Water Policy Learning Network

Bevin Buchheister | Senior Policy Analyst | Energy, Infrastructure & Environment
bbuchheister@nga.org | 202-624-2681

The National Governors Association's Center for Best Practices formed the **Water Policy Learning Network** in 2017 in response to requests by governors for help with a myriad of issues involving water resources.

The primary goal of the Network is to inform governors' advisors about best practices for water policy that they are uniquely positioned to advance. It is co-chaired by Maryland Governor Larry Hogan and Washington Governor Jay Inslee. NGA enlisted a group of national water policy and environmental experts to serve on an **Advisory Group** including directors from U.S Water Alliance, American Water Works Association, American Farmland Trust, River Network, Coalition of the Delaware River Watershed, American Water, Association of State Drinking Water Administrators, Environmental Council of the States, Rural Community Assistance Partnership, and the Association of Clean Water Administrators.

The activities of the Network include an annual Water Policy Institute to highlight best practices and policies on a wide variety of issues, quarterly webinars, state retreats where designated cross-agency teams develop policy strategies with NGA's support, and a listserv to spread news of best practices, policies and legislation addressing water issues.

Water Policy Learning Network Co-Chair, Maryland Governor Larry Hogan at the 2017 Water Policy Institute

About the Water Policy Institute
NGA hosts an annual gathering of governors' water policy advisors that allows them to engage with peers, leading experts and NGA subject matter experts. The event kicks off more targeted assistance in the form of follow-up webinars, retreats and tailored technical assistance. The first Water Policy Institute was held in Annapolis, Maryland in August 2017. The most recent Water Policy Institute was held in San Francisco, California in September 2018 where participants were welcomed by Governor Brown of California. The meeting featured new technology and innovative policies and drew advisors from thirty-one states.

About NGA Solutions: The Center for Best Practices
The NGA Solutions: The Center for Best Practices develops innovative solutions to today's most pressing public policy challenges and is the only research and development firm that directly serves the nation's governors. NGA Solutions has five divisions; the Water Policy Learning Network is spearheaded by the Environment, Energy & Transportation Division.

Outcomes

Over the past two years, the Water Policy Learning Network has helped governors' offices advance efforts in several key areas. The annual Water Policy Learning Networks have included teams from over 40 states and the quarterly webinars are widely attended. Examples of specific policy efforts include:

- NGA developed a best practices paper on how states can address concerns around emerging PFAS contaminants, that are linked to cancer and being found in drinking water sources across the country, based on lessons learned in New Jersey, Michigan and other leading states.

- NGA hosted state policy retreats on the energy-water nexus in Minnesota and Tennessee.

  - In Minnesota, NGA helped the state develop an action plant to address the needs of medium and small utilities in meeting state energy efficiency and GHG reduction goals.
  - In Tennessee, NGA helped the state develop the Plant Optimization Program that is helping water and wastewater operators achieve optimization in energy use and nutrient removal for their facilities through low-and-no-cost measures.

- NGA provided tailored technical assistance to governors' offices on a range of topics being explored in legislative sessions, regulatory proceedings or working group discussions, including:

  - Water utility consolidation
  - Innovative funding strategies that leverage State Revolving Funds
  - Deploying sensors and other smart technologies to reduce leaks and save costs
  - Using green infrastructure to address storm water concerns