



**36th Annual WateReuse Symposium**  
Annual Business Meeting

**Vision for the Future**

Remarks by Gilbert Trejo, President, WateReuse Association  
March 22, 2021

I am truly in awe of how much we've been able to accomplish with the hard work of a small staff and dedicated volunteer leaders. There are so many opportunities to advance water recycling and our association has been there to engage, educate, and advocate every step of the way.

Our successes do not happen by accident. It takes planning, resources, and most important – member engagement.

In 2019, the Board of Directors met for several days in Tampa, Florida to reach a consensus on a future vision for an evolved WateReuse Association. When we met two years ago this month, it was a pivotal time for the Association. After separating from the former WateReuse Research Foundation in 2016 and hiring a new Executive Director in 2017, it was important that we come through that period of transition with clarity of purpose, a vision for the future, and a strategy to ensure success.

Under the Board's leadership and with section input, we developed a strategy to become a fully resourced and independent organization.

As Pat noted in her remarks, our strategy is working. We have witnessed incredible momentum over the past two years for water recycling and the work of the Association. WateReuse is becoming the go-to organization on water reuse policy for federal and state agencies and within the water sector. We are advancing our key legislative priorities on Capitol Hill, and are playing a key leadership role in the development and implementation of the national Water Reuse Action Plan.

In addition to advancing policies that help our members plan and operate successful water recycling programs, we are working hard to provide more communications tools and technical education opportunities than ever before to keep our members at the forefront of innovation.

And you, our members, are an essential component of the momentum that we are building. Those of you who, like me, care passionately about water recycling and who are able to engage with the Association are key to our success. Thank you for sharing your knowledge, presenting at conferences

and on webcasts, writing letters to your elected leaders, and being an ambassador for water reuse wherever you go.

Last year, we had nearly 350 individuals from our membership volunteer in some way to support the work we do. That's truly amazing. And that is why I'm pleased to tell you that the Board has established more engagement opportunities to provide a forum for members to advance progress in several high-priority areas, including industrial water reuse, decentralized water recycling systems, and international engagement. Please stay tuned for announcements on how you can become involved in these new standing committees.

As exciting as our momentum is, I am even more thrilled about the opportunities that exist for us to have an even greater impact in advancing water reuse as a key tool in water resources management everywhere. Once seen as solely an irrigation tool in arid regions, the diversity of applications and drivers for water recycling has grown astronomically. Yes, we still use this water for irrigation. But we also use it to drink, to restore the environment, to keep businesses operating, to solve water quality issues, and to help communities and businesses become more resilient in the face of a changing climate.

In response to this evolving landscape, WateReuse has worked to become a truly "big tent" organization. Some of our newest members are from places like South Carolina and New York City. We also have members that operate decentralized water recycling systems and use recycled water for their business operations.

Our growing tent gives us more power in Washington, D.C. As we seek to advance policy and funding to support water recycling, we are able to engage with congressional representatives from more regions.

Our longest serving members are pioneering utilities that operate centralized water recycling systems in specific regions of the country. They bring important lessons learned and strategies for success to share with members newer to water recycling.

Although we recognize that there are common values and common themes shared by all of us interested in water reuse – in many ways, the WateReuse Association is a grassroots organization that seeks to weave us all together under the belief that water recycling is often a more sustainable and reliable approach to water resource management. There are diverse water management challenges that confront different regions and there isn't a one-size-fits-all approach to water reuse.

Our strategy for growth includes growing and supporting our State Sections to increase local engagement opportunities for members. To see how effective a mature State Section can be, we only need to look to California – the home of our founding and largest state section. WateReuse California

has been incredibly effective in advancing water recycling in California due to the support of our California members.

It's amazing that WateReuse has been able to keep up this momentum even through the pandemic of the past year. To accommodate the challenges the pandemic imposed on our members, the Board made the decision to forego any increase in member dues and asked our staff to forego salary increases. The Board felt these were prudent decisions, and our staff remained committed to the work of the Association.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, however, the opportunities to advance water recycling have not gone away. They have only increased. And we are continuing our strategy to develop a fully resourced and independent association and a successful future.

While the level of volunteer leadership in this organization is both abundant and critical, volunteers like myself have other jobs that we do as well. In line with our strategic plan, the Board of Directors has authorized the hiring of additional staff in 2021 to support the development of new technical tools and programming and to support the growth of state sections.

The Board recognizes that we can only do this work with the support of our members. We are working hard to set the stage for a fully mature association that can take advantage of every opportunity to engage, educate and advocate on water recycling. Our common vision for water recycling to become a readily available tool to manage water resources everywhere is one that I believe we can achieve if we remain committed to the work of our Association.

The WateReuse Association just celebrated 30 years of solid work, and I know that with your support, the next 30 years will be even more successful. Thank you for your commitment to the WateReuse Association, and I hope you enjoy the remaining week of Symposium roundtable discussions.

This concludes our business meeting.