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## **Water Environment Federation Honors Water Professionals, Organizations for Service and Contributions**

ALEXANDRIA, Va.— The Water Environment Federation (WEF) proudly announces the 2020 WEF Awards recipients for individuals and organizations that have made outstanding contributions to the sustainability of water resources and made a profound impact on the future of the water profession.

“The Water Environment Federation is extremely proud to honor the incredible contributions of these individuals and organizations in protecting one of the world's most valuable resources and contributing to their communities,” said Jackie Jarrell, WEF President.

The 2020 recipients for Individual Service and Contribution Awards and Organization and Association Recognition Awards are:

### **Camp Applied Research Award: Dr. Rao Surampalli**

The Camp Applied Research Award recognizes a WEF Member who demonstrates a unique application of basic research or fundamental principles through the design or development of a wastewater collection or treatment system. Dr. Rao Surampalli is renowned for his extensive and long-term contributions to technology transfer throughout the world. A longtime university professor, Dr. Surmpalli has written more than 600 publications. He has developed technology for treating emerging water contaminants and applied technologies for waste conversion to sustainable, value-added products associated with wastewater systems.

### **W. Wesley Eckenfelder Industrial Water Quality Lifetime Achievement Award: David Marris and Dr. Paul J. Usinowicz**

The Industrial Water Quality Lifetime Achievement Award recognizes and honors an individual who has made substantial and measurable engineering, scientific and/or operations contributions to industrial waste management or treatment related to water quality improvement.

David Marrs's professional experience is immersed in industrial wastewater treatment, hazardous waste management and groundwater remediation. He has served as process engineer, project manager or technical lead on more than 50 wastewater treatment plant upgrades and troubleshooting projects at petroleum refineries and chemical plants in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom.

Dr. Paul J. Usinowicz has 50 years of diversified professional experience and has developed innovative solutions and is a registered professional engineer in 11 states. He is a tenured professor of environmental engineering and serves as an industrial consultant with Environmental Resources Management. Dr. Usinowicz is also a research leader at Battelle and a technical advisor for Bechtel.

**Ralph Fuhrman Medal for Outstanding Water Quality Academic-Practice Collaboration: Zhiyou Wen, Tom Kunez, Kuldip Kumar and Martin Gross**

This medal promotes and rewards extraordinary collaborative work by two or more people that has made a positive impact on advancing the water quality profession by increasing the knowledge base, demonstrating the application of innovative scientific concepts or project implementation methods, and enhancing the relationship between academia and clean water practitioners.

The recipients of the 2020 medal advanced their algae technology to full-scale and their collaborative publications appeared in archival journals involving both academics and practitioners.

**Public Officials Award: Vaughn Hartung, chair, Washoe County (Nev.) Board of County Commissioners**

The Public Officials Award is presented to an elected or appointed public official that has made a documented, significant contribution in clean water legislation, public policy, government service, or another area of public prominence that resulted in improvements to the water environment. The award can be presented for local, state or federal public service.

Through his leadership and collaboration, Vaughn Hartung has developed and implemented an integrated water resources plan that includes water resources protection, ensuring clean and safe drinking water, reclaimed water effluent management and water quality protection. Hartung has been a champion of the OneWater Nevada water initiative involving demonstration of effluent reclamation for groundwater banking for future indirect potable reuse. He has taken an active role in protecting public property and public safety from seasonal flooding in the Truckee River watershed by actively advocating for federal and state funding to build flood control projects.

**Outstanding Young Water Environment Professional Award: Kristi Steiner**

This award recognizes the contributions of young water environment professionals for significant contributions to WEF and to the wastewater collection and treatment industry. The 2020 recipient, Kristi Steiner, serves on WEF's Students and Young Professionals committee and has helped plan several young professional summits hosted jointly by WEF and the American Water Works Association. She has also been a key contributor to WEF's "YP Connections," a series of articles that highlight the work of young professionals in the water sector. Steiner has been active in the Pacific Northwest Clean Water Association and serves on

its Board of Directors. She is a past chair and vice chair of its Students and Young Professionals committee. Steiner's work has resulted in that committee being one of PNCWA's largest and most active committees. Steiner also represents PNCWA in WEF's House of Delegates.

**Member Association Achievement Award: Saudi Arabian Water Environment Association**

The Member Association (MA) Awards were established to recognize outstanding Member Associations and MAs that excel in areas of membership retention, financial strength, new memberships, scholarship programs, student achievement and support, technology transfers, and/or award programs. WEF recognizes the Saudi Arabian Water Environment Association for its excellence in organizing events that support technology transfer. Since 2002, Saudi Arabian WEA has organized the biennial Water Arabia event. The conference attracts more than 1,200 water and wastewater professionals. Workshops concentrate on water quality and desalination topics. The Water Arabia event also includes a three-day technical conference and a technology exhibit hall.

**WEF Mentorship Award: Kerrie Greenfelder**

This award recognizes the life-altering impact one person can have on a young professional and the difference a mentor can make by offering intellectual, social, and personal support. The inaugural winner of the WEF Mentorship Award is Kerrie Greenfelder, the Kansas City municipal water division department manager at Burns & McDonnell. Greenfelder has mentored more than 100 young people during her career, which spans more than 20 years. She has helped young professionals within WEF, the Society of Women Engineers, and past and present colleagues. She has sought to support female engineers and leaders, and she has touched thousands of lives through her efforts developing STEM outreach and mentoring programs.

**Water Heroes Award: (1) Waterborne Infectious Disease Outbreak Control (2) First Utility District, Knoxville, Tenn. (3) David Sykora, Michael Arends, Jim Theiler, and the staff at the Papillion Creek Water Resource Recovery Facility and the Missouri River Water Resource Recovery Facility, Omaha, Neb.**

The Water Heroes Award recognizes individuals or municipalities who performed duties above and beyond the usual call of duty during an emergency to continue to protect the public and the environment.

1. A group of WEF members have gone above and beyond in their committee roles within the Waterborne Infectious Disease Outbreak Control subcommittee. Their work allowed WEF to provide water utilities and water professionals with critical information during the coronavirus pandemic. This information provided relevant, actionable information for utilities to protect essential workers and inform communities. This subcommittee was also responsible for several webcasts, podcasts and fact sheets and worked with WEF staff to review and validate website and publication content.

Members: Akin Babatola, Robert Bastian, Kyle Bibby, Kari Brisolaro, Elizabeth Conway, Lee Gary, Dr. Rasha Maal-Bared (chair), Lisa McFadden, Naoko Munakata, Lola Olabode, Robert Reimers, Albert Rubin, Samendra Sherchan, Scott Schaefer, Jay Swift, Charles Gerba, Mark Sobsey, Dr. Charles Haas

2. First Utility District serves more than 90,000 people in the Knoxville, Tenn. area. In February 2019, unprecedented rainfall submerged sewer pump stations in water, peaking at

approximately 20 feet above ground level in some areas. After the pump stations flooded, every department in the organization poured a tremendous amount of effort into responding to the situation, which threatened the district, its customers and the integrity of the system. Between February 23 and May 17, crews worked more than 1,300 regular hours and more than 1,400 overtime hours to manage the situation.

3. In the spring of 2019, Nebraska faced unprecedented flooding resulting from a combination of rapid snowmelt, frozen ground, and a bomb cyclone rainstorm. The predictions of record flooding prompted the Public Works Department to organize a round-the-clock, all-hands-on deck effort to build a flood protection wall for the Missouri River Water Resource Recovery Facility, which sits along the Missouri River. Staff laid barriers and sandbags, often wading through waist-deep water, to protect the critical infrastructure that ultimately allowed the facility to stay in operation during the flood. At the Papillion Creek Water Resource Recovery Facility, a similar process was underway, but flooding came from two directions as the facility sits at the confluence of the Missouri and Platte Rivers. Staff worked to protect the facility until water started to come over the levees surrounding the facility. After the flood water receded, the devastation was immense. Staff worked tirelessly to beat the time estimates to bring the facility back online and replaced pumps, electrical lines, and other equipment.

These awards will be presented on Wednesday, Oct. 7 at 5 p.m. at the WEF Awards ceremony during WEFTEC Connect. All WEFTEC Connect registrations include access to the WEF Awards and Presidential Ceremony and Celebration. For more information, click [here](#).

For more information about the WEF Awards, visit <https://www.wef.org/awards>.

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### **About WEF**

The Water Environment Federation is a not-for-profit technical and educational organization of 35,000 individual members and 75 affiliated Member Associations representing water quality professionals around the world. Since 1928, WEF and its members have protected public health and the environment. As a global water sector leader, our mission is to connect water professionals, enrich the expertise of water professionals, increase the awareness of the impact and value of water, and provide a platform for water sector innovation. To learn more, visit [www.wef.org](http://www.wef.org).