THREE STEPS FORWARD, TWO STEPS BACK

Heather Himmelberger, Director, New Mexico Environmental Finance Center, U.S.

Abstract
Asset Management was introduced in the U.S. over a decade ago, but in recent years the pace of acceptance in the water and wastewater industry has increased significantly. However, for each advance in asset management there are associated set backs. For example, many utilities begin an asset management program expecting to receive significant benefits right away or begin with a given outcome in mind. They think that an Asset Management program will guarantee a particular outcome or response from decision-makers. When that doesn’t happen, the refrain is “Asset Management failed” and the utility wants to abandon the program.

Some advances in the U.S. include: a few states incentivizing or requiring Asset Management, new tools and techniques for training, Asset Management User Groups, and peer to peer assistance. There are still many factors that hold back the overall success with Asset Management, including: lack of local involvement in the plan development, lack of incentives or mandates in most states, inability to see the potential for success, false starts with the wrong approach, and lack of long-term commitment.

This paper will explore the status of Asset Management in the U.S. with very specific examples at the national, state, and local levels.

Key Words: Asset Management, Water, Wastewater, Current U.S. Status