

Featuring the 2026 SDA Award Winners

SDA

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

SEPTEMBER 15-17, 2026
KEYSTONE, COLORADO

Be Prepared for Anything



*Before anything else, preparation is
the key to success.*
—Alexander Graham Bell





Welcome to the 2026 SDA Annual Conference!

We are so excited for this year's Conference! We have assembled an outstanding lineup of experts and professionals who will provide valuable information on a wide variety of topics and issues. As always, we will also be featuring inspirational keynote speakers and plenty of chances to meet and visit with other professionals in your field. Plus, we have brought back our Discussion Forums on Tuesday afternoon. In addition, we would like to thank our 15 Platinum Sponsors as well as our generous Gold, Silver, and Bronze Sponsors and all our exhibitors who are rounding out this dynamic three days. The SDA team and Board look forward to seeing you throughout the event!

Ann A. Terry

SDA CEO

2026 SDA Annual Conference

Tuesday, September 15



7:15-9:00 am, Longs Peak Ballroom

Welcome Breakfast Featuring Cam Awesome

Becoming Awesome

Sponsored by COLOTRUST



Join us as we kick off the 2026 Annual Conference! The morning will begin with the Presentation of the Colors and the singing of the National Anthem. We will then welcome our keynote speaker, Cam Awesome.

Cam takes audiences on a captivating journey through his life, sharing the triumphs and tribulations that have shaped him into the resilient and determined individual he is today. From his early struggles with bullying to his pursuit of boxing greatness, Cam's story is one of unwavering perseverance and the indomitable human spirit. Through his engaging storytelling and infectious energy, Cam motivates and inspires audiences to embrace their own unique paths to success, no matter how many obstacles they may face along the way.

Cam's powerful message is centered around the idea that failure is not the opposite of success, but rather an essential part of the journey towards it. He encourages audiences to reframe their relationship with failure, seeing it not as a roadblock, but as an opportunity for growth and learning.

9:15-10:15 am

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Session T-1, Torreys I-II

District Administration Survival Guide Applied for 1 Hour CLE

Adam Clark and Alex Simpson from Public Alliance LLC; and Crystal Schott from Ireland Stapleton Pryor & Pascoe, PC

Keeping a special district running smoothly requires more than just successful Board meetings, it takes strong administrative support behind the scenes. "The District Administration Survival Guide" offers practical strategies for the behind-the-scenes work that keeps special districts running smoothly. From agendas and minutes to managing records and post-meeting follow-up, this session explores common administrative challenges including version control, last-minute changes, and coordinating with consultants. Participants will leave with practical tools and best practices they can implement immediately to support effective governance, compliance, and transparency.

Tuesday, September 15

9:15-10:15 am

Continued

Session T-2, Torreys III-IV

Asset Management: More Than Just a List of Stuff

Marshall MacFarlane from Farnsworth Group

Asset management is becoming more and more commonplace. More than just a list of equipment, asset management should include equipment assessments (on existing equipment) along with specific information related to the equipment and/or assets. Asset management not only takes some of the mystery out of long-term budgeting for repair and replacement, but this information forms the backbone of your work order system, can help establish design standards, procurement specifications, and more.

Session T-3, Crestone I-II

Behind Closed Doors: Executive Sessions Done Right Applied for 1 Hour CLE

Allison Ulmer and Kathryn Winn from Collins Cole Winn & Ulmer, PLLC

Executive sessions are one of the most misunderstood responsibilities of a Board. Come learn when a Board can properly go into executive session, what must be said before the door closes, and how to avoid turning a confidential discussion into a public problem. We will cover common missteps, legal guardrails, and real-world tips for handling sensitive topics without stepping outside the law. Ideal for Board members and staff who want to keep discussions private, procedures proper, and headlines nonexistent.

Session T-4, Crestone III-IV

Setting the Stage for Water Efficiency in Colorado

Andrea Cole from Dominion Water and Sanitation District, Kevin Reidy from the Colorado Water Conservation Board, and Brennan Middleton from Spheros Environmental

Join Dominion Water and Sanitation District for a forward-looking discussion on how thoughtful land use planning and innovative water demand management can shape the future of water-efficient communities in Colorado. Through its collaboration with Sterling Ranch, Dominion is demonstrating how growth and conservation can work together—empowering homeowners with real-time water use tools, advancing drought-tolerant landscaping in partnership with Denver Botanic Gardens, using tiered rates to encourage efficient practices, and leading the state's first and only regional rainwater harvesting project. Attendees will learn how these strategies, along with strong non-residential demand standards, are helping set a new benchmark for resilient, sustainable, and water-conscious development.

Session T-5, Castle Peak (2nd Floor)

Emergency Services Funding: Using Impact Fees, Service Charges, and Sales Tax to Support Your Fire or Ambulance District Applied for 1 Hour CLE

Emily Powell from Ireland Stapleton Pryor & Pascoe, PC and Chief Joe DeSalvo from Evans Fire Protection District

Within the last two years, new state laws have created important new funding opportunities for fire protection districts and ambulance districts, including the ability to adopt impact fees without prior municipal approval and to charge fees for non-firefighting services. The new laws also allow fire protection districts and ambulance districts to get voter approval to collect sales tax in addition to property tax, which offers not only an important new revenue source, but also a means for revenue diversification. This session will guide you through the legal ins-and-outs of the new funding opportunities and how to accomplish them and will also provide real-world information and perspective from Joe DeSalvo, Fire Chief of the Evans Fire Protection District, which has successfully implemented both impact fees and sales tax within its jurisdiction.

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Tuesday, September 15

10:15-10:45 am	Exhibitor Hall Morning Break <i>Sponsored by Western Alliance Bank</i> Take a few minutes to visit with fellow attendees and check out our sponsors and exhibitors!  Western Alliance Bank® Member FDIC
10:45-11:45 am <i>Continued on page 5</i>	Session T-6, Torreys I-II Behind the Bond: Understanding the Legal and Accounting Behind Public Financing Applied for 1 Hour CLE <i>Brian Camiller from Plante Moran and Dillon Peters from Butler Snow LLP</i> Debt powers public projects, but the rules are complex. This session explains the legal and accounting foundations behind government debt, from authorization and elections to bond types, official statements, and compliance. Instructors include a bond attorney and a CPA, sharing pitfalls to avoid so finance officers can plan, issue, and report debt confidently. Session T-7, Torreys III-IV The Secret Sauce of a Safety Program <i>Kyle Brown and Brennan Mendus from the Colorado Special Districts Property and Liability Pool</i> Turn safety from a requirement into a mindset. This interactive session will show how education, accountability, and recognition can create a positive safety culture where employees are engaged, proactive, and invested in keeping everyone safe. Session T-8, Crestone I-II Financial Oversight for District Board Members: What You Should Be Asking (and Why) <i>Melissa Buck from UMB Bank and Anna Jones from CliftonLarsonAllen</i> District Board members are entrusted with significant financial stewardship responsibilities, yet most come to their roles without formal finance training. This practical, non-technical session equips Board members with the knowledge and confidence to exercise effective financial oversight—whether they’re evaluating a proposed bond issue, reviewing a refinancing opportunity, or simply ensuring their district’s long-term financial health. Attendees will leave with a framework for asking the right questions at the right time, understanding what answers to expect, and knowing when to dig deeper. Session T-9, Crestone III-IV No Bars, No Backup: Connected Districts are Protected Districts: Real Resiliency, Utility Fragility, and Best Infrastructure Practices! <i>David Zelenok, PE from Calibre Engineering; and Brian Stephens-Hotopp from Calibre Engineering and Evergreen Metropolitan District</i> When disaster strikes, the first lifelines to fail often aren’t the roads or the power grid—they’re the water lines and telecommunications networks connecting people, responders, and critical “Smart Infrastructure.” Water lines and telecommunication networks are the invisible backbone of every modern community, yet they’re overlooked in resilience planning and dismissed by community leaders who mistakenly believe the private sector is solely responsible for resiliency in utilities and telecommunications. This session will explore how district managers can, and should, take a leadership role in strengthening critical infrastructure crucial in operating “smart cities” infrastructure especially with water, transportation, and emergency response, ensuring their communities stay connected. Participants will learn about “utility fragility” and “real resiliency” and how to view telecommunications as critical public infrastructure—every bit as vital as streets, first responders, or fire hydrants that may or may not work—and how to integrate them into strategic, emergency, and capital planning efforts.

Tuesday, September 15

10:45-11:45 am
Continued

Session T-10, Castle Peak (2nd Floor)

Managing Mayhem: Leading Your District Towards Success During the Worst of Times

Chief TJ Steck and Kara Gerczynski from Elizabeth Fire Protection District

Every organization gets its chance to experience mayhem. Even if your district has been lucky so far, that day is coming. Whether it's public scrutiny, employee tomfoolery, or financial crisis, the smallest of problems can quickly transform your organization into a dysfunctional ball of resentment. This session will not only identify signs of a developing problem but will also provide tips and tricks that can fix them or even prevent them.

11:45 am-1:45 pm, Longs Peak Ballroom

Awards Luncheon Featuring Dr. Robyne Hanley-Dafoe

The Hope Forward Advantage: A Framework for Stability, Agility, and Possibility

Sponsored by Community Resource Services of Colorado (CRS)

Join us as we honor this year's award winners and celebrate these exceptional Board members, managers, and districts.

We will also feature a thought-provoking presentation from Dr. Robyne Hanley-Dafoe. Stress. Challenge. Change. Uncertainty. These forces shape our lives, and too often we believe they force a choice: performance or wellness, success or integrity, results or relationships, achievements or purpose. The truth is, they are not mutually exclusive. When we know *what* to do, *when* to do it, and *why* it matters, they become interconnected; the foundation for living well and working well.

In this keynote, Dr. Robyne Hanley-Dafoe, award-winning researcher and author of *I Hope So: How to Choose Hope, Even When It's Hard*, introduces a practical, research-driven framework for moving through disruption with clarity, courage, and confidence. With more than twenty years of research in psychology, education, and human development, Dr. Robyne equips audiences with evidence-based strategies they can apply immediately. Participants leave ready to steady themselves, harness stress into momentum, and move forward with hope; the force that defines and shapes the future.



2:00-3:00 pm
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Session T-11, Torreys I-II

Two Management Companies, Shared Lessons: Best Practices that Improve Board Outcomes

Alex Clem from CliftonLarsonAllen and Brittany Barnett from Timberline Management & Consulting

This presentation brings together experienced district management experts to share practical lessons learned from supporting Boards across a wide range of special districts. The discussion will highlight common challenges, effective governance practices, and management-led strategies that improve communication, efficiency, and Board decision-making. By comparing approaches and identifying shared best practices, the session provides Boards and professionals with actionable insights that strengthen district operations and foster more productive Board-management partnerships.

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**Shuttle buses to and from the
Conference Center sponsored
by Fromm & Company, LLC**



Tuesday, September 15

2:00-3:00 pm

Continued

Session T-12, Torreys III-IV

Homeowners, Dog Poop, and Weeds...Oh, My! Navigating the Muddy Waters of Community Management in Metropolitan Districts

Peggy Ripko from Special District Management Services, Inc.

Metro districts providing community management is more common each year, but confusion still reigns. There isn't an HOA, but there are rules? And fees? Then who maintains the park across the street? Come talk about the history of Community Management in districts, the trends, and the challenges. Learn how to help your Board members, staff, and homeowners understand what we do, why it's important, and how we can work together to make each community successful.

Session T-13, Crestone I-II

The Missing Piece: How Local Government Leaders Can Unlock Hidden Capacity

Debra Whitehead from CPS HR Consulting

When an employee underperforms, most leaders look to two familiar culprits: skills and motivation. But there's a third reason, one that often goes unaddressed, that can unlock levels of performance and service beyond what you thought possible from your existing team or individual performers. This session introduces local government leaders to the concept of "capacity" and provides two practical tools to use immediately: real examples of exceptional performance from ordinary employees, and a four-step situational assessment to help you identify what's actually getting in the way. You'll leave knowing what to look for and having thought about what you can do differently tomorrow. Without adding to your budget!

Session T-14, Crestone III-IV

Navigating the Colorado Open Meetings Law: Case Law Updates Applied for 1 Hour CLE

Shannon Smith Johnson and Karlie Ogden from Icenogle Seaver Pogue, PC

What do the latest legal decisions mean for your Board? This session will focus on recent case law updates with respect to the Colorado Open Meetings Law and the implications of those cases for running effective and compliant Board meetings. We'll translate recent developments into practical, real world guidance you can use at your next meeting.

Session T-15, Castle Peak (2nd Floor)

Resilient Districts: How to Prepare Before a Crisis Hits

Dr. Deserai Anderson from Anderson Resilience Advisors and the University of Colorado Denver

From wildfires and floods to unexpected operational disruptions, the risks facing special districts are increasing—but proactive mitigation can save districts \$13 for every dollar invested. This session breaks down resilience planning, including organizational continuity, hazard mitigation, leadership training, and crisis communications. Secure your district's future by learning how to prevent the worst-case scenario, saving vital time, money, and stress before the next crisis hits.

3:00-3:30 pm

Exhibitor Hall

Afternoon Break

Sponsored by Western Alliance Bank

Enjoy a quick break to fuel up before the afternoon sessions and Discussion Forums.



**Western Alliance
Bank®**

Member FDIC

Tuesday, September 15

3:30-5:00 pm

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Session T-16, Torreys I-II

By Default or By Design: Five Gaps Between Reserve Policy and Reserve Reality

Michael Warne and Tracy Powell-Warne from Synergy Capital of Colorado

Most district financial reserve programs were not designed all at once. They evolved. Projects changed, balances grew, priorities shifted, and over time the written policy, the actual practice, and the institutional knowledge drifted apart. In many districts the real process lives in one person's head. This session walks through five common gaps between what a district's reserve policy says and how its reserves are actually structured, drawing on Colorado statute and GFOA best practices: policy adoption, reserve classification, matching investments to when the money is needed, investment authority, and Board reporting. The session is built for the whole leadership table: Board members, general managers, fire chiefs, and finance directors. Attendees will leave with a five-question standard they can use to evaluate whether their own district's reserve structure exists by default or by design.

Session T-17, Torreys III-IV

Recent Litigation Trends Shaping Colorado Special Districts Applied for 1.5 Hours CLE

David Meschke and Kevin Walsh from Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck, LLP

This session explores the latest legal developments, emerging issues, and court decisions shaping the future of Colorado special districts, with a focus on metropolitan districts. The panel will summarize notable lawsuits and related court decisions and explain, in practical terms, what they involve and why they matter. Particular attention will be given to disputes that arise as districts transition from developer control to resident control, including concerns about governance decisions made during early development and the long-term financing arrangements that support district infrastructure. In several recent cases, residents or resident led Boards have raised questions about existing debt obligations and repayment structures, prompting broader discussions about transparency, oversight, and long-term impacts on communities. The panel will discuss what these developments may mean for district Boards, developers, local governments, and residents, and will highlight considerations for managing risk and expectations going forward.

Discussion Forum #1, Crestone I-II

When the Unexpected Happens: Crisis Communications When Facing Challenging Public Issues

Discussion Leader: Tony Kovaleski, Former Chief Investigative Journalist, Denver7 News

When a crisis hits, there is rarely time to pull out the communications manual and figure out what to do next. The cameras may already be rolling, reporters are calling, social media is moving quickly, and your community wants answers.

Join award-winning investigative journalist Tony Kovaleski for an engaging, real-world look at what happens when you suddenly find yourself on the other side of the microphone. Using actual scenarios, practical techniques, and a little theater, Tony will put attendees in the moment and demonstrate what works, what doesn't, and how to respond when the pressure is on. Learn how to prepare for the press, anticipate difficult questions, stay on message, avoid common mistakes, and communicate with confidence when the unexpected happens.

Come prepared to participate, think on your feet, and experience what it's really like when the cameras turn toward you.

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**Water stations
throughout the Conference
sponsored by CSAFE**



Tuesday, September 15

3:30-5:00 pm

Continued

Discussion Forum #2, Crestone III-IV

DEO Forum: Election Readiness Starts Now! Applied for 1.5 Hours CLE

Discussion Leaders: Micki Mills and Sarah H. Luetjen from Cockrel Ela Glesne Greher & Ruhland (CEGR Law); Crystal Schott from Ireland Stapleton Pryor & Pascoe, PC; Sarah Shepherd from Circuit Rider of Colorado; and Marcos Pacheco from Community Resource Services of Colorado (CRS)

The next regular election is just nine months away. Whether your district is considering a ballot question or you simply want to better understand the election process, this interactive forum is your opportunity to get ahead. Join a panel of experienced election experts for a lively discussion on what districts should be doing now, key deadlines to keep in mind, common pitfalls to avoid, and practical strategies for a successful election.

Bring your questions and take advantage of this open question and answer session covering ballot issues, election planning, legal requirements, and best practices. No question is too basic or too complex.

You do not have to be a Designated Election Official to attend. Board members, district managers, administrators, and anyone interested in district elections are encouraged to participate. Whether this is your first election or your fifteenth, you'll leave with valuable insights and practical information you can put to work immediately.

Discussion Forum #3, Castle Peak (2nd Floor)

From Chatbots to Colleagues: Putting AI to Work (Safely) in Your District Applied for 1.5 Hours CLE

Discussion Leaders: Mac Clemmens from Streamline powered by CivicPlus and Allison Ulmer from Collins Cole Winn & Ulmer, PLLC

AI has moved past novelty—it's now drafting agendas, answering resident questions, flagging cyber threats, and even acting as an autonomous "agent" on your behalf. In this interactive forum, Allison Ulmer, Partner at Collins Cole Winn & Ulmer, PLLC and Mac Clemmens, Co-Founder of DocAccess and Streamline, will demo what's newly possible, share what districts are actually doing today, and tackle the harder question: how do you govern it? We'll cover practical AI policy (including free tools that write one for you), the new wave of AI oversight platforms, and the cybersecurity threats—deepfake calls, AI-crafted fraud—every district should prepare for. Come ready to discuss, question, and leave with next steps sized for your district.



5:00-8:00 pm, Conference Center Patio and Longs Peak Ballroom

Opening Night Celebration

Sponsored by the Colorado Special Districts Property and Liability Pool

Join us for a night of fun and festivities at our game night! We will have casino tables throughout the ballroom plus trivia and other games to play! And of course, music and lots of amazing food!





7:15-9:00 am, Longs Peak Ballroom

General Breakfast Session Featuring Manley Feinberg

Exponential Commitment™

Build Breakthrough Momentum in the Storm of Change and Uncertainty

Sponsored by Streamline powered by CivicPlus



This dynamic keynote inspires participants to step up in a new way to overcome resistance and reach higher than ever by cultivating Exponential Commitment™ in themselves and those around them. Participants will learn essential Vertical Lessons for deepening their commitment and building momentum. They will discover how to achieve breakthroughs even when rapid change, including AI-driven disruption, creates pressure and disrupts clarity, focus, and forward momentum.

Audience members will leave with actionable insights on what it takes to gain clarity and make decisive progress through chaos every single day. They'll also learn three steps to build and rebuild momentum as well as a daily process to keep them focused and fully committed to their key initiatives.

9:15-10:15 am

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Session W-1, Torreys I-II

Staying the Course: How Persistence and Board Leadership Advanced a Challenging Infrastructure Project

Steve Ravel, PE from Advanced Engineering and Environmental Services, LLC (AE2S); and Suzanne Jurgens from Upper Thompson Sanitation District

Persistence is often the defining factor between a stalled concept and a successfully delivered public works project. The Upper Thompson Sanitation District's WRF and Lift Station Improvements Project progressed from concept to near completion over six years—demonstrating that determination and adaptability are as essential as technical expertise. While planning and design were critical components, the factors that significantly shaped the timeline were permitting coordination, obtaining funding, escalating construction costs, and the importance of steady governance throughout the process. The district worked closely with regulatory agencies to navigate discharge permits, environmental reviews, and land access. Simultaneously, assembling a viable financial package required multiple funding cycles and careful fiscal stewardship amid changing economic conditions. Attendees will learn that 1) persistence is essential in complex special district infrastructure delivery; 2) regulatory and financial processes drive special district project outcomes; and 3) focused special district governance makes the difference.

Session W-2, Torreys III-IV

Colorado's Property Tax Revenue Limits and Elections to Waive Them Applied for 1 Hour CLE

Daniel Rubin and Carolyn Steffl from Dietze and Davis, PC

This educational session will discuss the "5.5% limit" (CRS 29-1-301(6)) and the newer "5.25% limit," established by Colorado's House Bill 24B-1001. We'll also provide background on TABOR in the Colorado Constitution (Article X, Section 20). There will be a discussion of the separate revenue and spending limits, and the talk will proceed to focus on the special requirements for each and specifically what requirements apply if holding an election and running a ballot issue or question seeking voter approval to waive the limits.

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9:15-10:15 am

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Session W-3, Crestone I-II

Turn Water Leaks into Mountains of Savings: How Performance Contracting Can Strengthen Water Infrastructure and Unlock Savings for Special Districts

Ryan Quigley, Kate Sawyer, and Patrick McGuckin from Performance Services

Colorado special districts are under growing pressure to address aging water infrastructure, rising system demands, and limited capital dollars—all while maintaining reliable service and accountability to their communities. This session explores how performance contracting can help water and wastewater districts advance infrastructure improvements through a practical, outcome-driven approach that does not rely solely on upfront funding. By aligning contractor incentives with district goals, this model helps bridge financial and operational gaps, shift performance risk, and provide greater confidence that projects will be delivered on time and on budget. Attendees will learn how performance contracting can reduce water loss, improve system efficiency and resiliency, and create a clearer path to funding and implementation. Real-world case studies will highlight how performance contracting can turn water leaks into mountains of savings.

Session W-4, Crestone III-IV

Before the Referral: A Leadership Framework for Pre-Resilience in Fire and EMS

Chief Jeremy Young and Sammy Freyta from Frederick-Firestone Fire District

The fire service has invested in behavioral health like never before: peer support, clinicians, EAPs, critical incident response. But nearly all of it activates after a firefighter begins to struggle. A Fire Chief and an embedded Mental Fitness Specialist spent years approaching that problem from opposite ends and reached the same conclusion: resilience doesn't start in a therapist's office. It starts long before that. This session introduces Pre-Resilience: a practical framework of habits, leadership behaviors, psychological safety, recovery, connection, and culture that prepares firefighters before the worst calls find them. Because while therapy helps firefighters heal, leadership can help them stay stronger, longer.

Session W-5, Castle Peak (2nd Floor)

Can't We All Just Get Along: Legal Tools and Practical Tips for Managing Board Member Behavior In and Outside of the Meeting Room Applied for 1 Hour CLE

Jeffrey Erb, Jillian Martin, and Haley Trecarichi from Erb Law, LLC; and Sarah Shepherd from Circuit Rider of Colorado

Healthy discussion and disagreement among Board members is to be expected and is part of the democratic process. But sometimes behavior goes too far! This presentation will review the legal tools available for managing Board member behavior in and outside of Board meetings, including the potential for recall elections; censuring of Board members; the pros and cons of bylaws and rules of decorum; and public interaction. Board members will benefit from hearing about expected behaviors and how to address poorly behaving Board members from both a practical and legal perspective.

10:15-10:45 am

Exhibitor Hall

Morning Break

Sponsored by Pinnacle Consulting Group, Inc.

Spend a few minutes visiting with fellow attendees and enjoy a mid-morning treat.



Wednesday, September 16

10:45-11:45 am

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Session W-6, Torreys I-II

Bond Financing 101: A Practical Guide to Funding Public Projects

Sander Blackburn from Northern Water, Andrew Ma from Piper Sandler, and Bryan Stelmack from Stifel

Public infrastructure projects often rely on bond financing—but for many, the process can feel complex and difficult to navigate. This session provides a practical, real-world overview of how bond financing works from start to finish. Through a panel discussion featuring experienced professionals from leading financial institutions, attendees will gain insight into the key players, structures, and decisions involved in issuing bonds. The conversation will walk through the lifecycle of a financing—from early planning and market considerations to pricing, issuance, and post-issuance responsibilities. Designed for both finance and non-finance professionals, this session will demystify the process and equip participants with a clearer understanding of how to evaluate options, ask the right questions, and confidently engage in financing discussions.

Session W-7, Torreys III-IV

Together We Stand... or Gracefully Disband Applied for 1 Hour CLE

Evan Ela and Glory Schmidt from Cockrel Ela Glesne Greher & Ruhland, P.C. (CEGR Law)

Consolidating or dissolving a special district is a significant decision with lasting legal, financial, and operational impacts. This session will explore key considerations, common challenges, and practical lessons learned through real world case studies to help districts navigate the process with confidence.

Session W-8, Crestone I-II

Title 32 Special Districts and Construction Project Delivery Methods: Legal and Engineering Perspectives of the Pros and Cons of Common Project Delivery Methods as They Work for Your District Applied for 1 Hour CLE

Danielle Kaiser and Michelle Berger from Spencer Fane LLP

Title 32 special districts regularly contract for construction projects of all sizes for the benefit of their taxpayers. However, a lot of districts are unaware of the various project delivery methods available such as design-build, design-bid-build, construction manager at risk, and integrated project delivery. This session will discuss the pros and cons of each project delivery method and provide best practice pointers for ensuring the project delivery method is properly included in the construction contract.

Session W-9, Crestone III-IV

Securing the Future: Succession Planning for Special District Leadership

Jen Volmer and Anne McCord from ILG Strategic Services

Succession planning is a vital exercise for districts of all sizes and types. In this thoughtful discussion, we'll look at how Boards can develop robust emergency and long-term succession plans to ensure leadership continuity, mitigate organizational risk, and preserve institutional knowledge. Key takeaways will include differentiating between emergency and long-term succession planning; identifying critical leadership roles including the special district leader; building internal leadership bench strength; mitigating knowledge transfer risks; and implementing clear protocols for communication and authority during transitions.

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**We would like to thank Collins Cole Winn
& Ulmer, PLLC for sponsoring the 2026
SDA Annual Regional Workshops!**

**COLLINS | COLE
WINN | ULMER**

Wednesday, September 16

10:45-11:45 am

Continued

Session W-10, Castle Peak (2nd Floor)

From Budget Gaps to Structural Alignment: Rethinking Financial Strategy in Special Districts

David Norris from Eagle River Water & Sanitation District

Special districts across Colorado and the Mountain West are facing a new financial reality—where rising capital demands, workforce pressures, and constrained revenues are converging at the same time. Traditional approaches to budgeting and financial management are no longer sufficient to address these structural challenges. This session explores how leading districts are shifting from reactive budgeting to proactive alignment across operations, capital planning, and financial strategy. Participants will gain practical insights into how to evaluate program and service levels against sustainable funding; align capital improvement plans with long-term financial capacity; and identify operational efficiencies that preserve service delivery while managing cost pressures. Drawing from real-world examples in water, wastewater, and multi-service districts, this session will provide a framework for turning financial pressure into an opportunity for organizational clarity, improved decision-making, and long-term sustainability. Attendees will leave with actionable strategies to better align their district's priorities, resources, and financial planning in an increasingly complex environment.

11:45 am-1:30 pm, Longs Peak Ballroom

General Lunch Session Featuring Ben Whiting

Creating A Limitless Culture™

Better Results, Better Relationships, Limitless Possibilities

Sponsored by CEBT (Colorado Employer Benefit Trust)



What do you get when you combine a background in leadership development with decades of corporate entertainment experience? You get something that is fun, engaging, and that builds a bridge between insight and actionable strategies to bring the best out of your people. This is what Ben Whiting's Creating a Limitless Culture™ keynote delivers.

In addition to experiencing draw-dropping (and often hilarious) magic and mind reading, your group will be able to instantly increase productivity through better communication; reduce drama by learning how to create and sustain quality relationships in the workplace; and learn to thrive amidst constant change with a simple mindset shift that will also help them find not just happiness, but fulfillment in their day-to-day work lives (all while having A LOT of fun!).

1:45-2:45 pm

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Session W-11, Torreys I-II

Federal Policy Update for Special Districts: What's Changing and How to Prepare

Chantal Unfug from the National Special Districts Association and Mac Clemmens from Streamline powered by CivicPlus

Federal policy continues to evolve, bringing new opportunities and new responsibilities for special districts. From ADA accessibility requirements and cybersecurity priorities to federal funding opportunities and national advocacy efforts, district leaders need to understand not only what is changing but what actions to take. Join us for a discussion that bridges federal policy with practical implementation.

Chantal will provide an update on the latest federal developments affecting special districts, including ADA-related requirements, cybersecurity initiatives, funding opportunities, and NSDA's advocacy efforts on behalf of districts nationwide. Mac will then translate those developments into practical strategies districts can begin implementing immediately to reduce risk, improve digital services, and prepare for the future.

Whether you're a Board member, executive, or district staff leader, you'll leave with a clearer understanding of what's changing in Washington and what it means for your district.

Wednesday, September 16

1:45-2:45 pm

Continued

Session W-12, Torreys III-IV

Beyond the Binder: Building a Strategic Plan People Actually Use

Tammy Schiff, Ed.D from GrayMatters LLC

With close to 4,000 special districts in Colorado, how many are running on an expired strategic plan—or one written by a leader who's long gone?

If your plan sunset last year, sits in a binder gathering dust, or a new leader just walked in with fresh eyes, you're facing the same challenge: how do you build a plan people actually use—one that moves and inspires your organization forward? This interactive session delivers proven frameworks for navigating a plan refresh or leadership transition. You'll learn how to turn change into strategic advantage, engage your community in the process, and get your Board rowing in the same direction—with accountability built in from day one. You'll leave with a practical roadmap, real tools, and the energy to bring your plan to life.

Session W-13, Crestone I-II

Funding Drinking Water and Wastewater Improvements with the State Revolving Fund

Sean Oliver from the Water Quality Control Division and Giorgi Gazashvili from Colorado Water Resources and Power Development Authority

The session will touch on the advantages of the State Revolving Fund (SRF) program, including an overview of the process, program requirements, opportunities to access reduced interest rates, grants, and loan forgiveness, and other benefits.

Session W-14, Crestone III-IV

2026 Mill Levy Impacts and Calculations Applied for 1 Hour CLE

Lindsay Ross from CliftonLarsonAllen; Amanda Castle from Pinnacle Consulting Group, Inc.; and Elisabeth Cortese from McGeady Becher Cortese Williams PC

This valuable session will provide a refresher on Section 29-1-1702, C.R.S. 5.25% calculations and what it looks like to apply this moving forward. In addition, the impacts of House Bill 24B -1001 on mill levy and how to apply calculations will also be discussed.

Session W-15, Castle Peak (2nd Floor)

Rural Health Care's Intersection with Emergency Medical Services

Chief Bruce Evans from Upper Pine River Fire Protection District

Community Paramedicine has a firm footing in Colorado, with Eagle County EMS being one of the first in the nation. There has also been additional enabling legislation for community paramedics to go to the next level in Colorado. Upper Pine has taken that one step further and has broken ground on a fire station and urgent care in the same building which, with the urgent care partner, will be able to deploy community paramedics to the eastern part of LaPlata County. This presentation will detail the funding mechanisms, partnerships, and site locating along with the recent changes in state and federal legislation that has potential to add a revenue stream to local special districts.

2:45-3:15 pm

Exhibitor Hall

Afternoon Break

Sponsored by Pinnacle Consulting Group, Inc.

Get ready for the busy afternoon with a short break and time to visit with our sponsors and exhibitors.



Continued on page 14

3:15-4:45 pm

Continued on page 15

Castle Peak (2nd Floor)

Colorado Special Districts Property and Liability Pool Annual Meeting and Keynote Address

Beyond Compliance: Understanding and Managing Safety in Special Districts



Special districts face a wide variety of risks, from employee injuries to vehicle incidents and property damage. Brad Johnson, CSP, is the author of the book *Noncompliant Safety* and the Safety Coordinator at Parker Water & Sanitation District. In this presentation, Brad explores the “why” and “how” of building a strong safety program through the lens of risk. Participants will learn how risk-based approaches can improve safety outcomes, strengthen organizational performance, and help leaders make better decisions even with limited resources. Attendees will leave with a new perspective on safety, a better understanding of risk, and actionable ideas they can bring back to their districts immediately.

Session W-16, Torreys I-II

Perspectives on Passing a Ballot Measure for Your District

Mike Dell'Orfano from South Metro Fire Rescue; Wil Crossland from Telluride Regional Medical Center; Jim McGrady from Triview Metropolitan District; Courtney Sievers from Magellan Strategies; and Bryan-David Blakely (moderator) from Public Alignment Communication

Join special district leaders and professional experts from across Colorado's diverse landscape for a candid discussion on how they successfully educated voters and passed critical funding measures. Through a moderated and interactive discussion, three special district leaders and two professional experts will share their real-world strategies for translating operational needs into compelling public narratives, building community support, and addressing taxpayer concerns in an era of fiscal scrutiny. Learn how different districts tailored their approaches across different issues to community demographics, overcame opposition, and maintained transparency throughout their campaigns. Whether your district is considering its first mill levy ask in years or exploring new revenue options, you'll leave with practical tactics for community engagement, messaging frameworks that resonate with voters, and insights on what worked. This session is essential for district leaders, Board members, and anyone involved in funding strategies for essential services among Colorado's special districts.

Session W-17, Torreys III-IV

Special District Annual and Long-Term Financial Planning

Danely Howe from Westwind Management Group, LLC and Bryan Farley from Association Reserves Colorado

This important session will cover a wide variety of topics related not only to annual financial planning, but to long-term considerations as well. Discussion will include 1) an overview of the district budget process, deadlines, filings, and notices; 2) types of budgeting: zero-budget/incremental and when to use what; 3) when to start the budget and RFP process; 4) long-term planning: determining what to measure, worst/best case scenarios, forecast out, income, and mill levy needs; 5) capital reserve funding: determining components, adequate funding; 6) strategies to establish proper and adequate funding; 7) creating an executive summary of the budget with visual aids such as graphs and charts; and 8) common mistakes/misunderstandings to avoid.

Wednesday, September 16

3:15-4:45 pm

Continued

Session W-18, Crestone I-II

All Things Meetings: Practical Guidance for Board Members and Managers Applied for 1.5 Hours CLE

John Chmil from Lyons Gaddis

This interactive session covers the practical side of conducting effective and legally compliant public meetings. From preparing agendas to documenting Board actions, we'll answer the questions managers and Board members face every day. Topics include what legally constitutes a meeting, best practices for agendas and minutes, adding items during a meeting, motions versus resolutions, and record retention and public record considerations for meeting documents and recordings. Attendees will leave with practical tools and confidence to manage meetings efficiently while complying with Colorado law.

Session W-19, Crestone III-IV

Cybersecurity on a Shoestring Budget: Protecting Critical Infrastructure and First Responders

Beth Justice from Colorado SIPA and Terry Bradley from Mile High Cyber

All districts face the same ransomware, phishing, and account-takeover threats as large enterprises—but with a unique set of high-stakes vulnerabilities. From safeguarding drinking water treatment facilities and wastewater SCADA networks to ensuring 24/7 uptime for fire dispatch and emergency communications, these districts manage critical infrastructure with lean teams and tight public budgets. The good news is that hardening your district's security posture does not require an endless stream of expensive software or a massive IT department. This session introduces a practical "Minimum Viable Security Program" (MVSP) designed specifically for special districts. Attendees will learn how to implement the smallest set of governance, technical, and operational controls that measurably reduce risk across both informational technology (IT) and operational technology (OT) environments. We will map out how to protect critical utility and emergency systems, isolate operational networks, strengthen backup resilience against ransomware, and train shift-based personnel without overwhelming staff or breaking the budget. Through real-world district examples and a pragmatic 30/60/90-day roadmap, participants will leave with actionable, low-cost steps to immediately reduce cyber risk, satisfy insurance requirements, and protect the vital community services they provide.

4:45-7:00 pm, Conference Center Patio

Boots and BBQ Evening Event Featuring Randall McKinnon

*Sponsored by Ramey Environmental Compliance and
Highstreet Insurance & Financial Services*

Wear your favorite pair of boots as you enjoy some delicious BBQ with all the fixings right on the Conference Center patio. Plus, we'll have live music with perennial favorite, Randall McKinnon.



Continued on page 16





7:15-8:45 am, Longs Peak Ballroom

General Breakfast Session Featuring Steve Spangler

The Engagement Effect: Cultivating Experiences That Ignite Connection, Build Trust, and Inspire Action

Sponsored by Cockrel Ela Glesne Greher & Ruhland, P.C. (CEGR Law)



How do you break through the noise, capture attention, and create real connection in a world where people are constantly distracted? You don't shout louder—you design better experiences.

Steve Spangler's *Engagement Effect* is more than a keynote. It's a blueprint for transformational leadership in action. Drawing from the principles in his latest bestselling book of the same name, Steve reveals how leaders, educators, and entrepreneurs can engineer experiences that move people—from passive listeners to active participants, from compliance to commitment.

With over 4.5 billion views on social media, decades of Emmy Award-winning television, and a track record of scaling multimillion-dollar ventures, Steve knows what makes people lean in and stay engaged. His message is simple but powerful: Engagement isn't a tactic. It's a skill you can build, a mindset you can adopt, and a strategy you can master. This keynote experience is high-energy, story-rich, and loaded with memorable demonstrations that illustrate the science of engagement in real time.

9:00-10:00 am

Continued on page 17

Session TH-1, Torreys I-II

Fraud in a Small Town: How to Protect Yourself and the Community

Brian Camiller from Plante Moran

In this insightful presentation, we will take a deep dive into a real-world example of local government fraud. Attendees will learn practical strategies to identify and prevent fraudulent activities, safeguarding both their offices and the communities they serve. Join us to enhance your knowledge and fortify your defenses against fraud.

Session TH-2, Torreys III-IV

Unlock Funding for Your Water or Community Project with USDA Rural Development

Sallie Clark, Amy Mund, and Allison Ruiz from USDA Rural Development

Looking for funding to support critical infrastructure in your district? Join this informative session with USDA Rural Development to explore financing options for water systems, wastewater projects, and essential community facilities. Learn how special districts can access low-interest loans, grants, and technical assistance to plan, build, and improve infrastructure that keeps communities safe, resilient and thriving. From drinking water and sewer systems to emergency response facilities and community centers, USDA programs can provide solutions tailored to rural needs. Topics covered include identifying the right funding for your project, understanding the application process, leveraging combined funding opportunities, and connecting the resources to move your project forward.

Session TH-3, Crestone I-II

The Silent Warning: Real-Time Threat Assessment and Pre-Attack Indicators

James Hiromasa-Colorado POST Subject Matter Expert, Board of Directors North Metro Fire Rescue District, and Co-Founder Heroes Holdings & Consulting Inc.

In every escalating encounter, there is a window of time where the body betrays intent before an individual ever acts. "The Silent Warning" moves beyond basic de-escalation by teaching special district professionals how to perform real-time threat assessments through the lens of human physiology. Participants will learn to identify specific pre-attack indicators—predictable physical shifts in stance, gaze, actions, verbiage, and motor skills—that signal a person is moving from verbal frustration to physical violence. By recognizing these cues early, staff can proactively change the environment, actively deescalate, call for backup, or exit the situation before it turns into a physical confrontation.

Thursday, September 17

9:00-10:00 am

Continued

Session TH-4, Crestone III-IV

The Missing Infrastructure: Why Social Connection is the Key to Thriving Special Districts

Christy Bryse and Todd Hornback from Cohere

Special districts are essential to delivering critical public services, but increasingly, their success depends on more than infrastructure and operations. It depends on connection. In today's environment, many communities struggle with low engagement, declining participation, and a growing sense of disconnection among residents. Yet emerging research and real-world data shows that when communities are intentionally designed for social connection, the impact is measurable: higher resident satisfaction, stronger participation, increased trust, and long-term sustainability. In this session, we will explore the concept of social infrastructure as a critical, yet often overlooked, component of successful special districts. This session reframes community management and design as the connective tissue that brings districts to life - helping special districts not just serve residents but truly engage and sustain them. Whether you are in water, parks, libraries, or public safety, every special district ultimately serves people, and people thrive in places where they feel connected.

Session TH-5, Castle Peak (2nd Floor)

Navigating Workers' Compensation: Do You Know What You Should Know? Applied for 1 Hour CLE

Paula Lowder from the Colorado Special Districts Property and Liability Pool

This session will be a practical overview of workers' compensation and what every employer needs to know. This session will cover the basics of how workers' comp works, employer responsibilities after an injury, the claims process, and simple strategies to help manage claims effectively and support injured employees. Whether you're new to workers' comp or just want a refresher, this will be an interactive session, and you'll leave with a clearer understanding of how to navigate the process with confidence.

10:15-11:15 am

Continued on page 18

Session TH-6, Torreys I-II

AI for Government

Tyler Svitak from Colorado Smart Cities Alliance

This presentation will highlight how Colorado districts are sourcing and implementing AI to solve meaningful challenges across water, fire, transportation, and even libraries. We'll showcase real projects implementing AI solutions and dive into the challenge-based procurement model that sourced the solutions changing Colorado's infrastructure for the better.

Session TH-7, Torreys III-IV

Beyond Fire Flow: Building Real Wildfire Resilience for Colorado Special Districts

Jay Blackburn, PE, Scott Zurn, PE, and Allison James from Level Engineering; Hidde Snieder from ERO Resources; Ashley Pollock Zahedi from Curtis, Justus, & Zahedi, LLC; and Brittany Barnett from Timberline Management & Consulting

Wildfire risk across Colorado continues to evolve, while special districts must prepare and recover across fragmented responsibilities, limited resources, and vulnerable infrastructure. This session brings together a multidisciplinary panel spanning civil engineering, public works, emergency management, environmental compliance and restoration, water law, district management, and community engagement. Drawing on recent Colorado experience, panelists will discuss practical steps districts can take before and after wildfire: protecting water supplies and critical infrastructure; integrating hazard mitigation and WUI planning; addressing vegetation, watershed, and post-fire environmental impacts; navigating newer tools for fire-suppression ponds and on-river fire storage wells; coordinating with first responders and partner agencies; communicating with residents; and pursuing mitigation and recovery funding. The discussion will also address wildfire as a financial and governance shock that can disrupt district services, revenue, and public trust. Attendees will leave with a practical framework for moving beyond minimum fire-flow requirements toward coordinated, implementable community resilience.

Continued on page 18

Thursday, September 17

10:15-11:15 am

Continued

Session TH-8, Crestone I-II

Good Government Starts Local

Kris Kazian from Evergreen Fire Rescue

Every day, local governments and special districts shape the quality of life for our residents, businesses, and visitors by providing essential services such as safe drinking water, parks, fire protection, emergency medical care, and more. Those services, however, are only as strong as the organizations and people who deliver them. As elected officials and organizational leaders, we must look beyond today's challenges and prepare for tomorrow's realities. This session explores the growing pressures facing local governments—including rising personnel and benefit costs, recruitment and retention, aging infrastructure, increasing service demands, regulatory requirements, and escalating costs—and encourages a forward-thinking mindset that builds resilient organizations capable of sustaining exceptional service for the communities we serve.

Session TH-9, Crestone III-IV

When Security is Tied to Public Trust: The Value of Cybersecurity for Special Districts

Abel Moreno from South Adams County Water and Sanitation District and Paige Goss from Point Solutions Security

Special districts operate infrastructure that communities depend on every day, making cybersecurity inseparable from public trust. As systems become more interconnected and threats continue to evolve, districts are under increasing pressure to strengthen security while maintaining uninterrupted service and managing limited internal resources. This session examines how a critical infrastructure organization used a comprehensive, programmatic cybersecurity approach to move beyond reactive risk management. Through full-spectrum analysis and a long-term partnership model, the district gained clarity on real, meaningful risks, implemented sustainable security improvements, and aligned cybersecurity efforts with operational priorities—all without the burden of building and maintaining a full internal security team. For special district leaders, IT managers, and operations staff, this presentation offers practical insight into how a structured, ongoing security strategy can reduce risk, improve efficiency, and support reliable service delivery. Attendees will learn how partnering with experienced security professionals can provide depth of expertise, continuity, and strategic guidance that strengthens systems over time while reinforcing community confidence and public accountability.



11:15 am, Longs Peak Foyer

Grab-and-Go Lunch

Sponsored by Spencer Fane LLP

Enjoy our Grab-and-Go Lunch that you can stay and have before heading home or take with you in the car.



Outdoor tent sponsored by GovDeals



Don't forget that if you need a little extra space, you can watch the livestream of any of the sessions from your laptop in the outdoor tent!



Special District Association of Colorado
Supporting Community-Based Government

2026 Award Winners

2026 J. Evan Goulding District of the Year

Edgemont Ranch Metropolitan District

Just seven miles outside of Durango, Edgemont Ranch Metro District stands as a remarkable example of how a small district can deliver big results through vision, stewardship, and innovation. Established as a Colorado special district in 1983, Edgemont Ranch serves a diverse landscape that includes ranch land, waterways, and mountain terrain, providing water and wastewater services, road maintenance, and snow removal to roughly 1,800 to 2,500 residents. With a staff of only eight employees and one of the lowest mill levies in the county, the District has built its reputation on efficiency, transparency, and an unwavering commitment to public service.

From its earliest days, Edgemont Ranch was shaped by the realities of West Slope living and the need for reliable local infrastructure. The District's history reflects a community that understood the importance of planning for the long term, especially in a setting where water, roads, and sanitation are essential to daily life. Over time, that practical foundation evolved into a model of resourcefulness, with the District steadily investing in systems that would serve residents well into the future. That history matters because it shows Edgemont Ranch has never simply maintained services; it has built a durable community framework.

What makes Edgemont Ranch especially deserving of District of the Year recognition is its extraordinary innovation in water infrastructure. The District completed construction of the first Austrian-style wastewater treatment plant in the United States, a groundbreaking achievement that brought proven European technology to Colorado's mountain environment. Led by Utilities Manager Robert Ludwig and supported by a committed team, the District studied world-class facilities abroad before implementing a



system designed to deliver cleaner effluent at about half the electrical cost of traditional lagoon-based treatment. The result is not only a technical success, but also a clear demonstration of leadership and courage.

Edgemont Ranch also extended that innovation through solar technology at both of its plants, helping to offset energy demand and keep service costs equitable for residents. At a time when many districts are struggling to balance affordability with sustainability, Edgemont Ranch has found a way to do both. The District's work has drawn attention from utilities across the country, further confirming that its approach is not only effective but also replicable. This kind of forward-thinking approach to problem solving is what truly distinguishes an outstanding district.

Equally important is the District's culture of stewardship. Edgemont Ranch treats public trust as a core responsibility, emphasizing safety, training, and careful operations in everything it does. Its staff are trained in confined space rescue and emergency response, and the District's environmental practices support the Florida River watershed through conservation-minded water management, drainage controls, and partnerships with organizations such as Trout Unlimited, the Animas Water Partnership, and the Mountain Studies Institute. These efforts reflect an understanding of infrastructure and that it is about more than pipes and pumps; it is about protecting a place and the people who call it home.

Edgemont Ranch Metro District reflects the best of local governance through its combined history, innovation, and accountability in a way that is both inspiring and practical. It is a small district with a big vision, and its success proves that excellence in local government is measured not by size, but by impact.

Continued on page 20

2026 Manager of the Year

Abigail Wagner, Upper Blue Sanitation District

We are proud to recognize Abigail Wagner as the 2026 Manager of the Year, honoring her outstanding leadership, dedication, and commitment to Upper Blue Sanitation District. In just 11 years with the District, Abigail has built a distinguished career marked by steady advancement, dependable leadership, and a genuine investment in both her team and the community she serves.



Abigail Wagner

Abigail's path within the District reflects both hard work and earned trust. She began her career at Upper Blue as a Lab/Office Assistant and advanced through the ranks earning the highest "A" Wastewater Operator Certification to become Lab Supervisor, Assistant District Manager, and ultimately District Manager. Her growth within the organization demonstrates her technical knowledge, strong work ethic, and ability to lead with confidence while remaining approachable and grounded. Even at a relatively young age, she earned the respect and confidence of her coworkers, demonstrating a level of professionalism and leadership that set her apart.

As District Manager, Abigail has helped guide the District through significant transition and growth. She worked with the UBSD Administrative team to bring the Blue River region under the District's umbrella, expanding service and strengthening the District's operational reach. She also played an important role during one of the most challenging periods the District has faced: the retirement of both the District Manager and Administrative Manager in the same year. Her steady leadership helped ensure continuity, stability, and confidence during that transition.

Abigail's accomplishments also include her contribution to the completion of an eight-year project that brought the local plant back online, a major milestone that required persistence, coordination, and long-term focus. Throughout these efforts, she has remained committed to education, training, and promotion from within, helping foster a strong team culture and continuing the legacy of collaboration established by her predecessor.

Her leadership extends beyond District operations. Abigail has collaborated with fellow operators to organize facility tours for local schools, creating meaningful opportunities to educate students about the District's work and services. She has also built a pro-

ductive relationship with the county manager to help ensure customers are connecting to sewers appropriately, reflecting her commitment to both public service and strong intergovernmental communication.

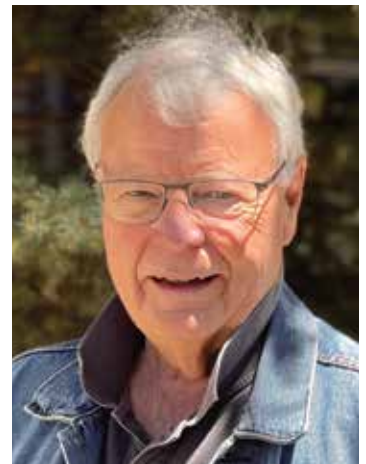
What makes Abigail especially effective as a manager is the combination of her character and her leadership style. She is known as a consistent leader who carefully weighs options and information before making decisions. Operators feel comfortable approaching her, and that trust has helped create a positive and collaborative workplace. Her emphasis on teamwork, communication, and continuous growth has strengthened the District from within and positioned it well for the future.

Abigail Wagner embodies the qualities that matter most in district leadership: integrity, adaptability, vision, and respect for the people she leads. Her record of accomplishment, her ability to navigate change, and her commitment to both staff and community make her a truly deserving honoree.

2026 Board Member of the Year

Dan Smith, Eagle County Health Service District/Eagle County Paramedic Services

Dan Smith is exceptionally deserving of recognition as Board Member of the Year for his steadfast leadership, deep institutional knowledge, and unwavering commitment to Eagle County Paramedic Services and the community it serves. Over the course of 18 years of service on the Board, he has helped guide the District through significant growth, organizational change, and moments of profound challenge, always with a steady hand and a clear focus on mission.



Dan Smith

Dan began serving on the Eagle County Health Service District Board in May 2006 and was present during the construction of the third station at Traer Creek in Avon in 2008. He played an important role in helping usher in the merger between Western Eagle County Health Service District and Eagle County Ambulance District, offering valuable support and insight throughout the process. His continued service through the transition to Eagle County Paramedic Services reflected both his loyalty to the organization and his understanding of the broader needs of the community. Since that time, the District has expanded significantly, with revenue growth of more than 50% and fund balance growth of more

than 30%, while building a strong and responsive system of care.

As Board President, Dan has helped lead the District through a period of remarkable development and growth. Under the Board's leadership, Eagle County Paramedic Services now operates five response stations and up to 11 ambulance crews serving communities from Gypsum to Vail. The organization has also expanded into innovative services that reflect real community needs, including a robust community paramedicine program, a critical care paramedicine program, a wildland fire medic program established in 2020, and a home health program created in response to the closure of the county's only home health agency in 2023. Dan's leadership has helped ensure that the District remains not only responsive, but forward-thinking in how it serves residents, seasonal visitors, and the broader Eagle County community.

One of Dan's most important contributions has been his role in guiding the District through major financial and operational decisions. He was a member of the Board when the District brought forth the vote to opt out of the Gallagher Amendment in November 2019, preserving the value of the 2016 mill levy and strengthening long-term financial stability. This decision proved especially important during the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic, when the District faced declining call volumes, increased demand for community paramedicine, and significant budget pressure. His leadership helped the District maintain staffing without pay or benefit cuts and supported the development of new revenue-generating services, including wildland fire response.

Dan's impact is also evident in how he leads with both wisdom and humility. He brings a long view to Board service, grounded in experience but open to new ideas. He understands the importance of consistency in emergency medical services, yet he also recognizes the need for growth, adaptation, and innovation. His ability to balance tradition with progress has made him a trusted leader and a stabilizing force during times of uncertainty.

Beyond his Board service, Dan has been a powerful force for public safety and community support throughout Eagle County. His dedication to service, his calm presence, and his willingness to step up whenever needed have made him an invaluable asset not only to Eagle County Paramedic Services, but to the community as a whole. His years of service reflect the very best of Board leadership: commitment, foresight, integrity, and an enduring belief in public service.

Dan Smith exemplifies what it means to serve with distinction. His leadership has helped shape the District's growth, strengthen its mission, and expand its ability to meet the evolving needs of the community. For these reasons, and for his many years of dedicated service, he is deeply deserving of the Board Member of the Year recognition.

Years of Dedicated Service Award

Jim Heckman, Fountain Sanitation District

Jim Heckman has retired after more than four decades of dedicated service as District Manager of the Fountain Sanitation District, leaving a legacy of stability, fiscal responsibility, and operational excellence. This year, we proudly recognize Jim for his extraordinary commitment to the District and Colorado's special district community.



Jim Heckman

Beginning his tenure in August 1984, Jim guided the district through 41 years of growth, regulatory change, and infrastructure modernization, becoming one of Colorado's longest serving special district administrators.

Under Jim's leadership, the Fountain Sanitation District fulfilled its mission of protecting public health and the environment while providing reliable, cost effective wastewater services to the growing Fountain community. He oversaw all operational, financial, and strategic functions, championing long term planning through the District's 10 year Capital Improvement Plan and Financial Model. His leadership ensured aging infrastructure was systematically rehabilitated while maintaining rate stability and strong financial reserves.

Jim also served as the District's Designated Election Official, ensuring compliance with Colorado election laws. In 2026, he joined the Fountain Sanitation District Board of Directors, reflecting his continued commitment to public service.

Beyond Fountain, Jim has been an exceptional leader within the Colorado Special Districts Property and Liability Pool. A Pool Board member since 2007 and Board President since 2023, he has helped guide governance, claims management, and membership policies while strengthening risk management services for special districts across Colorado.

Having called the Fountain area home since 1972, Jim's career reflects integrity, vision, and an unwavering commitment to public service. His leadership has strengthened both his local community and Colorado's special district community, leaving a lasting impact that will benefit special districts for years to come.

Congratulations, Jim, and thank you for your remarkable service and leadership.

Continued on page 22

2026 District Safety Award

Beulah Fire Protection and Ambulance District

Beulah Fire Protection and Ambulance District has been selected as the CSD Pool's Safety District of the Year in recognition of its sustained commitment to safety and risk management over the past several years.



Although it is a small, largely volunteer district with fewer than five full-time employees, Beulah Fire Protection and Ambulance District consistently makes safety a priority through the use of their Captain's dual-role as district safety coordinator; through frequently held safety talks, which utilize CSD Pool resources during demonstrations; and by completing annual safety walkthroughs of their facilities. The staff has also led the way as the first fire district to implement Flagger training for traffic-response safety. The District also supports broader safety efforts across the community by helping coordinate SKIDTRUCK driver training courses in the Pueblo area and by staying engaged in community education, outreach, and emergency management as well as a supplies-sharing program.

For all their hard work and dedication to safety, we are happy to honor Beulah Fire Protection and Ambulance District as the CSD Pool's 2026 Safety District of the Year!

2026 Risk Management Leadership Award

Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District



Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District has been selected for the CSD Pool's Risk Management Leadership Award in recognition of its strong stewardship of risk and proactive approach to protecting employees, operations, and the community.

The District goes well beyond core safety requirements by conducting risk assessments, contracting for targeted training on workplace hazards, and providing ergonomic evaluations and equipment to support office staff. It also makes excellent use of the available loss control resources from the CSD Pool, maintains a highly effective safety committee, and demonstrates disciplined risk management through its extensive fire mitigation plan.

Northern Water's risk management leadership also excels through its hands-on safety fair, which helps employees better understand how safety equipment works, and through its broad community outreach efforts.

For their thoughtful leadership and dedication to risk management, we are thrilled to present Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District with the CSD Pool's 2026 Risk Management Leadership Award.



Special District Association of Colorado

Supporting Community-Based Government

See you next year!
September 14-16, 2027
Keystone

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If you need a little extra space, you are welcome to watch the livestream of any of the sessions from your laptop in the outdoor tent. The tent is located on the Crestone Terrace.



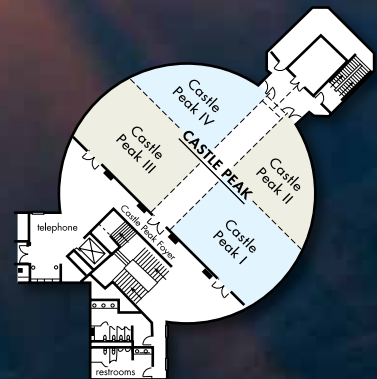
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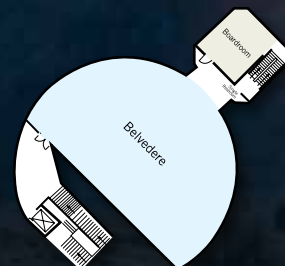
Main Floor

See you next year!
**September 14-16, 2027
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Second Floor

Third Floor



Special District Association of Colorado