

# S&YP News

## FWEA Students and Young Professionals Newsletter

### Message from the Chair



Nicole Cohen, *Carollo Engineers*

Welcome to the summer issue of the FWEA Students and Young Professionals Committee (SYPC) Newsletter. Many activities and events have happened since our last newsletter and we are excited to share it all with you!

First, I'd like to thank all our volunteers and sponsors for supporting all the S&YP events held at the Florida Water Resources Conference (FWRC). We held our first-ever in-person committee meeting, the poster competition, S&YP reception, YP Workshop, and the FWEA Student Design Competition. All of these events will be discussed in more detail in this newsletter.

Congrats to the University of North Florida team for winning the poster competition. Congrats to the University of South Florida and University of Florida teams for placing first in the environmental and wastewater categories, respectively.

Both teams will compete at the 2023 WEFTEC Student Design Competition in Chicago. We wish them the best of luck!

In addition to FWRC, you will read about the USF WaterChats event coordinated by the West Coast Chapter, the WEF/AWWA YP Summit, WEF programs, the YP of the Year Award, and upcoming FWEA events.

This summer the committee is working on rolling out the 2024 FWEA Internship Program. If you are interested in helping with this subcommittee or want your organization to participate, reach out. More information on the internship program can be found [here](#).

If you want to get more involved with the SYPC, our next committee meeting will be on August 9 at noon EST. Contact any of the SYPC leadership on the right to get the invite.

Thank you to all our committee members and sponsors. Have a great summer!

### Thank you to the SYPC Sponsors!

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### Looking to get involved?

Are you new to the industry? Do you want to join a committee, but not sure how? The SYPC is a great way to get involved and get connected with others in your field! If you're looking to get involved or become a sponsor please reach out to:

Nicole Cohen, Chair  
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Kamal Taha, Vice Chair  
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Olga Mikhachishina, Treasurer  
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Jissell Muir, Secretary  
Jissell.Muir@arcadis.com



Check out the  
FWEA SYPC  
[Webpage!](#)

## Meet the S&YP Committee

Nicole Cohen	(Carollo Engineers)
Kamal Taha	(Arcadis)
Olga Mikhilchishina	(Woodard & Curran)
Jissell Muir	(Arcadis)
Emma Johnson	(Hazen and Sawyer)
Carlee Chaffin	(HDR)
Laura Vogel	(Chen Moore and Associates)
Laura Rodriguez	(Carollo Engineers)
Alex Maas	(Heyward)
Hayden Tse	(CDM Smith)
Zachary Loeb	(Clay County Utilities)
Angel Villarruel-Moore	(Carollo Engineers)
Amanda Guillory	(Garney Construction)
Meera Joshi	(Carollo)
Kaylei Kambak	(Tetra Tech)
Alexis Scheele	(Wade Trim)
Emily Lutter	(Carollo Engineers)
Kimberly Lawrence	(McKim Creed)
Samantha Hanke	(Mott MacDonald)
Lina Polo	(City of Tallahassee)
Alyssa Massais	(CDM Smith)
Rhyannan Campos	(Hazen and Sawyer)
Brittany Bassett	(Martin County)
Cassidy Botelho	(Black & Veatch)
Arpita Meher	(Arcadis)

## West Coast SYP News



**Carlee Chaffin**  
HDR

On March 9th, the FWEA West Coast Chapter partnered with FSAWWA and the student FWEA and AWWA chapters to host USF's first WaterChats Career Fair. Water engineering professionals from fourteen firms and local utilities headed to USF's Tampa Campus to chat with students about what sets their organizations apart. WaterChats featured an innovative format where participating organizations were given brief 10-minute presentation slots to educate students on recent projects, organizational values, and perks of joining their teams. The career fair included an exhibition hall setup where students could network with professionals and ask follow-up questions based on their presentations. The presentation series and career fair took place concurrently, mimicking a conference condensed into a three-hour event. Professionals and USF students enjoyed talking, snacking, and listening to each other's presentations in a relaxed environment. The WaterChats Career Fair provided a great opportunity for students to get to know potential new employers and for professionals to market their organizations to promising new hires. FWEA is grateful to all of the organizations and students who came out to participate in FWEA's very first WaterChats Career Fair!



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- Wastewater & Reuse
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- Stormwater
- Contract Operations

[woodardcurran.com/careers-now-hiring](http://woodardcurran.com/careers-now-hiring)

# S&YP FWRC Committee Meeting



Jissell Muir  
Arcadis



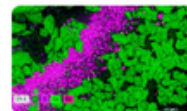
The S&YP Committee Meeting took place on the morning of Friday, June 2nd, 2023. To set the tone for the weekend of Student and Young Professional events, the meeting opened with an icebreaker to get everyone comfortable with each other through some fun introductions. Then the committee leaders ran through what we do as a committee, what events to look forward to, open board positions for recruitment, sponsor shoutouts, and the social media contest.

It is important everyone is aware of the different programs and opportunities available to them as a part of the committee and as members on both the Student and the Young Professional levels. This meeting also served as an opportunity to get feedback and new ideas for future planning. We discussed the internship program, the YP of the Year award, university and student outreach and additional events related to FWRC and the host organizations.

The current S&YP committee will be taking all the ideas from our peers into consideration moving forward to make the next year and conference even better than the last. We will continue with the internship program, YP workshop, student design competitions, poster competition, and roll out new initiatives. Stay tuned by joining us at on our recurring virtual committee meetings throughout the year to learn more about our next steps and please reach out to a board member to get involved.



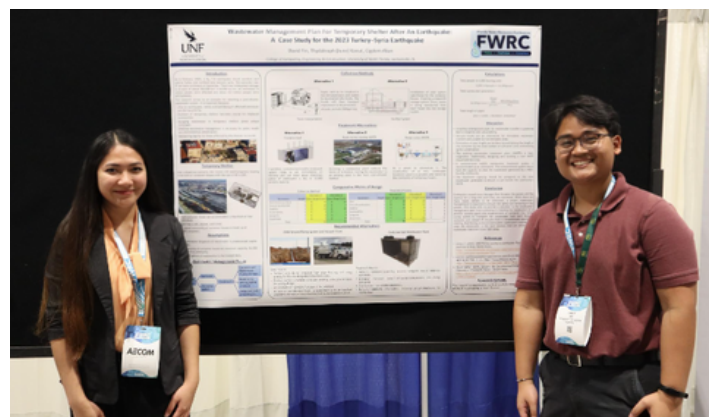
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## Poster Competition



First place went to Thydaleaph Koeut and David Yin from the University of North Florida, they presented a Wastewater Management Plan for Temporary Shelter After an Earthquake based on a case study for the 2023 Turkey-Syria earthquake. Taking home a prize of \$300 USD, this team should be proud for taking a real world scenario and thinking about how the water workforce can provide support and service a community in a time of need.



# Students and Young Professionals Reception



**Jissell Muir**  
*Arcadis*

The Young Professionals Reception held on Friday, June 2nd was a great success. The evening started with a professional networking bingo icebreaker game, hors d'oeuvres and drinks were served throughout, and raffle items were sprinkled into the mix.

Our raffle winners walked away with fun takeaways like FWEA hats and pins, a YETI cup, a backpack, a padfolio, and even a set of Apple air pods. JonesEdmunds was the proud sponsor of the YP reception. We thank them for supporting the opportunity to facilitate an event which promotes networking and mentorship in a casual setting for current and future leaders of our industry to participate in.



We hope to see you all again our next year's reception event and we thank those of you who joined us in making it a memorable event!

Follow FWEA on social media for the latest news!



[Link](#)



[Link](#)



[Link](#)





# FWRC YP Workshop



**Nicole Cohen**  
*Carollo Engineers*

The inaugural YP Workshop was a resounding success! On Saturday, June 3, 2023, from 7:30 to 1:00, we gathered a vibrant audience of 40-50 engaged participants. This exceptional event was made possible by the joint efforts of FWEA SYPC and FSAWWA SYPC, exemplifying the power of collaboration. Under the theme of "H2You," we embarked on a journey of personal and professional growth.

The workshop commenced with an invigorating session led by Alvin Pilobello from Mindspace Impact, titled "Tapping into Self-Awareness." Through interactive exercises, Alvin emphasized effective communication and its significance. Melissa Pomales from Arcadis then shared her career journey, empowering attendees with insights on self-awareness and self-advocacy for career progression.

Next was the YP Panel, featuring esteemed professionals who generously shared their experiences and expertise.



Alvin Pilobello engaging with the audience



Melissa Pomales beginning her speech

Maria Bertelli from FDEP, Amanda Guillory from Garney Construction, Meera Joshi from Carollo Engineers, Zach Loeb from Clay County Utility Authority, and Alex Maas from Heyward comprised this exceptional panel. Arpita Meher from Arcadis skillfully facilitated the discussions, addressing both prepared questions and insightful queries submitted anonymously by the audience.



YP Workshop Panelists

To conclude the workshop, representatives from various organizations graced us with their valuable insights. Marjorie Craig from the Village of Tequesta and Lisa Wilson-Davis from the City of Boca Raton shared their perspectives on FSAWWA. Patrick Murphy from the City of Plant City and Athena Tipaldos from the City of Orlando spoke on behalf of FWPCOA, while Sondra Lee from the City of Tallahassee and Suzanne Mechler from CDM Smith represented FWEA.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all the participants and attendees who made this workshop a memorable and enriching experience. If you're interested in joining the YP Workshop committee, we encourage you to reach out and get involved. Stay tuned for the next YP Workshop, which will take place at the 2024 FWRC. Together, let's continue nurturing personal and professional growth within our vibrant community.



Patrick Murphy and Athena Tipaldos with FWPCOA

# Student Design Competition



**Kamal Taha**  
*Arcadis*

On Saturday June 3rd, the S&YP committee hosted FWRC's annual Student Design Competition (SDC). Across the two categories, Environmental and Wastewater, three teams from two of Florida's largest universities were competing. The University of South Florida (USF) had one team competing in the Environmental Category while the University of Florida (UF) had teams in both categories.

Since UF was the only team competing in the Wastewater category they won by default and will be moving on to the national SDC at the 2024 Water Environment Federation's Technical Exhibition Conference (WEFTEC). The UF Team, represented by Hunter Kaminski, still had to present their project to our panel of judges in preparation for WEFTEC. Luckily though, since UF was the only team competing, the judges were able to have a more detailed conversation on the project and give their full feedback on the report and presentation. Hopefully, this will provide them with an edge at WEFTEC's SDC. We wish the UF team the best of luck at WEFTEC later this year!

The Environmental Category was a VERY close competition, between USF and UF. Both teams had excellent presentations and made full use of the time explaining their problem statements and methodologies. The students were also ready for any questions the judges threw at them, but in the end, only one team can move forward...



After some time for the judges to deliberate and a small drumroll from the committee, USF was granted the win in the Environmental category this year and will be moving on to the national SDC. Best of luck to Daniela Montoya, Fabricio Escobar, Olta Tarko, and Adele Howard at WEFTEC later this year!

The quality of students from the universities in Florida seems to increase every year and this year was no different. Hopefully next FWRC we see more student participation! It is always a treat seeing what new problems these students are working on and how they go about solving them.



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# Resume Workshop



**Kamal Taha**  
*Arcadis*



The S&YP committee held a resume workshop for all the students participating in the Student Design Competition on Saturday, June 3rd. The intent of the workshop is to give the judges time to tally up the scores and decide the winners for the Environmental and Wastewater categories while giving the students a much-needed break. This year I was joined by fellow Arcadian, Jissell Muir, to present to the students.

Since FWRC was scheduled differently this year, we did not have as many students attending. However, this allowed for a more intimate setting! We had a lot of engagement from the young professionals in the audience, namely Nicole Cohen and Laura Rodriguez from Carollo Engineers, Inc. As per usual, more than just resumes were discussed. Everything including CVs, cover letters, how to apply for a job in a specific location, the FE Exam, and elevator pitches were brought up. With a smaller audience you're able to give a more tailored presentation based on the questions you receive, which I felt made up for the lack of attendance this year. Hopefully the students felt this way too.

To conclude the workshop, we let all the students know that if they ever needed their resumes reviewed to PLEASE reach out to us or the others on the S&YP committee. This offer also stands to any student who needs their resume reviewed, whether you were at FWRC or not! If you are reading this and need a resume reviewed, please don't hesitate to contact us!!!

# YP Summit



**Emma Johnson**  
*Hazen & Sawyer*

The Young Professionals (YP) Summit held on March 28th, 2023, in Sacramento, CA, was an incredibly inspiring and informative experience. As a participant, I was able to learn from experts in the water industry and gain valuable insights into how to succeed as a YP. Additionally, the YP Leader Training Day was held on the day prior to the Summit. The YP Leader Training day was split into two rooms according to professional organization: American Water Works Association (AWWA) and Water Environment Federation (WEF). Due to my involvement with AWWA, I participated in the AWWA section of YP Leader Training.

Starting with the YP Leader Training Day, the AWWA section presented a wealth of advice related to becoming a better leader. One of the greatest pieces of advice for me was the comparison of being a leader versus a manager presented by the Transformative Water Leadership Academy, an AWWA leadership initiative. From the presentation, it was shown that being a leader is a step beyond being a manager, one that develops instead of maintains, one that innovates instead of administers, and one that focuses on people instead of on systems and structures. The second half of the workshop focused on leadership roles. This portion of the day involved workshoping with others from across the country regarding the challenges they face as a section or regional leader in various councils and committees. The environment of sharing challenges and solutions was extremely beneficial for me to learn how to improve my event planning skills and gain insight on what events other committees have put on.

The next day was the ever-so anticipated YP Summit - full of presentations, workshops, and networking.



One of the biggest aspects of the Summit was the emphasis on innovation and not sticking to the status-quo. This was incredibly motivating and encouraged me to be more willing to be creative in my work and pursue career goals, even if it means stepping outside of my comfort zone. In addition, the workshops also provided an abundance of practical advice and guidance. The speakers shared tips on creativity, building a personal brand, how to be an effective environmental advocate, and committing to continuous improvement. In addition to the presentations, I found it very inspiring to be in small group settings with like-minded individuals and with diverse industry perspectives.

Overall, the YP Summit was an incredibly valuable experience, and I encourage all YPs to attend next year's Summit, wherever in the country it may be. I left feeling inspired and empowered, with a newfound sense of confidence and motivation to pursue my professional goals.



# WEF 2023 National Water Policy Fly-in



**Olga Mikhalechishina**  
*Woodard & Curran*

I never thought that politics was my thing. I'm an engineer, not a lawyer. But I'm always open to new opportunities and experiences. That's why I applied for the WEF 2023 National Water Policy Fly-In scholarship, and I was honored to receive it. This Fly-In has completely changed my perspective on getting involved in water policy. The Water Fly-In, organized by water advocacy organizations and industry leaders, provided a crucial platform for concerned citizens and professionals to come together and voice their opinions on urgent water-related issues. Held in Washington, DC, this event aimed to raise awareness, drive policy changes, and promote the adoption of sustainable practices in the water and wastewater industry.

One of the most impactful aspects of the Water Fly-In was the opportunity to directly engage with policymakers. These face-to-face interactions humanized the issues at hand and fostered meaningful connections that have the potential to drive concrete policy change. The Water Fly-In plays a vital role in bridging the gap between concerned citizens and policymakers. It reinforces the importance of citizen engagement and underscores the tremendous power of collective action in achieving tangible outcomes.



I would like to encourage everyone to communicate with their congressional representatives and senators in their respective regions. It can be as simple as sending an email or, even better, scheduling a meeting with them. They are genuinely interested in learning about your concerns. Additionally, don't forget to show your support for their work on the issues that deeply matter to you.



# WEF YP Springboard Program



**Olga Mikhalchishina**  
*Woodard & Curran*

This year I had the privilege of participating in the Springboard Program organized by the Water Environment Federation (WEF) Students and Young Professionals Committee (SYPC). The program focuses on integrating young talents into WEF technical committees and the WEFTEC Program Committee during the WEF Winter Meeting. This unique opportunity aims to bridge the gap between experienced professionals and the emerging generation of leaders in the field. During my time at the Springboard Program, I had the privilege of meeting and collaborating with key volunteer committees and industry experts. I was paired with my buddy, an experienced program committee member, Tracy Ekola. She helped me navigate through the WEFTEC 2023 program-building process.

What struck me the most during my participation in the Springboard Program was the genuine commitment of the WEF community to empower young professionals. The program organizers and the industry leaders truly recognized the potential of the next generation and actively sought to create avenues for our voices to be heard and our contributions to be valued.

The Springboard Program emphasized the importance of cross-generational collaboration. It highlighted the need for diverse perspectives and fresh ideas to tackle the industry challenges we face today. By bridging the gap between senior professionals and the emerging generation, the Springboard Program fostered an environment of mutual respect and knowledge exchange. Looking back on my experience, I am filled with gratitude for the opportunity to participate in the Springboard Program. The connections I formed and the knowledge I gained during this event have undoubtedly influenced my professional growth and expanded my horizons. To fellow students and young professionals interested in the water industry, I wholeheartedly encourage you to explore the Springboard Program offered by WEF SYPC.





## YP of the Year Award 2022-2023



Colten Brickler was nominated by his peers for the 2022-2023 FWEA “YP of the Year” Award and was selected by the S&YP Committee, along with members of FWEA’s Board of Directors, due to his service to FWEA's Central Chapter.

As the YP of the Year, Colten will get the opportunity to take an all expenses paid trip to the 2024 Young Professional Summit, held in Portland, Oregon at the Utility Management Conference in February 2024. Additionally, he was recognized at the 2023 Florida Water Resources Conference Award Luncheon.

Applications will open Fall 2023 for the 2023-2024 YP of the Year. Stay tuned and check the SYPC website for the application.



# Upcoming Events

## First Coast Chapter

August 4

FWEA/FSAWWA Annual Fishing  
Tournament  
7:30 - 4:00

## Central Chapter

September 22

Scholarship Golf Tournament  
7:00 - 3:00

## Treasure Coast Chapter

July 27

Golf & Multisport Simulator Social  
5:30 - 7:30

## Manasota Chapter

August 3

Joint Summer Social  
5:30 - 7:30

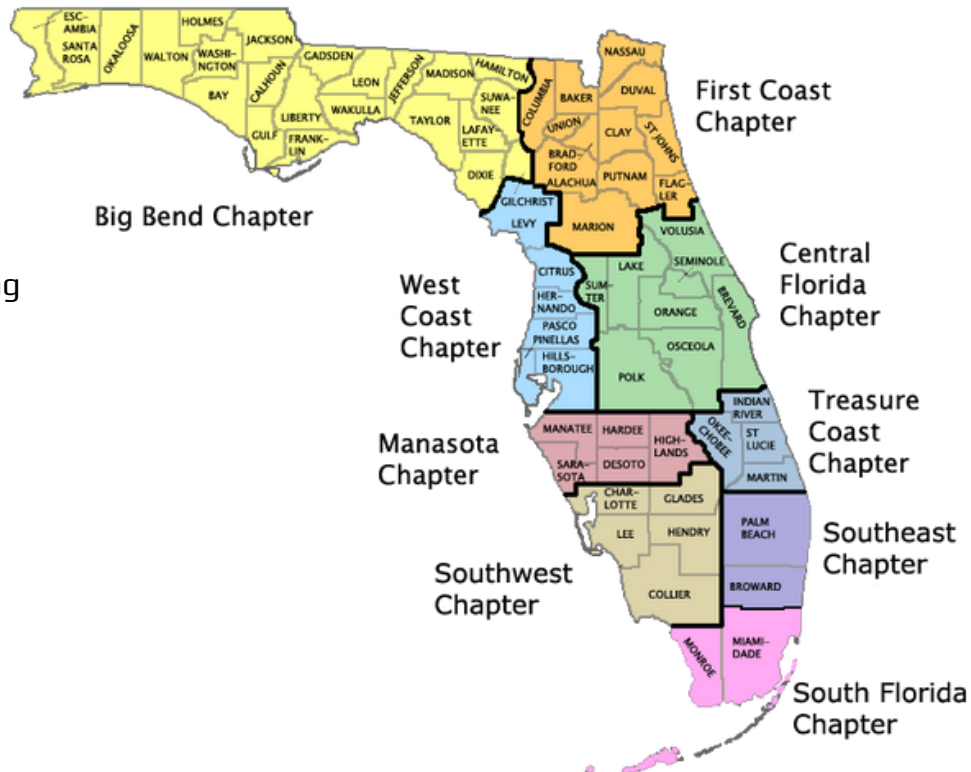
## Southwest Chapter

August 24

Southwest Florida Water and  
Wastewater Exposition  
9:00 - 4:00

September 29

FWEA/FSAWWA Annual Charity Golf  
Tournament  
7:00 - 2:00



## Seminars

September 14

Biosolids Seminar  
St. Petersburg

November 2

Wastewater Process Seminar  
Jacksonville

## Contact Us

Visit our website or contact the S&YP  
Committee Chair for more information  
on FWRC, volunteering, or sponsorship  
opportunities.

Nicole Cohen  
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[S&YPC Website](#)

Additional Events listed at: [FWEA Calendar of Events](#)