



ASTSWMO, Providing Pathways to Our
Nation's Environmental Stewardship Since 1974

November 22, 2021

Dear ASTSWMO Colleagues and Friends,

These past 20 months have brought us to a place that we could not have imagined. We have all gained new skills to help solve the important challenges we face each day. Under the steady leadership of both our outgoing President Brent Everett (UT) and our Executive Director, Dania Rodriguez, ASTSWMO has remained the guiding light by providing support and allowing us to make connections that under pandemic conditions were difficult to achieve. Through all of this we have transitioned into a new administration prioritizing long outstanding environmental injustices in our underserved communities. Through all of this we stand here stronger today, leaning on our new skills, focusing on priorities, pushing our programs forward, but most importantly we stand here together. ASTSWMO has an unmatched presence in bringing our States and Territories (States) together to help fulfill our commitment of addressing our environmental challenges while helping to shape our future. This commitment will not change.

This past year we as an organization took the time to find out what is most important to us as ASTSWMO, and unequivocally it is our members. We began by increasing the involvement of our Voting Members by listening to your concerns on how we engage with our federal partners. We have set up virtual meetings allowing new members, who historically could not travel, learn from our sessions. We have pivoted to changing priorities ensuring we, as an organization, can best support your needs. While it is important to look back on our achievements, we must also focus on our future. As Theodore Roosevelt said over one hundred years ago "*The nation behaves well if it treats its natural resources as assets which it must turn over to the next generation increased, and not impaired, in value.*" This is just as true today and we as ASTSWMO are here to help our members meet this objective.

As a model of constructive dialog, through our national environmental experts from our membership, ASTSWMO is fortunate to have strong Subcommittees and Task Forces/Focus Groups (TF/FG). We continue to experience within our membership a substantial number of individuals retiring. These retirements are well-deserved, and they leave behind an organization that is better than they found it. We are privileged to have members through our *Members-in-Action* willing to step into those leadership roles and make a difference. Going into my fourth year on the Executive Committee, it is truly astounding to witness the dedication of our organizational structure. I look forward to this upcoming year by having the opportunity to address both those historical and emerging concerns. Again, this work cannot be completed without our Subcommittees and TF/FG members.

Their hard work is not just the documents on our webpage ([ASTSWMO – Association of State and Territorial Solid Waste Management Officials](#)), but also in the relationships that they have built between our members and our partners.

Our organization understands the uncertainty that we continue to face in our local and State environment. Therefore, for the second year in a row, we have frozen our member fees. In the same manner, we have evaluated our expenses and found ways to continue to save funds. An example of this commitment was the reduction of our lease office space. We understand the constraints that each of our members face are unique, and we will continue to look for opportunities to be inclusive, so all the States share the benefits of being an active member of ASTSWMO.

In looking ahead, the ASTSWMO Board of Directors continues to make progress on enacting the goals of the 2020-2024 *ASTSWMO Strategic Plan*. We continue to: 1) Provide assistance to the membership; 2) Strengthen and develop strategic partnerships in our advocacy of member interests at the Federal level; and 3) Ensure a sustainable organization. The actions that we take on a daily basis focus on how we can improve to meet our Strategic Plan and our mission statement to *“promote effective State and Territorial programs and to affect relevant national policies for waste and materials management, environmentally sustainable practices, and environmental restoration.”*

The organization has submitted its comments to EPA on their *Draft FY 2022-2026 EPA Strategic Plan*. It is uplifting to see the EPA stating, *“With a renewed focus on climate, environmental justice and children’s health, EPA will emphasize frequent and early communications as a keystone of its partnership with Tribal and state co-regulators, whose concerns and existing regulatory program must be thoughtfully considered to develop effective and lasting policies to our most pressing environmental challenges.”* ASTSWMO is excited to continue our productive relationship with the EPA and continue to be an active partner in fulfilling the joint missions of both organizations.

In closing, I am going to end my letter to you today the way that it began, thanking those who have led this organization. Our outgoing President Brent Everett (UT), our outgoing Past-President Conchita Taitano (GU), Secretary-Treasurer April Webb (KY), and Executive Director Dania Rodriguez have illustrated a level of devotion that is immeasurable to this organization. I would also like to recognize our new Vice-President Millie Garcia-Serrano (MA), whom I am extremely excited to work with in leading ASTSWMO. In addition, as you all know the meaningful work of this organization could not have been achieved without Charles Reyes, Kerry Callahan, Scott Lauher, TJ Gannon, and Maria Warner. They are truly the glue that keeps this organization together. I look forward to continuing to learn from you all as we address ongoing concerns while working with our [Board Members](#) that represent the voices of their respective regions.

Sincerely,



Timothy T. Ratsep, DE
ASTSWMO President (2021-2022)