Milwaukee, WI | May 14-16, 2025
Saint Kate – The Arts Hotel – 139 E. Kilbourn Ave

All sessions and activities will take place at the Saint Kate, unless otherwise noted

TUESDAY, MAY 13

4:00 pm Registration opens – **until 7:00 pm**

8:00 pm Welcome Reception – Potawatomi Hotel & Casino (1721 W Canal St)

Presented by Forest County Potawatomi

WEDNESDAY, MAY 14

8:00 am Registration opens

9:00 am Concurrent pre-conference sessions:

Session #1 – **Mayors Commission meetings** (***restricted to Cities Initiative members***)

Session #2 – **The PitcH2O** (***open to all registrants***)

The Cities Initiative will be hosting its first ever water innovation competition. Presented with our partners, AquaAction and The Water Council, PitcH2O will provide an interactive forum for startups and cities to showcase their innovations on how they manage water challenges in a "pitch-style" format. Pitches will address our conference themes of water consumption, water protection and water resilience.

Emcee:

- **Marissa Jablonski**, Executive Director, Freshwater Collaborative of Wisconsin

Judges:

- **Soula Chronopoulos**, President, AquaAction
- **Karen Frost**, VP, Economic Development and Innovation, The Water Council

Speakers:

- **Laura Gerencser**, Advisor, Water and Wastewater, Region of Peel
- **Karen Frost**, VP, Economic Development and Innovation, The Water Council

10:45 am Member Meeting (***restricted to Cities Initiative members***)

12:00 pm Member Meeting concludes / Free time

1:00 pm 2025 Annual Conference Opening and Welcome Session

- Declaration**: Preserving the U.S.-Canada Relationship to Protect Our Prosperous Regional Economy and Precious Freshwater Resources**

2:45 pm Plenary #1 – **Balancing Supply and Demand: Preserving Our Region's Abundant Freshwater Resources**

Presented by Veolia

This plenary session will assess how communities can better manage water consumption to help keep water in the basin for generations to come by implementing innovative and resilient water-efficiency projects, encouraging more sustainable industrial practices, and defending the Great Lakes Agreement and Compact.

Moderator:

Alaina Harkness, CEO, Current Water

Speakers:

- **David Naftzger**, Executive Director, Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Governors and Premiers
- **Dave Ross**, Executive Vice President, Government Affairs and Sustainability, Veolia North America
- **Catherine Vallières-Roland**, Deputy Mayor, Québec City, QC

3:45 pm Networking Break

Presented by MMSD - Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District

4:15 pm Concurrent breakout sessions:

Breakout #1 – **Pioneering New Approaches to Water Management**

Presented by AquaAction

This session will highlight case studies of cities across the Great Lakes region that are leading the way in approaching challenges with creative solutions. The session will be delivered as a series of lightning talks followed by individual Q&A and a facilitated large group discussion.

Facilitator:

- **Brittany VanderBeek,** Director of Business Development, AquaAction

Speakers:

- **Jason Strangland**, Waterfront Practice Director, SmithGroup

Breakout #2 – **Bigger Solutions: Scaling Up Waterfront Planning**

Presented by SmithGroup

This workshop will engage participants in planning at scale, presenting successful approaches from the Great Lakes. The session will include a facilitated exercise for participants to begin brainstorming the elements of a local or regional issue that could be mitigated by planning at scale.

Speakers:

- **Bert Liverance**, Reeve, Township of The Archipelago, ON
- **Patrick Pauly**, Superintendent, Milwaukee Water Works

5:30 pm Day 1 Sessions End

6:30 pm Biinaagami Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Basin giant floor map exploration — **Père Marquette Park -** 900 N Plankinton Ave, Milwaukee, WI 53203

7:00 pm Cities Initiative Mayors Opening Reception — **Milwaukee County Historical Society -** 910 N. Doctor M.L.K. Jr Dr.

Presented by Veolia

THURSDAY, MAY 15

7:00 am Breakfast **– served until 9:00 am**

Presented by Black & Veatch

7:30 am Breakfast Session **– Advancing Coastal Resilience in a New Era**

Presented by Stantec

Coastal resilience is a clear and consistent priority for our communities and the Cities Initiative is leading the way! The Cities Initiative's coastal programs have engaged over 100 municipalities in the region. This breakfast will bring together participants of the

Resilient Coastal Projects Initiative; the Initiative for Resilient Great Lakes Coasts; and Advancing Coastal Adaptation in the Great Lakes. The breakfast will feature three five-minute talks from partners followed by networking, with the opportunity for participants to partake in an interactive activity.

Speaker:

- **Amy Lentz**, Director of Projects, Lakeshore Natural Resource Partnership

9:00 am Day 2 Welcome and Opening Session

10:00 am Plenary #2 **– Clean Water Communities: Addressing Legacy Pollution, Emerging Contaminants and Beyond**

Presented by America Is All In

This plenary session will explore effective community-led approaches and key programs and frameworks to protect and restore our freshwater ecosystem, with a strong emphasis on both environmental and socioeconomic benefits.

Speakers:

- **Andrea Horwath**, Mayor, Hamilton, ON
- **Ken Johnson**, Mayor, Muskegon, MI

11:00 am Networking Break

Presented by LimnoTech

11:30 am Concurrent Breakout Sessions:

Breakout #3 – **Strategic Communications and Marketing: Driving Policy & Public Action**

Presented by Xylem

The session will include a hands-on messaging challenge, where participants will collaborate to craft impactful communication strategies tailored to different stakeholders.

Breakout #4 – **Enhancing Water Stewardship through Public-Private Partnerships**

Presented by Veolia

This session will examine the basic elements of a water use impact and risk assessment framework for municipalities and organizations. It will also focus on the ways in which cities can apply such a framework in partnership with water users (industrial, commercial and agricultural).

Facilitator:

- **Matt Howard**, VP of Water Stewardship, The Water Council

Speakers:

- **Pete Coffaro**, Director Public Engagement, Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District
- **Paul Sambanis**, VP of Sustainability, Sloan
- **Alvin Tedjo**, Councillor, City Mississauga

12:45 pm Lunch – **until 1:30 pm**

1:15 pm Luncheon Session

Presented by Port Milwaukee, the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation, and the St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation

2:00 pm Plenary #3 – **Weathering the Storm: Promoting Water Resilience in an Era of Extreme Flooding and Erosion**

Presented by Stantec

This plenary session will discuss how basin communities can combat flooding risk and lessen the burden on municipal water infrastructure by advancing green infrastructure projects and integrating climate resilience as a central component of city planning.

Speakers:

- **Eric Genrich**, Mayor, Green Bay, WI
- **Paul Ainslie**, Councillor, Toronto, ON; Chair, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority
- **Kevin Shafer**, Executive Director, Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District

3:00 pm Networking Break

Presented by HDR

3:30 pm Concurrent Breakout Sessions:

Breakout #5 – **Harnessing Nature for Resilience: Overcoming Barriers to Green Infrastructure Implementation**

Presented by ENGIE North America

This session will explore some key challenges with GSI implementation as well as strategies for overcoming barriers. The session will be delivered as a series of lightning talks followed by individual Q&A and a facilitated large group discussion.

Introduction by:

- **Katy Glynn**, Senior Business Development Manager, ENGIE North America

Facilitator:

- **Emily Simonson**, Senior Director, Water Leadership and Innovation, US Water Alliance

Speakers:

- **Pete Hill**, Senior Policy Advisor for Green Infrastructure, Environmental Policy Innovation Center

- **Thomas Monter**, Project Engineer, ENGIE North America
- **Sylvain Ouellet**, Councillor, City of Montréal

Breakout #6 – **Discussion on Brownfields: Demystifying Remediation and Exploring Opportunities**

Presented by Ramboll

This session will showcase examples from the region; share best practices; and solicit feedback from participants on a developing pilot program for Cities Initiative members.

Speaker:

- **Evan Kanji**, Staff Professional, Geosyntec

4:45 pm Annual Conference Closing Ceremony

5:30 pm Day 2 Sessions End

6:00 pm Exhibitors Reception

Presented by Veolia, in collaboration with GM

7:30 pm *Cities Initiative Annual Awards Dinner*

Presented by the Fund for Lake Michigan

FRIDAY, MAY 16

9:00 am Educational Tours **–** depart from Saint Kate

Presented by:
- ***Acti-Zyme***
- ***Brico Fund***
- ***Greenprint Partners***
- ***International Joint Commission***
- ***Ducks Unlimited***
- ***Reyes Coca-Cola***

1:00 pm Return to Saint Kate – End of 2025 Annual Conference