

The Possibilities of Water Explored at EWTS

By Kerry Stackpole, FASAE, CAE, PMI CEO/Executive Director



Kerry Stackpole

Can you imagine a more inspiring location to talk about water than the arid climes of a desert? Drawn by an average of 330 days of sunshine annually, people have flocked to the desert called greater Phoenix, Arizona, in droves. Having had a population of slightly more than 1 million in 1973, Phoenix is on the verge of hitting 5 million residents in the next five years. But what about water you might ask. Isn't Arizona part of the southwestern drought belt? Spoiler alert: yes, it is.

Like many places on the planet, Arizona uses most of its water – 72% – for agriculture. About 22% is used for residential purposes with another 6% going for industrial purposes. Most water users in the state are under mandatory water conservation requirements 365 days a year. In 1980, Arizona was using almost 10.5 million acre feet of water to support its 2.7 million residents. Twenty years later, Arizona uses about 7 million acre feet to support 7.3 million residents.

And so, water experts, innovators and entrepreneurs from around the globe convened in Scottsdale, Arizona, for the biennial Emerging Water Technology Symposium (EWTS), a two-day forum co-convened by Plumbing Manufacturers International, the American Society of Plumbing Engineers, and IAPMO. To set the stage, we heard from **Sarah Porter**, director of the Kyl Center for Water Policy at Arizona State University, on the principles behind sound water stewardship and the Arizona Water Blueprint. More than 30 presenters shared their insights and experience on everything from rain-water catchment to geothermal solutions for clean heating and cooling technology.

Participants had the opportunity to query **Natascha Milesi-Ferretti** on the extraordinary premise plumbing research being conducted by the National Institute of Science and Technology. They engaged with **Jonah Schein**, national program manager for homes and buildings at the Environmental Protection Agency's WaterSense Program. You also couldn't help but be inspired by the young women compris-

ing the Desert Wave Team. These rising stars showcased their underwater robotics technology as part of the Women in Autonomous Vehicle Engineering Program created in partnership with the Si Se Puede Foundation and Arizona State University. Desert Wave provides a supportive and engaging environment in which female engineering students can come together to grow and accomplish amazing things.

A few years back at the PMI Manufacturing Success Conference, a presenter noted he no longer used the term wastewater because we have no water to waste. That sentiment came through in presentations from several water reuse experts who have taken up the cause for net-zero water use, landscape innovation, stormwater capture, and eco-sanitation solutions. Ideas came from presenters in distant spots including New Zealand and Canada, countries that have their own unique water challenges.

It's not hyperbole to say the world needs our collective leadership, shared ideas, and best innovative solutions to assure the ever-growing demand for clean, fresh drinking water and safe, responsible plumbing. In 1974, we were sharing clean, fresh drinking water with about 4 billion other people on the planet. Today, with about 8.1 billion people on planet Earth, we still have the same amount of drinking water as when dinosaurs roamed the earth.

This year, PMI celebrates its 70th anniversary. From our humble beginnings in 1954 as the Plumbing Brass Institute, we surely want to celebrate our history, but more importantly, we want to learn – to carry away the lessons that will help prepare our industry and its people for decades to come.

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John Lauer Takes Pride in PMI's Cooperative Approach

By Judy Wohlt, PMI Communications Team, Valek and Co.



John Lauer

In recognition of Plumbing Manufacturers International's 70th anniversary, **John Lauer** looked back at his time as PMI Board of Directors president in 2005 – grate-

ful for the valuable actions PMI took to support and safeguard its members. He recalled being proud of how PMI collaborated with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to support development of the WaterSense program and how PMI advocated for global fair-trade practices and educated legislators on lead in plumbing.

He worked with the board to adopt a new mission statement that summarized PMI's ideals of representing members' interests – promoting safe water and plumbing, offering educational and networking opportunities, and growing the industry. During John's tenure, the association also expanded stand-alone forums and workshops to focus on the prominent issues of lead, water efficiency, and international business dealings, he added.

"I've always believed that PMI is an important organization for the industry. It offers great networking and a good place where plumbing manufacturers can come together for the common good of the industry," Lauer said. He described membership in PMI as an investment in both the present and future.

Building regulatory and industry alliances

PMI became a vital industry watchdog for precarious regulatory initiatives and teamed up with like-minded organizations to share information, he said. PMI continued expanding stand-alone sessions on broader industry issues, such as working more successfully with interna-

tional companies and organizations.

Proposed legislation on lead in plumbing became a major focus for PMI. At the time, the Jeffords bill aimed to clean up lead contamination in the nation's drinking water, a goal which PMI supported. However, the original language in the bill would have required significant and expensive changes to many members' products and processes; these revisions would have resulted in little or no benefit to the public, Lauer said. PMI and its members played a key role in the Senate debate on lead in plumbing products. By educating legislators early in the process, the association helped successfully oppose the original legislation, he noted.

To help members stay on top of the lead issue, PMI's spring meeting in 2005 featured a series of presentations from the EPA, American Water Works Association, and NSF. For the first time at a conference, members brainstormed in a strategic summit meeting to determine PMI's next step on the lead issue, Lauer added. The PMI Lead in Plumbing Working Group continued the discussion of lead testing, research, and lead-replacement alloys, he said.

Lauer also sought to broaden PMI's global focus, as world trade accelerated. The association signed a memorandum of understanding with the Bathroom Manufacturers Association in the United Kingdom, enabling the two organizations to easily exchange technical, regulatory and economic information.

"Our continued involvement with CEIR (European Valve Association), as well as working with the U.S. Department of Commerce provided additional resources to help us stay abreast of world trade issues," Lauer said.



Water efficiency was another PMI priority at the time. Lauer joined PMI staff, members and others to build alliances with the EPA, meeting with officials on Capitol Hill to encourage one set of harmonized standards for flow and flush rates. Those efforts helped launch the EPA WaterSense program in 2006, he said.

Working for the greater good

PMI works for the greater good – whether harmonizing codes, ensuring fair trade practices, stopping potentially damaging legislation, or setting the record straight when misleading claims are made, Lauer said. "That was true then and it's true now," he added.

He praised the PMI staff for their support. Lauer gives credit to **Barbara Higgins**, former PMI executive director, for helping transform PMI into a more proactive, professional organization. In addition, "**Dave Viola**, PMI's technical director at the time, elevated the association's leadership position as a regulatory and standards-focused organization," he said.

Celebrate 70 Years During PMI24

PMI is planning to celebrate 70 years of safe, responsible plumbing — always — at the PMI24 Manufacturing Success Conference, Nov. 4-7 in Atlanta. Make plans to attend!



CEO Thinking Forum To Explore Customer-Centric Strategies

By Judy Wohlt, PMI Communications Team, Valek and Co.

This year's Plumbing Manufacturers International CEO Thinking Forum will deliver insights on how to create an exceptional customer experience with strategies from a prominent and proven business leader.

Lior Arussy will guide participants through an exciting day of discussions, case studies, and content focused on "Customer Centricity as a Growth Strategy."

"Leaders will be challenged in ways they've never thought about," he said. "We'll have a very honest and candid conversation around what works and what may not work."

The forum, to be held at the stylish Viceroy hotel in Chicago on Sept. 18-19, will explore how PMI member executives can place their most important resource – employees – at the center of product development and customer experience efforts.

Choose inspiration over desperation

There are two ways to win business – desperation or inspiration, Arussy said. Those who inspire their customers craft a memorable experience that leads to profitable, lasting relationships.

"Every company has one story that someone saved the day for the customer. But your service is either consistently exceptional or it's not," he said.

The forum will provide valuable insights and practical approaches that PMI member leaders can take back to their companies. Each participant will define a customer experience strategy that drives growth, develop a sales strategy to deliver an exceptional customer experience at every milestone, and align their talent to deliver exceptional value to customers.

"Executives should care about Susan in accounting because she's the one



in charge of your strategy execution," Arussy said. "The underlying point is that an organization is the sum of its employees' decisions, not the executives' decisions. Employees decide if an email, a call, or a meeting will be exceptional. If not, they will default to mediocrity – and that's how strategies die," Arussy said.

Create extraordinary service every time – with every customer

Arussy will share content on the major trends changing customers – particularly generative AI, the ground rules to design an inspiring value proposition/customer experience, and how to align your organization around executing that value proposition – every time and with every customer.

Participants will discover the principles of exceptional customer experience, the definition of success from the customer's perspective – hint: it's not implementation, and the most important criteria of the purchasing department – if you think it's offering discounts, think again, Arussy said.

"It's not product centricity or designing a better faucet, either. It's about the whole journey of everyone in the organization delivering to customer expectations and beyond," he added.

A special interactive event will shed light on each participant's unique buying experience, followed by a discussion on the critical components behind inspiring a dynamic customer experience. "I want everyone to connect to their inner customer and discover that if you do customer experience right, it's a strategy for growth," Arussy said.

PMI member leaders will get tips about how to engage their customers, along with 10 lessons from organization transformation. Arussy encourages everyone to bring their questions to participate in a lively Q&A session.

Learn from an accomplished leader

Arussy has a proven track record of helping many of the world's top brands achieve impressive goals in customer satisfaction, growth and profitability. He will share case studies of companies that have applied his strategies and found success.

Arussy has been involved in more than 400 corporate transformations in a variety of industries that helped maximize revenue and customer retention. For example, his approach enabled Mercedes-Benz to become number one in customer satisfaction, as recognized in the Wall Street Journal bestseller "Driven to Delight." Another client, a European logistics corporation, drove its annual organic growth from 3% to 44% in two years. He has also worked with Delta Airlines, FedEx, Johnson & Johnson, MasterCard, Royal Caribbean Cruises, BMW, Walmart, Pizza Hut, Sam's Club, and more.

He regularly writes for Chief Executive and Fast Company and has authored seven books including "Next is Now: 5 Steps for Embracing Change – Building a Business that Thrives into the Future," "Exceptionalize It!" and "Customer Experience Strategy." Arussy founded the Strativity Group, a strategy firm specializing in customer experience design, business transformation, employee engagement programs, journey mapping, and business growth.

Learn more about the PMI CEO Thinking Forum and register at safepumbing.org/ceotf.

PMI24: Hear Dynamic Speakers, Explore Vibrant Atlanta

By Judy Wohlt, PMI Communications Team, Valek and Co.

Where can Plumbing Manufacturers International members learn from enlightening speakers, enjoy fun industry networking, and plan an exciting adventure? At the Nov. 4-7 PMI24 Manufacturing Success Conference in Atlanta, of course.

Don't miss the keynote presentation by elite mixed martial arts fighter turned global humanitarian **Justin Wren** or the PMI24 Women's Breakfast featuring **DeRetta Cole Rhodes**, Ph.D., executive vice president and chief culture officer of the Atlanta Braves. Attendees can extend their stay to explore Atlanta's beautiful outdoor spaces, eclectic restaurants, vibrant art and music scene, rich history, and more.

Enjoy luxury and southern sophistication at the InterContinental Hotel Buckhead, where PMI24 participants will stay in stylish guest rooms and can indulge in onsite spa services, work out in a state-of-the-art fitness center, and take a dip in the heated saltwater outdoor pool. Dine in the hotel's renowned restaurant theAmericano, led by celebrity chef **Scott Conant**, to experience culinary excellence at Atlanta's first Italian steakhouse.

Overcoming adversity to advocate for indigenous people

Wren will share with PMI24 attendees his remarkable story and recommend tools and techniques for navigating adversity, finding purpose, and making a meaningful impact in business and life.

After achieving success in his MMA career and overcoming injuries and an attempted suicide, Wren has dedicated his life to making a positive impact. He founded Fight for the Forgotten to focus on providing clean water, education and empowerment to Pygmy communities in

Africa. He advocates for indigenous rights and is a powerful voice for marginalized communities.

One of his organization's current projects involves developing a self-sustaining community hub that provides quality health care, education, employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for the displaced Batwa and surrounding tribal communities. Fight for the Forgotten will offer comprehensive training in community transformation, peacebuilding, stewardship, compassionate leadership, and empowerment for women and children, according to the organization's website.

Known as "the Big Pygmy" – the name his tribal family in the Congo gave him – Wren has helped drill wells and teach others in the Pygmy communities how to get access to life-saving clean water, reported an Oklahoma News 9 story. He also wrote the book, "Fight for the Forgotten: How a Mixed Martial Artist Stopped Fighting for Himself and Started Fighting for Others."

Persevering after being told 'You'll never have a leadership role'

At the PMI24 Women's Breakfast, Dr. Rhodes will focus on the importance of finding a personal voice as a female



leader. She oversees communications and community affairs for the Braves and the team's spring training facility operations, as well as the The Battery Atlanta shopping mall adjacent to Truist Park, where the Braves play.

Dr. Rhodes has left a lasting impact in her short time with the Braves, expanding the organization's culture with training programs and employee resource groups and creating an internal diversity, equity and inclusion council, reported the Braves website. She also managed the organizational changes that became necessary because of the pandemic.

She shares her experiences and challenges, giving career advice and tips to women and others. "I had a leader that told me that I would never have a leadership role," Dr. Rhodes said in an X post. She decided to earn her MBA because not only is education important, so is trying to persevere – a lesson her parents taught her, she explained in a video. When working for another organization, Dr. Rhodes found a supportive leader who told her, "You have a voice. You're not invisible and I need for you to be bold," she added.





Check out things to see, do and hear

Atlanta offers delightful experiences around every corner – whether you enjoy world-class dining, high-end shopping, treks through scenic parks and gardens, live entertainment, or eclectic art.

Foodies can feed their epicurean tastes at well-known Buckhead and nearby eateries. Inspired by partnerships with local farms, Atlas’ Michelin Star culinary director uses seasonal produce to create innovative American cuisine. Anyone craving upscale Thai can visit Chai Yo for award-winning cuisine and craft cocktails. Or, visit some of Atlanta’s iconic restaurants – Bones for its legendary steak, seafood and service; Busy

Bee Café to enjoy southern specialties, such as fried chicken voted the best in Atlanta; and Mary Mac’s Tea Room, one of Atlanta’s oldest restaurants.

The Buckhead neighborhood is home to the High Museum of Art and the Atlanta Botanical Garden – ranked as one of the 10 best botanical gardens in the



country by USA Today. The new LEGO Discovery Center Atlanta is nearby and offers immersive new experiences and family learning-through-play activities. A world of aquatic wonder waits at the Georgia Aquarium, one of the world’s



largest aquariums, located in the heart of the city.

Those looking to improve their golf game can play nine holes at the Bobby Jones Golf Course, an historic course that offers scenic views, or 18 holes at the Chastain Park Golf Course, set within Atlanta’s largest park and offering both leisure and challenge.

Exhibits within the King Historic District explore the life and legacy of celebrated civil rights leader **Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.**

Known for its live music scene, Atlanta offers something for everyone whether you enjoy hip-hop, rock or indie tunes. Head to Atlanta’s oldest blues club, Blind Willie’s Blues Club, for some raw, soulful music or Eddie’s Attic in Decatur, known for launching singer-songwriters to stardom, to hear original, live music from independent artists.



PMI Weighs in on EPA's Toilet and Faucet Specs

By Judy Wohlt, PMI Communications Team, Valek and Co.

The Environmental Protection Agency has changed specifications that affect the certification status of dual-flush toilets and is also considering the addition of other types of faucets to the WaterSense labeling program. Plumbing Manufacturers International and its members have been weighing in with comments and suggested transition timelines.

In May, the EPA published version 2.0 of the WaterSense Specification for Tank-Type Toilets, listing revisions that affect the certification status of dual-flush toilets with a full-flush volume over 1.28 gallons per flush (gpf) only. The revisions do not affect the certification status of single-flush toilets or dual-flush toilets that have a full-flush volume less than or equal to 1.28 gpf. Products that do not meet the version 2.0 criteria will no longer be eligible to carry the WaterSense label but will still be available for sale because they meet the federal water-efficiency standard.

“PMI supports the revision from 1.28 gpf effective flush volume to a flat flush rate of 1.28 gpf for both single- and dual-flush toilets because it standardizes the requirements for these products,” said PMI Technical Director **Kyle Thompson**.

PMI worked with members that manufacture tank-type water closets and flush valves for tank-type toilets to negotiate with the EPA on a transition timeline and reached an agreement in May. Plumbing manufacturers need time to adjust production, update labels, test, and certify new products to align with the updated specification. EPA proposed a 12-month period between the publishing date of version 2.0 and the EPA discontinued date; instead, PMI suggested a 24-month period. “We compromised on a little over an 18-month period,” Thompson added.

The EPA established a new specification effective date of July 1, 2025. On

Dec. 31, 2025, all dual-flush models not meeting the revised criteria will be delisted and removed from the WaterSense Product Search. In addition, the timeline states that between July 1 and Oct. 1, 2025, certifying bodies will have a transition period to remove ineligible products from their certification listings and submit updated product notification templates.

PMI anticipates that the EPA will publish version 2.0 of the WaterSense Specification for Tank-Type Toilets on its website soon. Draft versions of the specifications and a summary of revisions can be found on the EPA website. (epa.gov/watersense/residential-toilets#transition).

Raising concerns on adding new faucet categories

In March, the EPA issued a notice of intent (NOI) to consider a revision of the high-efficiency lavatory faucet specification to allow other types of faucets to earn the WaterSense label. PMI submitted comprehensive feedback, noting some concerns and solutions, to the EPA at the end of May.

The EPA may expand the scope of the existing specification or develop new specifications for kitchen faucets, public lavatory faucets, and metering faucets, and add bar sink faucets. If the new faucet categories are added to the specifications, the EPA plans to establish clear definitions and criteria for each category, the NOI stated.

PMI gathered comments from Advocacy/Government Affairs and Technical Committee members, who addressed technical, performance and safety aspects of the potential changes. The association appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the NOI, Thompson noted. “However, we strongly encourage the EPA to incorporate definitions and criteria by working through the applicable product stan-



dards committees before making any additional changes to the specification or adding new categories of products,” PMI’s comments stated. “PMI is open to meeting with the EPA to discuss our concerns and determine a path forward.” The EPA has had past success in partnering with product standards committees to develop definitions, such as recently incorporating a definition for a rain shower, PMI’s comments noted.

For several reasons, PMI stated that it does not support the EPA’s development of a specification for public lavatory faucets or its efforts to translate the metering faucet maximum flow rate from gallons per cycle (gpc) to gallons per minute (gpm). PMI’s detailed rationale noted that the proposed definition for “public lavatory faucet” is different from the definition in the product standard. In addition, the product standard does not currently define “metering faucet.”

PMI encourages the EPA to work with the ASME A112/CSA B125 product standards committee to develop performance requirements for kitchen faucets in the applicable product standard before revising the WaterSense specification.

PMI members can view details about proposed revisions to WaterSense specifications in Tech Talk reports on the PMI website (safeplumbing.org/members/technical/tech-talk-reports) and can learn more by attending Tech Talk and Advocacy/Government Affairs calls.

Including Non-Sewer Sanitation Systems in IPC Proposed

By Judy Wohlt, PMI Communications Team, Valek and Co.

A proposal to include non-sewer sanitation systems (NSSS) in the 2024 International Plumbing Code (IPC) is another major step for plumbing manufacturers and others to develop water-efficient alternatives to traditional toilets and sewer systems.

Non-sewer sanitation systems are stand-alone integrated sewage treatment units not connected to a public sewer or private sewage disposal system. The IPC proposal outlines the necessary groundwork for code officials to inspect and approve the installation of these systems within buildings.

NSSSs can help meet critical public health needs in areas with limited water and wastewater infrastructure, water supply constraints, or unfavorable soil for traditional on-site disposal methods, the proposal noted. In the United States, more than 20% of the population relies on an onsite wastewater system.

“These systems are an interesting development because they’re practical and a good fit for places that need sanitation but don’t have access to sewers,” said PMI Technical Director **Kyle Thompson**. “The technology has been proven but still needs to be commercially developed.”

Text will be added to the IPC saying that non-sewered sanitation systems will comply with ANSI/CAN/IAPMO/ISO 30500. PMI member IAPMO published the ANSI/CAN/IAPMO/ISO 30500 standard in 2019 as a national adoption standard for the U.S. and Canada for non-sewered sanitation systems. The standard specifies general safety and performance requirements for the design and testing of NSSSs. The 2024 Uniform Plumbing Code published by IAPMO will also include NSSSs in the new Appendix O.

‘Reinvented toilets’ getting closer to commercialization

Non-sewered sanitation systems, such as “reinvented toilets” that meet the 30500 standard, are getting closer to being commercialized. Manufacturers, including PMI member LIXIL, have been working to cultivate compliant systems for domestic and international installations, according to the 2024 IPC proposal.

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has been looking for ways to develop sustainable sanitation solutions and sees public-private partnerships as a vital solution. In 2011, the foundation launched the “Reinvent the Toilet Challenge” to support developing and commercial-

izing new products and technologies that remove harmful pathogens from human waste and recover valuable resources such as energy, clean water and nutrients, the foundation’s website said.

LIXIL announced in March that it was named the first commercial license partner for Georgia Tech’s Generation 2 Reinvented Toilet (G2RT) Consortium’s technologies. The G2RT program, with a global research team of 95 engineers, scientists and industrial designers, was charged with transforming traditional, infrastructure-dependent toilets into an appliance, reported a LIXIL news release. LIXIL’s commercial license adheres to a four-year partnership with Georgia Tech and ongoing collaboration with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the release stated.

Georgia Tech describes the G2RT as an “innovative human waste cleaning technology that neutralizes waste at the source, killing pathogens and turning feces into harmless, odorless ash.” Designed to operate independently of traditional infrastructure, the G2RT doesn’t require a water supply or connection to a sewage system – just a cup of water to get going. The processing technology prevents the contamination of water systems, thereby reducing the spread of diseases caused by fecal contamination and waterborne pathogens, LIXIL reported.

“While much is still unknown about the cost, maintenance and reliability of NSSSs, or even the business model for their installation and servicing, forward-looking communities and jurisdictions with acute sanitation needs or water supply constraints will want to be prepared for the safe installation and use of this promising new technology as it enters the market,” stated the IPC proposal.



Nominate Co-Worker for Paul Patton Award

The recipient of the annual Paul Patton PMI Manufacturing Success Conference Award receives complimentary registration to the PMI24 conference, including the PMI Inspiring Leaders Program and PMI Meeting of the Membership. Nominate a co-worker for the award, which recognizes an employee of a PMI member company who shows outstanding potential for a career in plumbing manufacturing. Nominees must show career potential and possess outstanding characteristics relating to leadership, community service, teamwork, or other personal qualities.



Fill out this nominating form (tinyurl.com/2zsb78ya) and email to **Jodi Stuhrberg** at jstuhrberg@safep plumbing.org. Nominations will be evaluated this summer, and the recipient will be recognized at the annual PMI Meeting of the Membership. Paul Patton was a former president of the PMI Board of Directors who had a special interest in developing the talents of industry newcomers. The recipient of the inaugural 2023 award was **Denise Dougherty** of Sloan.

2024 PMI LEADERSHIP

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The Possibilities of Water (Contd.)

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There are lessons to be learned from our history that are relevant to you. Probably the most vital, obvious and underestimated lesson is this:

You must keep moving into the future.

It is easy to stick with things that have made you successful – a winning product, a great legislative or regulatory achievement, a breakthrough invention, or perhaps a strong business model.

It's even easier to stick with what's made you successful as a professional – what got you to where you are. Yet, as author and executive coach **Marshall Goldsmith** reminds us, what got you here won't get you there. One of the core responsibilities of self-leadership is to understand when it's time to change – within your organization or within yourself – or perhaps both.

And it's equally important to understand what not to change... what truly must endure.

The flow of information and opportunities for change are flourishing at greater velocity and with greater unpredictability than ever. Whether you lead a business sector, a department, a lab, or a government agency, there is tremendous pressure to deliver short-term results and quick fixes. In our line of work, those quick fixes can create immense danger and extremely harmful unintended consequences like those occurring in Jackson, Mississippi; Houston, Texas; Baltimore, Maryland; or Flint, Michigan. While the sources of the crises may differ, the outcomes – loss of potable drinking water – are the same.

EWTS 2024 provoked us to think deeply about the forces of change impacting our environment, illuminated essential solutions, and undoubtedly caused many of us to rethink water itself. It also reminds us, there's nothing we cannot achieve when we work together.