American Water Works Association
VirginiaSection

2026 VA AWWA Rodeo Events Rules



Note: No walk-on registrants on the day of events. All contestants shall be pre-registered. All contestants shall be active Utility Members of the Virginia Section of the AWWA to compete.
Revised July 2026

VA AWWA Competitions BEST OF VIRGINIA - TAP WATER TASTE TEST

INTRODUCTION

1. The Taste Test event determines which Virginia AWWA Utility offers the best tasting water in the State. The winner of this event will represent the Virginia Section at the Best of the Best Tap Water Taste Test held at the National AWWA Annual Conference and Exposition.

ELIGIBILITY

2. Utilities must be located within the Commonwealth of Virginia.
3. Utilities wishing to compete in the Taste Test must be affiliated with the AWWA Virginia section, either through utility or individual AWWA membership.
4. Utilities wishing to compete in the Taste Test must have at least one person registered for the Distribution Seminar and Utility Rodeo event.
5. Utilities planning to submit a sample for the Taste Test shall not have any state or federal drinking water violations (MCL, monitoring, record-keeping, etc.) for the current and prior calendar year. Samples found to be in violation will be disqualified.
6. Only one entry per utility may be submitted.

COMPETITION

7. The samples will be covered and stored at room temperature until the time of the event. The name of the Utility will be recorded and replaced with a number. At the time of the event, all samples will be uncovered and distributed into sampling cups and will be tasted at room temperature.
8. A panel of 3 judges and 1 alternate, appointed by the Distribution Seminar and Utility Rodeo host utility and approved by the Distribution Systems Committee Chair, shall taste each of the water samples from the participating utilities.
9. The samples will be judged on four different categories – Clarity, Odor, Flavor, and After-taste. Each category will be on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the best in each category. The scores from each category will then be added together for a total score ranging between 10 and 40.
10. If there is a discrepancy in any of the judge's scoring sheet, the scores for that particular judge will be thrown out and the alternate used. If there are discrepancies with all of the judges scores, then all scores will be thrown out and the contest will be re-started.

11. The scores from all of the judges will be totaled and the top three water samples will be recorded. The utility supplying the water with the highest score will represent the Virginia Section at the ACE Conference. Only the winner shall be announced during the Banquet the night before the Rodeo.

12. If the Section winner is unable to attend the National Competition, they will be given the option of either providing samples to another Virginia Section member to act as a representative for them at the competition or defer to the runner-up to enter the competition.

13. If the Section winner receives any state or federal drinking water violations (MCL, monitoring, record-keeping, etc.) between the date of the Section Taste Test and two (2) calendar weeks prior to the start of the ACE conference, then the runner-up utility will have the option of attending the event on behalf of the Section.

REQUIREMENTS

14. Each utility participating in the Taste Test shall submit three (3) individual 1-liter samples in standard glass containers with a secured cap. **DO NOT LABEL SAMPLE BOTTLES.** Bottles will be identified to the proper utility at the time of registration for the event.

15. The samples shall be received at the registration table located at the Distribution Seminar and Utility Rodeo hotel, no later than 5:00 pm on Monday, the first day of the conference, by the individual representing the utility. Submitting the sample in person is recommended. **SAMPLES WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED AFTER THE 5:00 PM DEADLINE**

16. Samples may be mailed to the event, at the sole risk of the municipality, and shall be received and transferred to the Committee by the deadline. See registration information for the mailing address of the conference hotel. Address the package to “VA AWWA Utility Rodeo representative”. All risks associated with shipping, receiving, and transfer of packages shall be that of the municipality. Late packages will be returned to the municipality unopened, and the municipality shall forfeit competing in the event.

WHAT THE WINNER RECEIVES

17. The Champion will:
    a. Be presented with one traveling trophy to keep at the close of the competition for one year.
    b. Be presented with an individual trophy.
    c. May be featured on the VA AWWA website and in publications.
    d. Receive a stipend for expenses to attend the next AWWA ACE Conference to compete in the Best of the Best (In general, expense reimbursement covers transportation costs to and from the convention site, hotel, and meals).
    e. Amount of Stipend will be determined in December of each year and will be based on location of the Annual AWWA ACE Conference. Amount will be no less than $1,000.
    f. Winners will be informed of the exact amount before ACE Registration opens

VA AWWA Competitions PEOPLES CHOICE - TAP WATER TASTE TEST

INTRODUCTION

1. In addition to the Best of Virginia Taste Test, there will also be a People's Choice taste test. Winner of this event will receive a trophy and recognition by the section.

ELIGIBILITY

2. All entries in the Best of Virginia Taste Test are also entered into this competition.

COMPETITION

3. The samples will be covered and stored at room temperature until the time of the event. The name of the Utility will be recorded and replaced with a number. At the time of the event, all samples will be uncovered, poured into individual glass pitchers, then distributed into sampling cups and will be tasted at room temperature.

4. Each registrant will be given one ticket to vote for the taste test. During the morning breaks of the seminar schedule, a tasting table will be set up in the exhibition hall. Registrants will then be invited to taste each sample and cast their vote by depositing their ticket for the sample of their choice.

5. The tickets received by each sample will then be counted, and the Utility with the most will be announced as the winner at the Banquet the night before the Rodeo.

REQUIREMENTS

6. See Best of Virginia – Tap Water Taste Test rules

WHAT THE WINNER RECEIVES

7. The Champion will be presented with an individual trophy.