

MEDIA ADVISORY

NRWA to Partner with Department of Labor on Apprenticeship Program

The National Rural Water Association, the nation's largest water utility association with more than 31,000 members, will hold a ceremonial signing in conjunction with the United States Department of Labor Nov. 14 at 3:30 p.m. local time on the rooftop of 101 Constitution Avenue NW, to launch a new nation-wide apprenticeship program.

The DOL will provide support for the NRWA as it continues to build the **WaterPro Apprenticeship Program**, which is set to become a nationally-recognized standard.

Twelve NRWA state affiliates will jointly make the announcement at training events for water and wastewater operations specialists as they look to register their own programs with the NRWA's national guideline standard. The announcement and events will commemorate National Apprenticeship Week 2017 and will highlight the need for a national water sector apprenticeship initiative.

CoBank, a cooperative bank serving agribusinesses, rural infrastructure providers and Farm Credit associations throughout the United States, will underwrite \$250,000 to help establish the program.

Media are invited to attend the signing ceremony. Sam Wade, the CEO of the NRWA, John Ladd, the Administrator of the Office of Apprenticeship for the DOL, leaders of several NRWA state affiliates and rural water leaders from CoBank will be available for interviews after the ceremonial signing.

If planning to attend, contact Jacob Morgan, corporate communications manager, CoBank at Ex. 6 or email jmorgan@cobank.com.

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More about the NRWA and the **WaterPro Apprenticeship Program**

It takes more than 380,000 highly skilled water and wastewater personnel to ensure the public supply of safe drinking water and to protect our lakes, streams and groundwater. Advancements in water treatment and supply technology have increased the skills and training required of this workforce. Water professionals are ultimately responsible for meeting stringent regulatory standards, replacing aging infrastructure, recruiting and training new operations specialists, and responding to and recovering from disasters.

In addition to increasing professional demands, utilities will soon be forced to replace many of their most experienced employees. Over the next decade, the water sector is expected to lose between 30 and 50 percent of the workforce to retirement. Many of these employees have worked at the same utility for the majority of their careers, and they will depart with decades of valuable institutional knowledge.

NRWA and State Affiliates currently provide training on operator certification, financial sustainability, environmental compliance, utility management and governance to 80,000 water professionals annually in all 50 states. Last year, over 55,000 on-site consultations were delivered by NRWA's technical experts for water quality, energy efficiency, source water protection, technical assistance and emergency response.

The WaterPro Apprenticeship program will initially be tailored to water system operations specialists and wastewater system operations specialists. Additional apprenticeships programs are in the works for water utility system customer service personnel and technical assistance specialists.

