

## What's Happening with AWWA ACE21?

Many of you have been wondering, "What is happening with ACE 21 in San Diego, California?" AWWA has been evaluating closely all the circumstances to date with where we are with COVID-19. Over the last several months, AWWA has been advertising that ACE21 would be offered as an in-person and virtual conference but that a final decision had not been determined as there were a number of factors the Association was analyzing before a final decision was made. The Association has been analyzing public health circumstances, the viability of an in-person conference in San Diego, as well as alternative locations and has determined after weighing all the critical elements, it would be in the best interests of the membership to have an all-virtual conference. Here are the facts surrounding the decision to go with an all-virtual conference.

After a thorough evaluation, the Association has determined that ACE21 will transform to an all-virtual experience. An all-virtual format is the best way to assure the safety of attendees and a successful event for everyone involved. Most members want to go to ACE, but they are unable to commit to travel in June. AWWA is grateful for the work our members from San Diego and the Cal-Nevada Section have put into planning ACE21.

The San Diego Convention Center is currently closed and unlikely to allow an event the size of ACE21 in June. The convention center cannot commit to hosting even a dramatically scaled-down ACE. As of mid-March, the convention center had no information about its operational status in June and when it might accommodate even small events. Under these circumstances, the Association cannot assure the high-quality experience ACE exhibitors and attendees have come to expect.

AWWA's first concern is the safety of ACE21 attendees. AWWA's first core principle is the protection of public health. The California Department of Public Health is discouraging travel from other states and asking Californians not to drive more than 120 miles from home. Many members have shared they are concerned about traveling until a large percentage of the population is vaccinated and the pandemic is under control. Members from Canada are currently asked to avoid all non-essential travel as are people from many other countries.

So, based on all the facts, now is the right time to make this decision. Business partners deserve to be informed in time to adjust their own plans, and attendees and exhibitors need clarity on travel and hotel reservations. AWWA can better focus on providing several in-person events planned for the fall.

Through all of this, AWWA remains financially strong and healthy and, as you might have expected, AWWA planned and budgeted for the possibility of an all-virtual ACE in

2021. The Association has ample reserves to sustain any short-term revenue declines and is anticipating a very successful ACE21 virtual event.

You may be asking yourself, "What would an all virtual ACE21 look like?" All-virtual will be informative, engaging, and energizing. Attendees will have an unprecedented opportunity to inform, influence, and impact the water sector. ACE21 all-virtual will provide an atmosphere that inspires innovation.

The ACE21 all-virtual professional program features the most sought-after and engaging presenters on the topics of greatest interest to water professionals. ACE21 all-virtual presenters are the best of the best. Attendees will benefit from more than 80 hours of content in six professional tracks. The opening keynote will feature a captivating conversation between Jennifer Sara, the Global Director for World Bank's Global Water Practice, and AWWA President Melissa Elliott. Attendees will interact with presenters and one another through the ACE21 all-virtual online platform and active social media conversations.

So please go to AWWA website and sign up for the ACE21 all-virtual conference June 14-17; I have known doubts that you will be impressed with the virtual experience!

Sincerely,

Randy Black

PNWS Association Director/ Incoming Vice President