

DECENTRALIZED APPROACHES TO WATER AND WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT

MARCH 12TH, 2024 - MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA

BREAKOUT TRACK AT THE ALABAMA RURAL WATER ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE

The Water Finance Exchange (WFX) and the Consortium for Alabama Rural Water and Wastewater Management (CARWW) are partnering with the Alabama Rural Water Association (ARWA) to host a one-day breakout track on decentralized approaches to water and wastewater infrastructure, including more cost-effective management options, at the ARWA Technical Training Conference on March 12th, in Montgomery, Alabama.

WFX and CARWW are offering free one-day registration to the Alabama Rural Water Association conference for invited participants who attend the Decentralized Breakout Track.

Registration Instructions

- [Click here](#) to go to the WFX registration page.
- In the dropdown menu labeled “Workshop”, select “**Alabama Rural Water Conference - March 12, 2024**”
- Fill in the remaining information on the page
- Click “Send”
- We will contact you with further information and updates as the event gets closer

This dedicated training track is specially designed to tackle the significant issue of appropriate wastewater treatment access in rural regions and small communities, like the Alabama Black Belt region, as well as the long-term financial sustainability of small, rural utilities. With a focus on decentralized solutions and cost-effectiveness, from technologies to management and policy, this series of sessions will bring forward innovative, practical information and strategies to address the region’s unique challenges.

Attendees will gain insights into the latest technologies, sustainable practices, and policy developments tailored to improve wastewater management in rural and underserved areas. The track will feature experts in decentralized systems, management, environmental engineering, and public health, offering a multidisciplinary approach to developing cost-effective and long-lasting solutions for the Black Belt region and other parts of the state. This training is essential for local government officials, utility managers, environmental professionals, community leaders, and anyone committed to enhancing wastewater services in Alabama’s rural communities.

You can find a description of the sessions in the Decentralized Track on the next two pages. To see the full agenda and other details about the entire conference, visit the ARWA webpage [here](#).

You do not need to register via the official event website. Instead, register via the WFX [registration link here](#) so we can be sure to secure your free one-day registration.

What

Free, one-day registration to the Alabama Rural Water Association Conference to attend the Decentralized Breakout Track.

When

Tuesday, March 12th, 2024
8:00 am - 5:00 pm

Where

Renaissance Montgomery
Convention Center
201 Tallapoosa Street
Montgomery, Alabama 36104

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Session Descriptions

Session 1: A Wastewater Plan for Rural Alabama

8:00 - 8:45 am

Alabama's rural Black Belt is known nationally for a high incidence of straight-piping, where wastewater is discharged at the ground surface near residential properties, resulting in public health and environmental impacts. Soils in the Black Belt are incompatible with traditional septic systems, and the relatively low levels of income across the region limit affordable solutions. This session will review why traditional wastewater systems have not worked in the Black Belt, the public health implications of straight piping, and present a path forward for the Black Belt region and other rural areas of the state.

Featured Speakers:

- Kevin White, Consortium for Alabama Rural Water and Wastewater Management
- Amy Hutson Chatham, University of Alabama-Birmingham

Session 2: Success Stories in Collaborative Water and Wastewater Management

8:45 - 10:00 am

Collaboration in water and wastewater management can take many forms. In some cases, interconnection and consolidation is appropriate, but in other cases, collaboration can simply mean sharing services and equipment, purchasing water, bundling engineering services, or addressing workforce challenges by having one water operator serve more than one system. This session will review the different types of collaborative approaches and how to identify which approach may be appropriate in different situations.

The session will also review collaborative and regional approaches to water and wastewater management that have been successful throughout the country. That success has come in the form of reducing costs for users, mitigating financial distress, and addressing noncompliance issues.

Featured Speakers:

- Tad Bohannon, Association of Regional Water Organizations
- Lupita Ortega, Communities Unlimited
- Chase Glisson, Jackson County Utility Authority

Session 3: Barriers and Opportunities to Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Collaboration in Alabama

10:30 - 11:30 am

Despite broad support for appropriate collaborative approaches to water and wastewater management at the federal level and in many states, there are organizational and statutory limitations to implementation. This session will review the types of entities that exist or can be created to serve as a regional water or wastewater management entity, and why such an entity is necessary to address wastewater challenges in rural regions, such as the Black Belt. The session will also feature state and local officials in Alabama to provide perspective on how the state approaches collaboration in water and wastewater management, including potential opportunities at the state level to improve collaborative processes.

Featured Speakers:

- Bob Rubin, North Carolina State University
- Eric Reidy, Alabama Department of Environmental Management
- Jason Padgett, North Baldwin Utilities

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Session 4: Current & Emerging Technologies & Strategies in Decentralization

1:00 - 2:00 pm

In many rural parts of Alabama and the U.S., the low population density makes the construction of new water or wastewater treatment, or the interconnection with a nearby system, is cost prohibitive. There are not enough rate payers to justify the capital, operations, and maintenance cost of the infrastructure. New technologies are emerging that can better serve these small clusters of properties at lower costs. This session will review those technologies and how they have been deployed across Alabama and the region.

About Water Finance Exchange

Water Finance Exchange (WFX) partners with federal and state stakeholders, communities, philanthropy, and the financial sector to address the funding shortage of water infrastructure projects for thousands of U.S. communities. With a network of experts and a revolving pre-development fund, WFX works hand-in-hand with communities to connect them to funding and expertise to build scalable solutions, one community at a time. WFX is building a pipeline of community water infrastructure project opportunities that will attract funding from a range of public and private financing entities through a rigorous pre-development process.

About the Consortium for Alabama Rural Water and Wastewater Management

Clean running water and well-functioning wastewater systems are something that many Americans take for granted, but rural residents and communities in the Black Belt region of Alabama often do not have that privilege. These communities face many issues including inadequate infrastructure, wealth inequality, and soils that are incompatible with traditional onsite wastewater treatment. Inadequate sewage disposal can result in unhealthy exposure to viruses, bacteria, and parasites via untreated wastewater, which can lead to both public health and environmental health problems.

In response to these environmental and socioeconomic issues facing the rural, underserved communities in the Black Belt, many groups have taken an interest in finding solutions for these rural Alabama communities. In 2018, the Consortium for Alabama Rural Water and Wastewater Management was formed to facilitate communication and collaboration between the regulatory community, academic institutions, elected officials, community groups, and representatives from the water and wastewater industry so that we may find environmental equity solutions together.

Presented By

