



The Monitor

The Louisiana Section Newsletter



January 2026

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Message from the Chair

Corey Gautreaux, PPM Consultants, Inc.

I hope the 2025 holiday season was merry and bright and I hope your 2026 is off to a wonderful start! As I begin my second (and final) year as Chair of the Louisiana Section, I'd like to thank all of those that have worked so hard to make 2025 a success. From the board members to the committee chairs, the corporate sponsors, and all our event attendees, thank you!

We closed out 2025 with yet another successful Fall Conference. This event continues to exceed our expectations and shows the overwhelming support of the Section. None of this would be possible without our Conference Planning Committee volunteers! What looks like a show that runs itself is a real testament of the hours upon hours of hard work behind-the-scenes by all our volunteers. Months of planning, meetings, conference calls, abstract reviews, attendee registration, etc. all culminate for a two-day event that is one of the premier environmental conferences across the country. We are lucky enough to host that right here in Baton Rouge!

In 2025 we were fortunate to host a handful of events that allowed for networking and information sharing. Numerous lunch/dinner meetings, a distillery tour, a YP social, and our annual YP Golf Tournament provided opportunities to meet with fellow professionals. I hope you have had a chance to join us at one of our exciting events that show the value of your membership and look forward to seeing you in 2026. Additionally, our new website has helped streamline Section emails and meeting hosting.

As we kick off 2026, I hope we can provide opportunities to learn about our ever-evolving environmental world through regularly scheduled lunch/dinner meetings. I believe these meetings are valuable for networking with fellow colleagues and sharing information in a neutral forum. I also look forward to sharing information through our quarterly newsletter, The Monitor, and our website. Finally, I look forward to continuing our support for our local communities through scholarship opportunities, providing special awards at the Louisiana State Science Fair, and numerous outreach opportunities.

In 2026 the Board will welcome our newly elected Director, Emily von Qualen, and Secretary, Courtney Tolbert. Ashley Viator will serve her second year as Vice Chair, Eric Rucinski will remain Treasurer, and Allyson Morales will complete her sixth-year commitment as Past Chair. Special thanks to Boyd Boswell who completed his three-year term as Director in December and D'Juana Beason for her two-year term as Secretary.

We have already reserved lunch at Mike Anderson's in Gonzales for January 22nd and I look forward to seeing everyone! If you are interested in getting involved or have any feedback you'd like to share, please don't hesitate to reach out. Cheers to a healthy and happy start to the new year!



A&WMA 119th Annual Conference & Exhibition

[From AWMA.org/ace2026](http://AWMA.org/ace2026)

For those who were unable to attend the HON Workshop held April 8 and 9, there will be a webinar on October 9 from 12 to 1:30 pm. The webinar will review key revisions to the Hazardous Organic NESHAP (HON) and Group 1 Polymers and Resins regulations, including NSPS changes to aid in the implementation of compliance programs. Topics including process and maintenance vents, flare and LDAR requirements, fenceline monitoring, and ethylene oxide will be covered. The status of EPA's reconsideration will also be discussed.



Announcing our 119th Annual Conference & Exhibition, June 21–24 in Austin, TX!

Texas has become the “Energy Capital of the World” and is leading the way in production of both traditional and renewable sources of energy. A state larger than any European country with landscapes ranging from major metropolitan to rural, or deserts to forests to coastal areas, Texas has a wide range of environmental challenges affecting its diverse communities. The state is known for its oil and gas reserves and abundant industry, but it's also home to newer, cleaner sources of energy such as solar farms, wind farms, and hydrogen production plants. All that energy must go somewhere – be it transmitted on Texas's own electrical grid, stored in batteries made at one of the state's battery factories, transmitted via pipeline, or shipped out by road, rail, or water – and Texas does it all.

A&WMA ACE is recognized as a premier international conference, featuring content from international environmental experts from industry, researchers, consulting, legal, and government. The conference will feature over 200 platform and poster presentations, nearly 40 panels, and multiple concurrent tracks each day on air, waste, clean energy, sustainability, and environmental management topics.

Join us in Austin — we're not only the state capital, but also a burgeoning tech hub, home to the largest urban bat colony in North America, as well as the third largest state environmental agency. We're excited to welcome y'all!

[Call for Abstracts available!](#) Submit your work and present at the premier conference on environmental technology, regulation, and solutions.

Now accepting [Sponsor](#) and [Exhibitor](#) applications! Check out our new menu-based packages to meet your goals.



Understanding Member Benefits

Jason Midgett, Placid Refining

Did you know? All A&WMA members in good standing will receive one free live or recorded webinar (\$99/1.5 hours or \$169/2 hours, not a series) per membership year. Your membership must be current at the time of the webinar.

Apply for your free webinar at least 2 full business days in advance. Late applications will not be accepted. Once received, we will check your membership and if you are current and haven't already used your free webinar this year, we will send your registration to our webinar partner. You will receive a confirmation and access link from support@peachnewmedia.com.

If you are not able to attend the live webinar, you will be sent a recording to watch at your convenience. If you want to use your member benefit to access a [past webinar](#), the same form should be used.

Not a member, but ready to join and take advantage of some of many member benefits? Visit the [Association's website](#) to join now.



Annual Mission Partner



from A&WMA.org/missionpartner

Elevate Your Brand. Expand Your Impact.

The Mission of A&WMA is to assist in the professional development and critical environmental decision-making of our members to benefit society, and we want you to be a part of it!

Join the Air & Waste Management Association as a Mission Partner and connect with a global network of environmental leaders, innovators, and policymakers. Align your organization with trusted science, credible information, and real-world solutions that shape the future of environmental management.

- **Expand Your Reach and Visibility** — Showcase your organization to thousands of environmental professionals, regulators, and industry decision-makers across the globe.
- **Demonstrate Leadership and Expertise** – Contribute technical content, present at specialty conferences, and position your organization as a thought leader driving environmental innovation.
- **Support Science-Based Solutions** – Champion credible, balanced, and practical environmental approaches through A&WMA's mission-driven programs and initiatives.
- **Drive Real-World Impact** – Collaborate on educational initiatives, technical content, workforce development, and emerging issues that shape environmental policy and practice.

Annual Mission Partner Benefits

Annual Mission Partners can take advantage of a range of year-round benefits, such as:

- **Premier Exposure** – Showcase your brand at high-profile conferences, webinars, special events, and our premier annual conference, (ACE)
- **Industry Connections** – Network with direct access to federal, state, and local regulators, A&WMA leaders, researchers, consultants, and industry representatives
- **Content Influence** – Contribute to and align with trusted technical programming
- **Talent Pipeline** – Engage with emerging professionals and student programs
- **Recognition** – Enjoy year-round visibility through sponsorships, exhibits, and A&WMA digital promotion, social media and an A&WMA Annual Mission Partner logo to proudly display on your website. Plus, we will include your logo on the A&WMA website for 12 months and in 12 monthly newsletters

Opportunities to Choose to Sponsor Engagements

Mission Partners can enhance their visibility and influence through:

- A&WMA ACE Annual Conference & Exhibition (ACE) – technical sessions, events, and networking
- Specialty Conferences – focused technical content and sector-specific engagement
- Webinars and Digital Learning
- Mentoring and Career Development Programs
- Young Professional Initiatives including Coffee Break Webinars and networking sessions

Leadership and Content Collaboration

Mission Partners are invited to take an active role in A&WMA's leadership and technical planning, including:

- A&WMA's Technical Council and Coordinating Committees
- Conference Planning Committees
- A&WMA's Education, Young Professionals, and Sections & Chapters Councils
- Webinar Committee
- Member focus groups on a specific area of technical interest

Becoming an A&WMA Annual Mission Partner

Sponsor and/or exhibit at the Strategic Sponsor Level for three or more A&WMA specialty conferences and our premier Annual Conference & Exhibition (ACE) to qualify for Annual Mission Partner status. This pathway is just one way to achieve Annual Mission Partner status. There are many ways to partner with us, where you can choose which opportunities would best meet your goals. We'd be glad to create a customized package that fits your organization's priorities.

Join the Mission!

Let's work together to advance environmental knowledge and solutions. Contact Jessika Keefer to start your journey now! jkeefe@awma.org; 412-904-6003.



A Letter to My Younger Self

from Karen Brignac, Brignac Environmental Consulting

August 1, 1982

Dear Karen,

Congratulations on getting your first job out of college with your degree in chemical engineering from the University of Oklahoma. Tomorrow is your first day at Cabot Corporation's Pampa, Texas plant. This plant makes carbon black – you'll become very familiar with carbon black!

Remember that although you have a degree, you don't know anything about how this plant works. The operators (most of whom are much older than you) know how to run it – learn from them. Ask questions, get to know them as people and listen. They will make you better at your job.

It's a good thing you like football because you don't hunt or fish and you need something in common to start the conversation. Eventually, one operator will be comfortable enough with you to ask if all engineers are issued a stiff collar when they graduate – to keep their noses in the air! Don't be that engineer.

Keep your sense of humor and don't be afraid to use it. For example, at your first job, you will quickly hear about the woman operator who put arsenic in the communal coffee pot because she was mad at her boyfriend who was on the same shift. Fortunately, she put in too much and they all got sick and figured out where it came from. When you meet the crusty old union steward, he asks if you like coffee. You gain his laugh, his respect and perhaps a touch of worry when you respond "No, but I make a mean coffee cake"!

Oh, and don't be afraid to get dirty. Carbon black is dirty and the operators have to be in it every day. In fact, volunteer for the really dirty jobs – you will gain their respect quickly! One day, an operator will tell you how to fix a problem and you'll both get a bonus because he is right. The other operators know the answer but won't say anything because they'd been told to run the process another way. He trusts you to handle the information properly and not get him in trouble.

You are entering the workforce at a time when only around 10% of all Chem E graduates are women. In fact, you are the first female engineer to be hired at Cabot – with over 7500 employees worldwide. You will have to be better than male engineers and prove yourself time and time again – that isn't fair but it is what it is so just accept it and move on. Things will change, but it will take awhile. You will attend company meetings with people from plants worldwide – in a room of over 200 people, you will be one of 2 technical women. You were rigorously interviewed to be sure you had the personality to handle this – you do, so just get on with it. If you are friendly and don't look down on your co-workers, you will find them eager to help – and many will treat you like a daughter.

You will face low level sexual harassment – in 1982 only quid pro quo harassment is illegal. The court case deciding that a harassing environment is illegal is still several years away. Don't let it get you down and don't be afraid to bring it up to upper management when it's too much. Fortunately, you won't have to deal with this later in your career as companies realize it is a liability and begin training and taking harassment complaints seriously.

Cabot will take you from Pampa to St. Louis, Missouri and then Centerville, Louisiana. You'll learn a lot and meet your future husband in Louisiana. You will also realize that Louisiana is a wonderful place to live with great weather, great people, and you can literally eat shrimp every day! Cabot has small plants in small towns, so you'll eventually end up in the Baton Rouge area. You decide that 2 engineers should be able to have successful careers in this area and you're correct.

Be flexible because there might not be a production engineer job available and you'll end up in environmental. It's a good field and you'll love it so much you don't ever go back to production. But EVERYTHING you learn will come in handy throughout your career. One day you'll be an environmental consultant and sit in a room full of design engineers – the year you spent in design engineering at Cabot working with multi-discipline teams will be priceless – and earn you kudos from your co-workers and clients.

Once you get into environmental, you should join A&WMA. The contacts you will make will become lifelong friends and the technical content you learn will keep you up to date for your job. You'll also have the opportunity to develop leadership skills – don't let these pass you by!

You'll work for Georgia Gulf in Plaquemine, LA as an environmental engineer. Here you will learn to read regulations (on paper, you'll learn about the internet later), become proficient in air, water, and waste management and become the plants' expert in the Emergency Planning and Community Right to Know Act.

This gives you a chance to practice speaking to large groups as you are asked to present information on EPCRA and the Toxic Release Inventory Report to the plant employees. You'll also get more involved in safety with the PVC Division. At one point, you'll end up on the cover of the annual report so they can showcase their diversity. The rest of the team will give you a hard time about this but are secretly jealous.

You'll also get involved in the community as the Responsible Care program is developed by the Chemical Manufacturer's Association. One of the tenets of Responsible Care is sharing information about the plant and its impact on the local community. You will find this to be very rewarding and it will continue to be an important part of your career.

While at Georgia Gulf, you'll have 2 wonderful children. At this time there is no Family and Medical Leave Act. You will manage to convince your doctor to give you 8 weeks off medical leave with your first child and then convince the company to let you work part time for a few weeks with your second child. Since you have no family in the area, you and your husband manage sick days. One VP questions why you are home sick when your kids have the chicken pox – it doesn't occur to him that his wife didn't work and thus he never had to stay home with sick kids! There will be mornings when kid number two decides to spit up on you as you head out the door – you'll become a quick change artist to make it to work on time! Child care doesn't get any easier when they start school but you will manage to make it work with understanding bosses and good community support.

One advantage of environmental work over production work is that there are fewer times when you need to work late nights and weekends; this leads you to stay in the environmental department when given an opportunity to move back to production.

Then on to Deltech Corporation as EHS Manager – the first women manager on that leadership team. Here you'll lead a staff managing environmental, health, safety, security and training. This is the first time these roles have been consolidated in one department allowing you to set up your own procedures and work flow. This is a smaller company where everyone feels like family. Deltech is also closer to your home making the child care much easier! But, after 10 years, with no room to grow and the same reports year after year, you'll start looking for other opportunities.

PPM Consultants will expand your knowledge by working with other industries and a variety of regulations. Some days feel like an episode of How It's Made! One day you'll visit a plant that makes sinks and another that refinishes the rolls used in making paper – much cooler than a chemical plant or refinery where everything is in pipes! You'll also learn how to market the company's services and develop young scientists right out of college. This proves to be very rewarding.

As you approach retirement an opportunity comes up to be Director – EHS at Deltech under new ownership and management. You decide this is a good way to finish out your career. While at PPM you continued to support Deltech so it's like coming home.

But don't get too carried away with retirement, you decide to do a little work as an independent consultant – we'll see how that works.

A quick word about safety. You'll learn that keeping people safe comes down to psychology, everyone needs to understand the procedures and why they are in place. You'll hear time after time "I've done it this way for 30 years and never got hurt, why should I change now?". You have to get people to want to do it the right way for the right reasons. Throughout your career, you will be fortunate not to experience a fatality and only a few serious injuries. Here again, showing people you care is half the battle.

Along the way, you'll have bad bosses and good bosses. You'll work with outstanding leaders – and a few that are terrible. Learn from them all so that when you are a boss and leader, you'll be the best you can be. Good bosses listen, don't micromanage, set expectations, and follow through. They are also kind, civil, and respectful to everyone. It may take you awhile to get it right.

In summary, a few tips as you start your career:

- Respect everyone – until they show they aren't worthy of it.
- Find a common topic to discuss with others – this helps you establish a relationship with them. People are much more likely to help those that show they care about them more than "what can you do for me".
- Not everyone will like you – that's okay. But don't go out of your way to make enemies.
- Be on time to meetings – don't waste others time by being late.
- In the future, everyone will carry a phone in their pocket which is connected to just about the entire world. Don't let this be a distraction – especially in meetings!
- Be civil to everyone – you never know who will be your next boss – or who you will need something from in the future!
- Learn from everyone from the janitor to the CEO – you never know what nugget of knowledge will come in handy later in your career.
- You'll make decent money but be sure to save for retirement. Defined benefit retirement plans will slowly go away and be replaced by 401k plans – put as much as you can into those and be sure to get the company match – that's all you'll get from your employer for retirement.
- When you retire, it doesn't matter what your title was or what your accomplishments were, you'll remember the people you met and how you were treated. People like Charlie, Doug, Glynn, Julie, Dave, David, Cindy, Jamie, Ashley, Paul, Jessica, Lance, Traci, Rebecca, Mike, Corey, Keith, Jennifer, Jason, Bill, Greg, Ian, Zach, Rob, Jeremy and many more. That's what really matters in the long run.

Lastly, when your daughter gets her ChemE degree and starts working, she'll say "Mom, I knew I could do it all – because you did."

Enjoy the ride!

Your future self



2025 LA Section A&WMA Fall Conference Wrap-up:

Whew! What a conference! First and foremost, thank you! Thank you for your support in making the 2025 annual conference a huge success! This year's attendance was one of our highest with approximately 470 attendees over the 2 days. We hope you enjoyed the conference and networking opportunities.

Many thanks,

Elizabeth Smith and Jennifer Tullier, 2025 Conference Co-Chairs
and the A&WMA - Louisiana Section Conference Planning Committee



Southwest LA Chapter A&WMA 2026 Spring Conference

from Laura Bruchhaus, Lyondell Basell



Date: February 26, 2026

Location: L'Auberge Casino Resort, 777 Ave L'Auberge, Lake Charles, LA 70601

Registration: Individual attendee registration is now open. [Register here](#) - Registration closes Thursday, February 12, 2026. Registration prices will increase after this date. - Please note: No refunds will be issued after registration closes. **Refunds are subject to a 10% processing fee**

Hotel Accommodations:

Discounted rates are available at L'Auberge Casino Resort. Call 1 (866) 580-7444 and use room block code **SAWMA26** to secure your rate.

Sponsorship & Exhibitor Opportunities:

[Exhibitor Registration Form](#)
[Sponsorship Registration Form](#)

Questions? - Please contact Registration Chair Kris Ackoury at (337) 708-4806 or kackoury@westlake.com.

**L'AUBERGE
LAKE CHARLES**

DISCOUNTED ROOM RATES AVAILABLE



Upcoming Association and Section Events

SAVE THE DATES

January 22, 2026	A&WMA LA Section's January Lunch Meeting	Mike Anderson's – Clarion in Gonzales
February 26, 2026	Southwest Louisiana Spring Conference	L'Auberge Casino Resort Lake Charles, LA
March 19, 2026	A&WMA LA Section's March Dinner Meeting	Walk-On's Patio – Burbank Restaurant
March 24-26, 2026	Data Center Insights and Innovation	Dulles Technology Corridor, VA
June 22 – 24, 2026	A&WMA 119 th Annual Conference & Exhibition	ACE – Austin, TX

For a complete list of Association events and registration information, please visit the [Association's Event Calendar](#). To learn more about the Section's activities please visit the [Section website](#).

Thank You 2025 Corporate Sponsors



Become a Corporate Sponsor! The support and contributions through this program allows the Section to fund annual educational awards activities such as our Collegiate Scholarship Program, and Louisiana State Science Fair Awards. The Corporate Sponsor donation of \$375.00 is fully dedicated to the educational goals and programs of the Section. The annual donation allows any three employees of your company to attend meetings, workshops or conferences at discounted rates. As in the past, your company's name/logo will be listed on the newsletters, routine communications, and website of the Louisiana Section as a Corporate Sponsor. [APPLY HERE](#)

2026 Board Members

Corey Gautreaux	Chair	PPM Consultants, Inc.
Ashley Viator	Vice-Chair / LDEQ Liaison	LDEQ
Allyson Morales	Past-Chair	TotalEnergies Petrochemicals & Refining USA, Inc.
Eric Rucinski	Treasurer	Alliance Technical Group
Courtney Tolbert	Secretary	LDEQ
John King	Director	Breazeale, Sachse & Wilson, LLC
Emily von Qualen	Director	Liskow & Lewis
Karen Brignac	Director	Brignac Environmental Consulting LLC
Jason Midgett	Association Board of Directors	Placid Refining, LLC
Laura Bruchhaus	SW Chapter Chair	LyondellBasell

2026 Committee Members

Michael Waguespack	Awards Chair	Project Consulting Services, Inc.
Doug Melancon	Program Chair	ExxonMobil
Tokesha Collins-Wright	Program Chair	LCA
Kelly Phillips	Facilities Chair	Vopak
Andrew Swedler	Corporate Relations Chair	ExxonMobil
Heather McCormick	Membership Committee	Linde
-Coming Soon-	YP Chair	
Blake Vincent	YP Golf Tournament Chair	CK Associates
Courtney Tolbert	Communications Chair	LDEQ
Boyd Boswell	Communications Committee - Social Media Outreach	T. Baker Smith LLC
Maureen Ducote	Communications Committee - Website	LDEQ
Cindy Wu	Education Committee	Erthwrks, Inc.

The Louisiana Section is one of nearly 140 geographical member units of the Air & Waste Management Association. As such, we plan, organize and present activities that focus on local and regional environmental issues. This includes holding luncheon and dinner meetings, technical seminars, annual conferences, workshops, continuing education courses, and social outings. We publish a newsletter, launch outreach activities and provide funds for scholarships. For more information about the A&WMA, [visit the A&WMA website.](#)