

Monday, September 12  
Opening Session Address  
8:15AM – 9:45AM

**Be Like Water: Adapting with Purpose – A Call to Action**

**Phyllis A. Brunner**

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In keeping with the theme of the conference and setting the stage, the opening address will cover our changing and complex world today as it relates to the water sector. The goal of the presentation is to instill a sense of urgency in tackling the challenges we are facing but also with hope and confidence that we can creatively solve the issues ahead of us to benefit society and the environment.

We have faced challenges before in our past, and we have risen through innovation and working together. The spotlight on infrastructure is here with the federal spending bill and the issues we are facing with climate change. Examples of past accomplishments around wastewater treatment, advances in water regulations and compliance, technology, and how the human environment as adapted over time will be discussed historically.

Turning then to today, we see a rapidly changing world focused on sustainability and resiliency. The terms will be defined, examples of how the water sector is adapting to the challenges and how we as engineers, scientists and operators can step up to address these global changes with our skills and experience. These times require us to think differently and look for solutions that address a range of scenarios because of the uncertainty. Approaches will be suggested for the audience to consider and explore during the rest of the conference.

Closing remarks will address the people side of the challenges we are facing professionally and personally. What should be considered at the organization level, how each of us can maintain our own resiliency individually and how to stay energized for a long and rewarding career. We each play a critical role in the sustainability of the future of our world, and we can inspire the next generations with what we do. This is our time!

**Phyllis A. Brunner**

Phyllis Brunner is an experienced consulting professional, president, operations manager and licensed civil engineer with over forty-five years working in the water and wastewater industry. As President of Consulting for Woodard and Curran from 2016 to 2021, she was responsible for business performance, sales, growth, and delivery of project work across a national footprint for public and private clients. She led the consulting operations through the first year of the COVID pandemic and the integration of a number of acquisitions across the country during her five-year tenure. Phyllis worked at Brown and Caldwell, based out of the Seattle office for over twenty years, fifteen of which were as the West Regional Manager. Previous experience was with Woodward Clyde as office manager, the City of Boulder, Colorado in the utilities department and several smaller firms in Colorado and New Jersey.

Phyllis has developed and led sales and technical strategic plans to drive long-term business results. She has a unique ability to lead teams that build strong client relationships, that plan, design and implement

complex project solutions that deliver successful business metrics. She has advocated for sustainability and green engineering solutions before it was in vogue and her passion around developing talent for next generation leadership has been a focus for much of her professional life. She has dedicated her career to breaking down barriers for women in environmental engineering and more specifically the water profession, often having been the first woman in the room, the position, or the organization.

Phyllis grew up in the northeast but has lived and worked in the Pacific Northwest since 1985. She, her husband David, and her daughter Claire enjoy a bi-coastal lifestyle that lets them enjoy the beauty nature offers and makes them keenly aware of the impacts of climate change and the urgency to develop sustainable solutions. Currently, as President of the Indian Island Association, based in Casco Bay, Maine, Phyllis collaborates with community leaders, governmental agencies, and non-profit organizations to make responsible, equitable, and environmentally-sound investment decisions that will protect coastal communities for generations to come. She loves to fish, garden, travel, read, and walk!