span generations of users and how vital our projects are to communities across the state.



Young Professionals Update

As summer comes to a draw and I prepare for the annual APWA Colorado Conference, I notice something has changed this year. No, it isn't the increased hustle of the construction industry or the fact that my awards lunch co-host and APWA Secretary, Matt Knight, is preparing the script and presentation, as we've done before, yet it always seems to come up so fast. This new sensation is the buzz of emails circulating from the five new and ambitious APWA young professional committee members. I can barely keep up with them. This group will carry on the legacy and assume the representation of the emerging leaders, growing and developing in the public works landscape of Colorado. As the current young professional (YP) committee members age out in the upcoming years, we welcome and advise the next generation of professionals to take the lead and keep progression moving forward, continue hosting and expanding events and welcome and encourage participation of both young professionals and tenured professionals alike.

My fellow committee member, Ryan Garringer and I both started our participation in approximately 2021, being introduced to the organization and advised by Jess Hastings with Benesch, and since that time have both tried to grow ourselves and this outstanding committee of the general APWA organization in Colorado. Over the years, we have mingled with other YPs at various events including barbecues in Cherry Hills Village, tours of the South Platte Water Renewal Partners facility in Englewood, annual events with the Highline Conservancy where we collected trash and debris from the canal or planted trees, and of course, the ever popular, "Night at the Rockies". Whether sipping lemonade or eating ice cream from a baseball cap bowl, watching the Rockies with 60 of my closest public works friends, or racing Ryan's team to see who can plant the most trees, accidentally shortening a 6-hour event to about two, I have enjoyed every memory of this ride and hope to give these opportunities and more to this next group of leaders.

This summer, the YP team has engaged in monthly happy hour "meetings", to discuss the future, what ideas they have for the program, where they want to take it, how to reach out to other young professionals and how to stay in touch with friends throughout the Public Works field. The YP group is now actively engaged on social media including Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn, sharing information about upcoming events, and posting photos and details about how the events went. If you visit these pages right now, you can see literal TONS of trash and debris cleared out of the Highline Canal during the cleanup, and the Night at the Rockies had a smile on everybody's face, despite the Rockies best attempt to win. The team's ambition has flourished into new events as well. Planning for several new and exciting events are under way, from winter sports to summer barbecues; fun and lighthearted to community engagement and social stewardship, the YP group is looking to get more people active in networking than ever before and we want you to be a part of it.

As you may have noticed at the Annual Colorado Conference this year, several sessions were moderated by a YP, they were also at the check in table, welcoming you in, wearing a Food Bank of the Rockies t-shirt, hosting the awards lunch and running around with a QR code for the new and improved YP Instagram account. The new committee members Anna Bignault, Mark Flood, Lola Sanchez, Sam Gens and Drew Roberts have certainly hit the ground running, and while they have so many more years to continue to build and grow this organization, I can already see the bright future they are illuminating, one that I have been honored to be a part of.

Matthew Matuszewski

City of Littleton, APWA Colorado Emerging Professionals Director

For the past 24 years, ACEC Colorado and APWA Colorado scholarship programs have benefited from their partnership. APWA Colorado awards the Jack Bruce Memorial Scholarship of \$3,500 each year.



ACEC held a ceremony earlier this year honoring this year's outstanding students. The recipient of the 2025 APWA Scholarship is Madison Bietz. Madison attends Colorado State University where she is in her senior year and is majoring in civil engineering.

Congratulations Madison!



2025 ACEC - APWA Scholarship

YP Group Sponsors a Community Service Project with the High Line Canal Conservancy

The APWA Colorado Chapter Young Professionals (YP) group once again joined forces with the High Line Canal Conservancy to clean up the canal and do brush removal. The event was held this fall. The group of volunteers got a lot of work done in that short time! A BIG THANKS to all who participated!



The Power of Partnership: How Local Government and Small Businesses Thrive Together

David Skuodas

*Design, Construction, and Maintenance Director
Mile High Flood District*

I want to share a story that challenges a tired stereotype and offers a hopeful, practical alternative. It's a story about government. But not the kind you usually hear about.

This isn't a story about red tape, inefficiency, or bureaucracy. It's a story about trust. About relationships. About how a local government agency and a group of small, family-owned businesses built something bigger together. Something that's still growing, still evolving, and still making a difference in people's lives.

The following article is based on interviews I conducted with several family-owned businesses who work with the Mile High Flood District (District) to protect, improve, and maintain the Denver region's waterways.

Every business origin story I heard began with a leap of faith. Some started with a borrowed chainsaw. Others left stable careers to chase a vision. What they shared was a willingness to bet on themselves and a belief that their work could make a difference.

A Different Kind of Government

Let's start with the stereotype. We've all heard it: government is slow, bloated, wasteful. It's a punchline in sitcoms, a scapegoat in politics, and a source of frustration for many.

But in the Denver metro area, a different kind of government story has been unfolding. One that's quiet, consistent, and deeply human. Equal parts public service and entrepreneurship. Instead of rigid procurement systems and impersonal processes, the District has chosen flexibility, responsiveness, and long-term relationships. Project managers have the autonomy to match the right people to the right work. That flexibility has made all the difference.

Daniel and Elysa Loewen, founders of Loewen Engineering, launched their firm in 2018. Elysa was still working her day job and pregnant with their second child when they got their first small contract. "Without the District," she said, "we likely would've had to keep our day jobs and potentially work two jobs to realistically get started as a business."

Their first projects were small, but meaningful. Over time, they earned the trust to take on larger design projects and became a go-to partner for quick-turnaround design work. "It's cool to see how our projects have grown over time," Daniel said. "Seeing that growth in trust has been very meaningful".

The District's flexibility — allowing project managers to select and manage consultants without excessive red tape — was key. "For most other clients, we'd have to be on a list and wait for an opportunity," Elysa explained. "With the District, we could get started right away. That made all the difference".

Loewen's work with other agencies also grew thanks to the District's reputation. "The District exposed us to other municipalities like Broomfield, SEMSWA, Littleton, and Lakewood," Elysa said.

The Power of Trust

Matt Ursetta of ICON Engineering tells a similar story. In the late 1990s,

he and his partners were working for a large corporate firm. Frustrated by inefficiencies and disconnected leadership, they decided to buy out their Denver office and go independent.

It was a bold move, and it could have failed if not for public agency clients like the District.

"The District really went out of their way to support us," Matt recalled. "They even made it a point to give us additional work to help us get started. They told us, 'We work with you, not the name on the building.'"

At the time, 70% of ICON's work came from the District. Today, they've grown to 42 employees, and the District remains their largest client. But more than that, Matt says, "We've learned a lot from each other. The District pushes innovation, and that makes us want to innovate too."

This is not a transactional relationship. It's a partnership. A symbiosis.

The Work Is the Reward

What was striking in all these stories was how rarely anyone talked about profit. Instead, they spoke about purpose.

Rick Kurth of Arrowhead Landscaping started his business after years of managing land management and reclamation crews for other construction companies. "If I'm going to run everybody else's adult daycare," he joked, "I'm going to run my own."

He initially worked exclusively for a wealthy landowner who needed help managing hundreds of acres of mountain property. But when the wealthy landowner passed away, the contract disappeared and left Rick looking for a more sustainable source of work.

He started with revegetation work for the District along Boulder Creek and quickly earned a reputation for quality. The consistent source of work not only sustained his business but created a sense of pride as well.

One of his proudest moments came after installing vegetated soil lifts (a form of stream bank protection) on Big Dry Creek. That summer brought unusually high flows right after construction, but when the water receded, the lifts were still standing. "Just like the day we put them in," Rick said. "It gives you goosebumps. It's that rewarding."

In 2008, Joe Cordova and his wife Tami lost their jobs during the recession. With no prospects and no equipment, Joe borrowed a chainsaw and started knocking on doors in Parker and Elizabeth, Colorado looking for forestry management work. "I was chasing \$25 branches," he recalled. "I had no plan. Just a truck and a borrowed saw."

His first major opportunity came after a tornado hit Windsor, Colorado. Joe drove up, talked his way past the National Guard checkpoint, and offered his services. That job for the Town of Windsor launched their new company, ArborForce, and was a springboard to opportunities with other local agencies like the District. Their long-term forestry management work along the region's waterways has led not only to financial stability but also meaning.

As Joe put it, "The satisfaction at the end of the job, to look at what we started—where you couldn't even see through the trees—and then see people walking their dogs there, saying thank you... that's what it's all about."

Joe and Tami's company now employs over 30 people. They partner with programs like Ready to Work to help individuals recovering from addiction and homelessness find meaningful employment. "We're in homeless camps every day," Joe said. "To see someone go from that to full-time employment—it's huge."

Relationships Over Transactions

In a world obsessed with scale and speed, the District has chosen depth. It invests in long-term relationships with its contractors—many of whom have worked with the agency for decades.

These aren't just vendors. They're collaborators. Co-creators. Partners.

For Jerry Naranjo of Naranjo Civil Constructors, the journey began with a \$150,000 bridge project for the South Suburban Parks and Recreation District. At the time, he didn't fully understand bonding or insurance requirements, and they'd never done any earthwork. He rented an excavator and hired an experienced operator. He figured it out and delivered.

The project was along Little Dry Creek and introduced them to District staff. Jerry's team showed a willingness to help the District with the smallest, dirtiest work, anything from fishing shopping carts out of the river to cleaning muck off pond intake screens.

Now the company brings in \$70 million in annual revenue.

The workload growth didn't just happen one day; it grew as the District's trust in Jerry's company grew. "The 25-year relationship with the District enabled us to take on larger projects and build trust," he said. The consistency of public agency work was also a huge factor: "Municipal contracts gave us the stability to grow and withstand market volatility."

Jerry's proudest achievement isn't the revenue—it's the employee ownership program he created after merging with Western States Reclamation and Ecological Resource Consultants. "I felt I owed a debt to the people who helped grow the company," he said. "Now they're part of the ownership. That's been the most meaningful part of all."

The Valles family story is equally compelling. After being laid off while recovering from illness, Juan Valles started their company with a single truck – a 1988 Dodge pickup – and a loan from a family member. They rented equipment, took small jobs, and slowly built their reputation as stream restoration and maintenance specialists.

The District's support was life changing. "We started with nothing," Juan said. "Just one truck, knocking on doors and chasing small jobs on Craig's List. But the District gave us a chance. Now we have 18 workers in the summer and our own equipment. Everything we have is because of the work we've done with the District," Juan said. "It's a family business now. My kids are taking over."

From Vision to Reality

For Jesse Clark, co-founder of Stream Landscape Architecture+Planning (Stream), the journey to start his own firm was shaped by a mix of personal conviction and professional friction. After years working in landscape architecture, Jesse realized he wanted to focus on infrastructure – especially stormwater, drainage, and landform. He knew if he continued working for someone else, he may not get to choose that path. "I rarely go after a park project that doesn't have some component where I can integrate stormwater," he said. "That kind of work just really gets me excited."

Jesse launched Stream in 2009 during a down economy, winning a spot on an on-call contract with Denver Parks and Recreation. "It wasn't guaranteed work, but it gave me a foothold," he said. His other early clients included Civitas and Muller Engineering Company (Muller), who supported his leap into entrepreneurship. "They were asking themselves why I hadn't already started my own thing."

Stream developed a relationship with the District that deepened over time through their work with Denver and as a subconsultant to Muller. A turning point came with the Tanglewood Creek project, where Jesse's

team helped shift the design from a hardened, boulder-lined channel to something more natural and resilient. "That was when the District started to see that a landscape architect could have a big influence on the outcome of a project," Jesse said.

Today, 98% of Stream's work is for public sector clients, and Jesse sees that as a strength. "The employees who are attracted to Stream want to do meaningful work for the people, not just an individual person," he said. "We make people's lives better. We give them better water, better air, better places to be. That's a really cool thing to do."

A Community of Practice

Mary Powell, who worked with the District for decades as an environmental consultant, described the ecosystem that has grown around the agency.

"There's almost a brotherhood," she said. "Dozens of companies, consultants, contractors, nurseries, seed suppliers – we all know each other. We've all grown together because of the District."

She added, "I wouldn't have the same warm fuzzies if my main client had been a commercial developer. The District cares about quality, about the environment, about doing things right. They don't just see the land as property to be bought and sold like a stock."

Jesse Clark echoed that sentiment. "The District has been the most transformational client for our business," he said. "It's not just about the work; it's about the culture. They value what we do and create an environment that empowers us to be successful."

That care extends to the way the District pays its contractors – promptly and reliably. Jerry Naranjo said, "That kind of consistency allowed us to grow while weathering volatility in other markets."

Meaning Beyond the Job

For these entrepreneurs and their teams, the work isn't just a job. It's a calling. They talk about the pride of seeing a project through from start to finish.

Matt Ursetta spoke fondly of the projects he worked on in Adams County. "The longevity of the relationships and the projects over time, especially projects that helped the community, were really fulfilling to me."

At Loewen Engineering, Daniel and Elysa have built a company where work and family life are deeply intertwined. "We love taking our kids to our projects," Elysa said. "Recently they got to test out a playground we helped build."

Mary Powell shared a story about a restoration and trail project along Cherry Creek that created a better connection from the neighborhood to a small coffee shop. "The coffee shop owner told me that after the project, people started walking and biking there. It totally changed his business. That's the kind of ripple effect our work can create."

And for Joe Cordova, the meaning is in the transformation. "We're not just cutting trees. We're creating access. We're restoring ecosystems. We're making places better."

That sense of purpose is shared across firms. Whether it's removing invasive species, restoring habitat, or building resilient infrastructure, these teams know their work matters and they take pride in doing it well.

A Model Worth Noticing

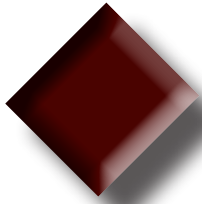
These stories aren't just feel-good anecdotes. They're a model. A model for how local government and small businesses, when they work together with trust and purpose, can unlock each other's potential – not just to build things, but to build lives, families, and communities.

The District didn't just help these businesses grow. It helped them matter.

And in return, these businesses have given the District something that can't be measured: loyalty, innovation, and a shared sense of mission.

As Joe Cordova put it, "We know we're stewards of public funding. We take that seriously. The work and the relationships, that's the reward."

News & Announcements



News

Check out the APWA Colorado Articles in the Colorado Public Works Journal!

APWA Colorado contributes to each issue of the Colorado Public Works Journal with timely topics. *APWA Insights* articles are written by public works professionals from across the state. [APWA Awards](#) were recognized in the Fall 2025 issue along with articles from APWA Colorado Chapter President, **John Burke**, City Engineer, City of Westminster, and the APWA Insights article was written by **Jay Goldie**, Deputy City Manager/Public Works Director, City of Cherry Hills Village and current Past President on the Colorado Chapter Board. You can view the [Fall 2025](#) issue as well as archived issues on their [website](#).

The Colorado Chapter would like to thank the **Colorado Public Works Journal** for putting together another great awards issue recognizing the APWA Colorado award winners. We appreciate the partnership and the opportunity to recognize the extraordinary projects, programs and individuals from around the state!

APWA Reporter

It's always exciting to see Colorado contributors/articles/recognitions in National's publication, APWA Reporter.

[August 2025](#)

National Awards

Asset Management, Town of Castle Rock

Denver Northwater Treatment Plant, Denver Water

"Navigating Changes in Federal Funding", **Kati Horner Gonzalez**, Katigon Consult, APWA Colorado Director

[September 2025](#)

Recognition of the following for receiving recertification:

Colin B. Martin, City of Lakewood, CPWP-S

Email Scams

Unfortunately, APWA and the Colorado Chapter can be targets of email scams. These emails are sent by scammers impersonating as APWA or Chapter Board members claiming to have an association with APWA, PWX, or the Colorado Chapter and asking for gift cards or claiming to have access to APWA National or Colorado membership or attendee lists. Please delete these emails and do not respond.

The Practitioner

Do you have information on an emerging topic of interest, project, or news that would be of interest to our members? All members are welcome to contribute to future newsletters. *The Practitioner* is published quarterly. The submission deadlines for the 2026 issues will be January 9, April 10, July 10 and October 9.

Otak Welcomes New Leadership

Otak is happy to announce Dan Kessler as its new director of architecture. Otak is delighted to have Dan as part of their leadership team. *(Courtesy of Otak press release issued July, 2025.)*

News & Announcements

Membership

New Members

As you may be aware, APWA switched to a new platform. As we have gone through the process, we haven't been able to access the information to recognize new members but are looking to start doing that again. We apologize to all those we may have missed over the last several months but we hope you know that you are valuable to us and we hope you are finding ways to connect with Colorado APWA. We also apologize if we are showing you as a new member but you have been a member previously. Hopefully this will be sorted out soon! If you have questions at any time, please contact Pamela Weimer, Chapter Administrator, at bdweimer@msn.com. We would like to welcome the following new members from the last quarter.

Tom Berger, Matrix Design Group
Jeremy Borchardt, Contech Engineered Solutions
Andrew Breyton, Turner Construction Company
Benjamin Brown, Vaisala, Inc.
Jerry Combs, City of Boulder
Justin Forman, Town of Basalt
Chris Gersbach, Beaver Creek Metro District
Andrew Gross, Grand County
Fernando Herrera, Town of Erie
Michael Hodyno, City of Arvada
Colby Hoefer, Tetra Tech IEW
Jennifer Holmquist, Vaisala, Inc.
Michelle Iblings, Drexel, Barrell & Co.
Karl Johnson, Town of Pagosa Springs
Tuomas Keranen, Vaisala, Inc.

Michael Koslow, City of Arvada
Jonna Lehto, Vaisala, Inc.
Eric Lewin, City of Arvada
Anastasia Manner, Vaisala, Inc.
Michael Martinez, Town of Minturn
Anant Naik, LS Gallegos
Daniel Paul, City of Craig
Juan Sanchez, Town of Avon
Michelle Sciortino, City of Littleton
John Sheldon, City of Sterling
Lindsey Sherwood, J-U-B Engineers, Inc.
Sara Siggue, City of Aurora
Mike Smith, Park County
Luis Tapia, Town of Avon
Howie Youngman, City of Fort Collins

Interested in Membership?

When you join APWA, you join a network of professionals dedicated to excellence in all aspects of public works. Discover the many benefits of APWA membership and options for joining by visiting the Membership page of National APWA's [website](#).

APWA Colorado
Winter issue

Watch for these articles!

2025 APWA Colorado Awards issue

2026 Avalanche Night

Call for Papers for 2026 Annual Chapter Conference

American Public Works Association
Colorado Chapter
Pamela Weimer, Chapter Administrator
6540 South Tabor Street
Littleton, Colorado 80127

Did you know that much of the
information contained in this newsletter
is also available on the Web? Go to the
APWA Colorado Chapter website at
<https://colorado.apwa.org/>



APWA Toll Free Membership Hotline
1-800-848-APWA

2025 Colorado Chapter APWA Executive Committee and Chapter Board of Directors

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President: John Burke
City of Westminster
4800 West 92nd Avenue, Westminster, CO 80031
Phone: 303.658.2021
Email: jburke@westminsterco.gov

President-Elect: Chuck Weiss
E-470 Public Highway Authority
22470 E. Stephen D. Hogan Pkwy., Suite 110, Aurora, CO 80018
Phone: 303.810.6007
Email: cweiss@e-470.com

Treasurer: Travis Greiman
Benesch
7979 E. Tufts Avenue, Ste. 800, Denver, CO 80237
Phone: 303.754.3458
Email: tgreiman@benesch.com

Secretary: Matt Knight
City of Littleton
2305 W. Berry Avenue, Littleton, CO 80120
Phone: 303.795.3784
Email: mknight@littletonco.gov

Past President: Jay Goldie
City of Cherry Hills Village
2450 E. Quincy Avenue, Cherry Hills Village, CO 80113
Phone: 303.783.2731
Email: jgoldie@cherryhillsvillage.com

Chapter Delegate: Pete Adler
Adler Consulting LLC
Phone: 303.349.3394
Email: rockies325@gmail.com

Alternate Delegate: Renée Railsback
D2C Architects
1212 S. Broadway #250, Denver, CO 80210
Phone: 303.952.4802 x816
Email: rrailsback@d2carchitects.com

AT LARGE DIRECTORS

Anne Beierle
City of Golden
1445 10th Street, Golden, CO 80401
Phone: 303.384.8153
Email: abeierle@cityofgolden.net

Kristin Brownson
Town of Breckenridge
1095 Airport Road, Breckenridge, CO 80424
Phone: 970.547.3179
Email: kristinb@townofbreckenridge.com

Kati Horner Gonzalez
Katigon Consult
Phone: 816.715.0324
Email: kati@katigon.com

Jacob James
City of Lone Tree
9220 Kimmer Drive, Lone Tree, CO 80124
Phone: 720.509.1240
Email: jacob.james@cityoflonetree.com

Shawn Poe
WSB Engineering
Phone: 214.773.6767
Email: shawn.poe@wsbeng.com

Scott Schlect
City of Littleton
Littleton, CO
Phone: 303.413.7179
Email: sschlecht@littletonco.gov

Matthew Matuszewski, Emerging Professionals Director
City of Littleton
2255 W. Berry Avenue, Littleton, CO 80120
Phone: 303.795.3871
Email: mmatuszewski@littletonco.gov

WEST SLOPE BRANCH

West Slope Chair: Brandon Wallace
Montrose County
Phone: 970.209.8329
Email: bwallace@montrosecounty.net

Chair-Elect: Martin Schmidt
Gunnison County
Phone: 970.641.0044
Email: mschmidt@gunnisoncounty.org

Secretary: Jim Hatheway
Stantec
Email: jhatheway97@gmail.com

Treasurer: Kirsten Armbruster
City of Grand Junction
Email: kirstena@gjcity.org

West Slope Past Chair: Scott Mattice
Pitkin County
Email: scott.mattice@pitkincounty.com

West Slope Branch Directors
West Slope Director At-Large: Susie Hervert, shervert@vailgov.com
Joe Lucero, Gunnison County, jlucero@gunnisoncounty.org
Curtis Milton, Montrose County, cmilton@montrosecounty.net

CHAPTER ADMINISTRATOR

Pamela Weimer
APWA Colorado Chapter
6540 S. Tabor Street, Littleton, CO 80127
Phone: 303.979.2190
Email: bdweimer@msn.com