



TOP 10

Public Works Leaders of the Year Award Nomination

WASHINGTON STATE CHAPTER

MARCH 2, 2026



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February 24, 2026

APWA Award Selection Committee

1200 Main Street, Suite 1400

Kansas City, MO 64105-2100

Re: Washington Chapter Nomination for Public Works Leaders of the Year Award

Dear Awards Committee:

It is my honor to submit, on behalf of the Washington Chapter of APWA, the attached nomination of Kirk Holmes for the 2026 Top Ten Public Works Leaders of the Year Award. Our nomination package details Kirk's history and accomplishments in public works and the Washington Chapter is proud to submit him for your consideration as one of this year's Top Ten Leaders.

Kirk has been a **devoted member of APWA since 1998** and has served the chapter in many ways. Kirk served on the Board of Directors, chaired the Emergency Management and Award committees, and led the Washington Chapter as President in 2017. He continues to provide leadership to the chapter, **most notably as an adviser and instructor for the Northwest Public Works Institute**, where he guides and helps prepare the next generation of public works leaders.

Kirk's career has been marked by a passion for assisting communities' response and recovery from the disruptions caused by natural disasters. He has worked tirelessly to enhance long-term resilience for the communities that he serves. Kirk is an active member of the Washington State Emergency Managers Association and **currently serves as Chair of the State Emergency Management Council that advises the Governor on all matters pertaining to state and local emergency management. Kirk is the first public works professional to serve in this capacity**, and he advocates for recognition of public works with the emergency response community.

Thank you for considering Kirk for this prestigious award. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact me at 360-753-8484 or jrioux.ci.olympia.wa.us.

Sincerely,

Jim Rioux

2026 Washington Chapter President



NAVIGATION

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Kirk Holmes

Kirk's career reflects a rare blend of technical expertise, strategic foresight, and principled leadership. In every role he has held, he has demonstrated an unwavering focus on protecting communities, strengthening infrastructure, and advancing systems that serve the public good. His ability to bridge public works, and intergovernmental coordination has been particularly valuable in an era defined by increasingly complex and cascading risks.

**— Sharon Wallace
Deputy Director
State of Washington, Military Department
Emergency Management Division**

Summary

Over a career spanning four decades, Kirk Holmes has distinguished himself through sustained leadership and dedication to the public works profession, strengthening infrastructure systems, advancing emergency preparedness, and positioning public works as a central pillar of resilient communities throughout Washington State. His career reflects not only technical competence but strategic vision — the ability to see transportation, utilities, solid waste, flood control, capital planning, and emergency management as interconnected systems rather than isolated departments.

Kirk's leadership is defined by disciplined management, forward-thinking program development, and institutional integration. He has led multidisciplinary teams across rural and urban jurisdictions, managed multimillion-dollar capital programs, overseen federal and state grant compliance, and modernized operational frameworks to improve accountability and performance. His work consistently demonstrates that effective public works leadership requires both technical expertise and cross-functional leadership — aligning engineering, finance, operations, regulatory compliance, and public communication into unified action.

Employment Record

Director of Central Washington and Emergency Management Services

PERTEET INC.

JAN 2015 - PRESENT, WASHINGTON STATE

Since joining Perteet in 2015, Kirk Holmes has served as a senior executive leader responsible for delivering transportation, utility, flood control, and emergency management programs throughout Central Washington. His role integrates executive oversight, technical direction, emergency preparedness leadership, grant strategy development, and stakeholder engagement—bringing decades of public works operational experience into the planning, design, and resiliency services provided to local governments. Kirk has served as Principal-in-Charge, Project Manager, Emergency Services Lead, and Director of Central Washington Services.

In this role, Kirk provides executive oversight of Perteet's operations and client relationships throughout Central and Eastern Washington. He leads multidisciplinary teams delivering transportation, utility, flood control, and emergency management projects. He is responsible for strategic direction, program development, resource allocation, and maintaining long-term relationships with cities, counties, tribes, and special purpose districts.



Principal-in-Charge:

Kirk's PIC experience spans roadway reconstruction, intersection improvements, signalization, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, stormwater infrastructure, flood control facilities, and all elements of public water/wastewater systems.

- » Provides executive oversight of design and capital improvement projects from planning through construction
- » Ensures quality control of plans, specifications, and estimates (PS&E)
- » Guides project scope, schedule, and budget management
- » Serves as executive liaison between Pertteet and public agency clients
- » Supports stakeholder engagement and public involvement strategies
- » Supervises multidisciplinary teams including engineering, GIS, and subconsultants

Project Manager:

As a project manager, Kirk is responsible for coordinating public outreach, leading stakeholder meetings, presenting to city councils and boards, and translating complex technical findings into accessible information for decision-makers.

- » Comprehensive water and sewer system planning
- » Hazard mitigation plan development and updates
- » Comprehensive Flood Hazard Management Plans
- » Transportation corridor studies and intersection control evaluations
- » Federal and state funded capital projects (STBG, TIB, Safe Routes to School, FEMA BRIC)
- » Construction phase services and coordination

Public Works Director

AUG 2008 - JAN 2015 KITTITAS COUNTY

From 2008 to 2015, Kirk Holmes served as Kittitas County Public Works Director, leading all transportation, utility, and emergency management functions for a geographically large and hazard-prone rural county. During his tenure, he oversaw roadway maintenance and capital improvement programs, bridge rehabilitation, flood control infrastructure, stormwater

management, and solid waste operations while managing multimillion-dollar annual budgets and multidisciplinary staff. He directed major federally and state-funded projects, including rural arterial reconstructions, fish passage barrier removals, culvert replacements, and pavement preservation strategies designed to extend asset life in freeze-thaw environments.

Kirk also played a central role in the formation of the Kittitas County Flood Control Zone District in 2013, leading public outreach, policy development, and implementation of a voter-approved funding mechanism that leveraged local dollars into significant annual flood mitigation investments.

A seasoned emergency management professional, Kirk served in 19 presidential disaster declarations and locally declared emergencies, frequently acting as Operations Section Chief or liaison within the Emergency Operations Center. He led preliminary damage assessments, coordinated mutual aid deployments, developed FEMA project worksheets, and implemented debris management and mitigation strategies following wildfires, floods, and severe winter storms. His leadership emphasized resilience, long-term risk reduction, and improved financial recovery processes, positioning the County to respond more effectively to future events while strengthening public infrastructure and community preparedness.

Public Works Director

MAR 2000 - AUG 2008 CITY OF SNOQUALMIE

Project Engineer / Manager

From 2000 to 2008, Kirk served as Public Works Director for the City of Snoqualmie during a period of rapid growth associated with the Snoqualmie Ridge development. He led major capital upgrades to the City's water and wastewater treatment systems, including a \$6.5 million plant expansion and implementation of Class A biosolids processing to improve efficiency and reduce long-term disposal costs. He directed roadway, stormwater, and utility improvements to support residential and commercial expansion while maintaining service reliability. Kirk also served in key emergency management leadership roles during significant flood and storm events, strengthening debris management and emergency response protocols.



Public Works Director

JUN 1998 - MAR 2000 TOWN OF CHESTER, MT

From 1998 to 2000, Kirk served as Public Works Director for the Town of Chester, Montana, overseeing water, wastewater, streets, and solid waste operations in a rural agricultural community. He managed system maintenance, regulatory compliance, capital planning, and budgeting while working closely with elected officials and state agencies. His leadership emphasized infrastructure reliability, fiscal stewardship, and practical solutions tailored to limited rural resources. During this time, he coordinated hazard assessments for rural water systems and supported regional water initiatives building a foundation of experience in small-system operations, community engagement, and resilient infrastructure management.

When I was first elected as a Kittitas County Commissioner with no prior public office experience. From day one, Kirk served as an indispensable mentor, patiently teaching me the responsibilities, priorities, and practical realities of a county public works department. His guidance was a foundation for my effectiveness as an elected official.

— Paul Jewell
Former Kittitas County Commissioner

JOB-RELATED TECHNICAL & MANAGERIAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS >>



Past President's Meeting: Scott Egger, Debbie Sullivan (Mentee), Toby Rickman (Top Ten Winner), Mike Clark (Top Ten Winner)

During my time working under his leadership, I served alongside Kirk through multiple emergency management events, including significant floods and severe ice storms. In each instance, he led with composure, strategic clarity, and a deep understanding of public works operations. His expertise spans snow and ice operations, water, sanitary sewer, storm water management, capital planning, and organizational development. At a time when Snoqualmie was among the fastest-growing cities in Washington State, Kirk implemented systems and operational frameworks that ensured reliable service delivery while positioning the department for long-term sustainability and resilience.

— Michael Roy
Fleet Director
City of Portland, Oregon

Innovation in Kirk's career is not technological novelty for its own sake. Rather, it is systems innovation: strengthening documentation practices to protect public funds, integrating debris management into emergency operations plans, developing scalable programs adaptable to jurisdictions of varying size, and embedding hazard mitigation principles into everyday infrastructure planning. Whether managing transportation safety improvements, overseeing flood mitigation initiatives, or guiding solid waste operations, he applies a systems-based lens that anticipates long-term impacts.

A defining managerial accomplishment has been his ability to move public works beyond reactive service delivery into proactive resilience planning. He has repeatedly improved processes after disasters, institutionalized lessons learned, strengthened reimbursement documentation practices, and built cross-jurisdictional partnerships that endure beyond single events. His leadership reflects steady stewardship — not episodic success, but sustained advancement.

Kirk Holmes represents the model of the modern public works professional: technically grounded, managerially disciplined, fiscally responsible, collaborative across agencies, and innovative in strengthening the systems that protect communities every day.

A Public Works Generalist — Mastery Across Disciplines

One of Kirk Holmes' greatest professional strengths is his breadth of public works experience. He is not defined by a single specialty; rather, he has developed expertise across the full spectrum of public works functions. This comprehensive foundation has enabled him to manage complex, interdependent systems with confidence.

Throughout his career, Kirk has overseen and contributed to:

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE:

Roadway design and rehabilitation, safety corridor improvements, ADA compliance upgrades, bridge coordination, multimodal facilities, traffic safety enhancements, and grant-funded transportation improvements. His work integrates safety, accessibility, and long-term asset stewardship.

STORMWATER AND FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT:

Flood mitigation planning, drainage system improvements, culvert replacements, watershed coordination, and integration of floodplain regulations with capital planning. His experience includes coordination with flood control districts and hazard mitigation planning processes.

JOB-RELATED TECHNICAL & MANAGERIAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS >>



Team Rubicon



Flood Disaster Training Exercise - Kittitas County

WATER AND WASTEWATER SYSTEMS:

Utility coordination, capital improvement planning, regulatory compliance, and long-term infrastructure investment strategies to ensure reliable service delivery.

SOLID WASTE AND DEBRIS MANAGEMENT:

Transfer station operations, environmental compliance, disposal site coordination, disaster debris planning, and implementation of structured voucher and tracking systems during emergencies.

CAPITAL PROGRAM MANAGEMENT:

Oversight of multimillion-dollar infrastructure programs, grant administration, contractor management, procurement compliance, and lifecycle asset management.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS INTEGRATION:

Development of emergency operations appendices, debris management planning, FEMA Public Assistance coordination, and disaster recovery documentation processes.

His work spans rural counties with limited staffing and resources, as well as more urbanized jurisdictions with higher service demands and regulatory complexity. This dual exposure has required adaptability, financial discipline, and operational creativity.

Being a generalist in public works is not a dilution of expertise — it is an expansion of perspective. Kirk understands how transportation affects emergency access routes; how stormwater systems influence road stability; how solid waste operations impact public health; how utility resilience shapes recovery timelines; and how capital planning decisions today influence hazard vulnerability tomorrow.

This broad professional base became the foundation for his later leadership in emergency management integration. Because he understands each component of public works operations, he can coordinate them effectively under disaster conditions. His generalist expertise is what allows him to see the whole system when others may see only their part.

Preservation & Maintenance for Critical Infrastructure

SNOHOMISH COUNTY:
11 bridges in poor condition



Snohomish County Bridge System Level Seismic Assessment

In his current role on the State Emergency Management Council, he continues to engage in collaborative discussions to identify solutions to mitigate the impacts of declining FEMA Public Assistant Program funding. His strategic thinking and pragmatic approach are vital to improving community resilience across the state.

— **Debbie Sullivan**
Assistant City Manager
City of Olympia

Integrating Public Works into Disaster Preparedness, Response, and Recovery

Kirk's comprehensive public works background uniquely positioned him to elevate the profession's role within emergency management. Rather than treating disasters as temporary deviations from normal operations, he has embedded preparedness, response, and recovery into the fabric of public works systems.

His leadership demonstrates that public works is not ancillary to emergency management — it is foundational.

PROJECT EXAMPLE

Snohomish County Bridge System Level Seismic Assessment – Snohomish County, WA

This project exemplifies Kirk's ability to translate emerging federal and state resilience tools into actionable public works decision-making. Kirk and his team worked with Snohomish County Public Works to assess all the agency's bridges using a newly developed analysis tool, created by the Department of Homeland Security with WSDOT and WA Emergency Management Division. Perteet was the lead data analyst tasked with using the Bridge Seismic Screening Tool (BSST), ingesting data, analyzing it, and compiling outputs. Kirk coordinated this effort with Perteet's engineering group and GIS analysts for both creation of additional data as well as visualization of outputs. Kirk also developed and delivered training material and even provided feedback to the original authors of the tool. The results of this project were used to confirm current route planning and to prioritize mitigation strategies along pre-identified critical transportation routes.

Snohomish County deliverables:

- » 2019, GIS Data Set
- » 2019, Bridge Seismic Screening Tool Training Plan

INSTITUTIONAL LEADERSHIP AT THE STATE LEVEL

As Co-Chair of the Washington State Emergency Management Council, Kirk serves as a liaison to the Washington Military Department's Emergency Management Division and the Governor's Office, working alongside representatives from law enforcement, fire services, public health, and other first responder disciplines. In this role, he ensures that public works priorities — debris removal, infrastructure restoration, utility stabilization, and regulatory compliance — are represented in statewide emergency planning discussions.

This position requires strategic vision, policy fluency, and collaborative diplomacy. Kirk helps shape statewide preparedness policy, ensuring

that emergency operations plans account for infrastructure realities and that recovery strategies align with public works operational capacities. His presence at this level elevates the profession's voice within decision-making environments.

One of the many projects that Kirk worked on in preparation for this role was his participation in the Cascadia Rising 2016 Exercise both as a consultant for City of Bellevue's participation and a member of Critical Transportation Subcommittee. The Cascadia Rising 2016 Exercise, the Pacific Northwest's largest, multistate functional exercise, explored the risks associated with a full rupture of the Cascadia Subduction Zone; risks that could include a catastrophic earthquake and tsunami. The outcomes of this exercise were documented in the Cascadia Rising 2016 Exercise Joint Multi-State-After-Action Report, prepared by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The City of Bellevue was one of the participants in the Cascadia Rising and had been involved in the 24-month-long planning effort leading up to the event. During this period the city responded to several smaller emergencies in their jurisdictions. As a result of these experiences, the Bellevue Transportation Department decided to review and revise its current disaster preparedness program.

Participation in Cascadia Rising 2016 positioned Kirk at the intersection of public works operations and statewide emergency policy during the Pacific Northwest's most significant earthquake preparedness exercise, where he bridged field realities with policy frameworks, translating operational challenges into actionable planning improvements later shared across professional forums, including PWX 2019.

PROJECT EXAMPLE

2017 - 2025, Bellevue Transportation Department Preparedness Initiative

Kirk provided technical assistance by performing a comprehensive review of the current preparedness program at the City of Bellevue transportation department. The process included attending meetings and reviewing current planning documents and appendices processes, and procedures. A gap analysis was prepared detailing the findings and recommended planning and programmatic actions the transportation department could take to increase their preparedness. Based on findings of the gap analysis, Kirk

and his team were also asked to update Emergency Support Functions 1 - Transportation, 3 - Engineering, and 12 - Energy. The transportation department is the lead agency for these Emergency Support Functions (ESFs), and the updates were focused on expanding and clarifying the department's roles and responsibilities. Perteet also completed a comprehensive update of the transportation coordination center handbook. The transportation coordination center is the departmental operations center for emergency response and recovery of the transportation system. The update included restructuring the organizational chart for the transportation coordination center, updating roles, responsibilities, and processes to be consistent with the incident command system, increasing coordination with the City's emergency operations center, and revising the incident tracking system. To test the new structure and processes within the transportation coordination center handbook, Perteet facilitated two tabletop exercises with the planning team.

Bellevue deliverables:

- » 2017, 2023, Emergency Support Function Updates
- » 2018, Debris Management Incident Appendix
- » 2018, Communication Flow Charts
- » 2017, Transportation Coordination Center Handbook
- » 2017, Preparedness Initiative Gap Analysis

DISASTER DEBRIS MANAGEMENT LEADERSHIP

On the ground, Kirk has repeatedly demonstrated how integrated debris management accelerates recovery.

Following major flooding events, including the December 2025 atmospheric river impacts across multiple Washington counties, Kirk provided leadership in the planning and implementation of structured debris removal systems to ensure accountability, equity, and compliance with reimbursement requirements. He advanced voucher-based disposal programs with centralized tracking, standardized documentation, and tamper-resistant accountability features.

These systems were not improvised; they were pre-planned, scalable frameworks built from years of experience navigating FEMA Public Assistance requirements. By integrating debris operations into emergency operations plans, he enabled rapid activation once declarations occurred.

This work required coordination across:



JOB-RELATED TECHNICAL & MANAGERIAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS >>

- » County and City public works departments
- » Solid waste operators
- » Contractors and haulers
- » Emergency operations centers
- » Finance and grant administrators
- » State emergency management officials

His generalist background allowed him to anticipate how debris staging would affect transportation corridors, how disposal volumes would impact facility capacity, and how documentation gaps could jeopardize reimbursement.

By institutionalizing real-time tracking and documentation, he reduced financial exposure and strengthened public trust. Debris management became a disciplined operation, not a chaotic aftermath.

DISASTER DEPLOYMENT AND GROUND-LEVEL SERVICE

Kirk's commitment to emergency management extends beyond institutional leadership. Through his work, he deploys directly into disaster-impacted communities within Washington State, focusing particularly on areas of high social vulnerability. In these deployments, he works alongside volunteers and skilled professionals performing debris removal, property cleanup, and stabilization efforts for residents who may lack financial or physical resources to recover independently. This ground-level service reinforces his understanding of disaster impacts beyond infrastructure metrics. He witnesses firsthand how delayed debris removal affects elderly residents, low-income households, and rural families. This perspective informs his policy-level decisions, ensuring that equity considerations are embedded into planning.

Early in his career, Kirk was forced to learn the ins and outs of all public works, something he never forgot. In one instance, as the Public Works Director of Chester, Montana, a blizzard forced Kirk to hop into a snowplow to clear access to the local high school. He made a quick stop to feed some dogs since Public Works was also in charge of Animal Control, then drove to Helena with the mayor and changed out of his snow gear just in time to testify before the legislature.

His ability to operate both at the Governor's liaison level and at the neighborhood cleanup level reflects the full spectrum of leadership, both strategic and tactical.

FEMA PUBLIC ASSISTANCE AND FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

Kirk's integration of public works and emergency management also includes disciplined financial management. He has served as Applicant Agent, developed FEMA project worksheets, and overseen documentation processes that protect jurisdictions during audits.

He understands that reimbursement compliance is as critical as field operations. Without proper documentation, communities risk losing essential recovery funds. His insistence on documentation rigor protects taxpayers and ensures sustainable recovery.

He also applies after-action analysis to improve systems after each activation. Lessons learned become institutional improvements. Gaps identified during one disaster are closed before the next.

PREPAREDNESS AS DAILY PRACTICE

Perhaps most significantly, Kirk does not treat preparedness as an occasional exercise. He embeds resilience into daily operations:

- » Updating emergency annexes
- » Conducting tabletop exercises
- » Revising debris contracts
- » Strengthening interlocal agreements
- » Coordinating training across departments

This approach ensures that emergency response is an extension of normal operations, not an unfamiliar disruption.

Because he understands transportation, utilities, stormwater, and solid waste as interconnected systems, he can orchestrate integrated response strategies. Roads must be cleared before utilities are repaired. Debris must be removed before rebuilding begins. Drainage systems must function to prevent secondary flooding. Each decision affects another. His bird's-eye view of public works makes him uniquely capable of managing these cascading dependencies.

In every disaster, Kirk reinforces a central truth: public works does not merely restore communities — it stabilizes them.



Kittitas County Floodplain Management

Notably, Mr. Holmes brings strong experience in emergency management and flood response, where preparation, interagency coordination, and rapid response are critical.

What sets Mr. Holmes apart is his ability to combine strategic foresight with practical execution. He listens carefully to diverse stakeholders, values expert input, and builds cooperation across agencies and jurisdictions. At the same time, he is decisive when circumstances demand it, always acting with accountability and respect for the people he serves

— Jason Detamore
Environmental Manager
Chelan County Public Works Department
Chelan County Flood Control Zone District

BRIDGING TECHNICAL COMPLEXITY AND PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING

A hallmark of Kirk's leadership is his ability to translate complex engineering, regulatory, and emergency management concepts into language that is accessible and actionable for the public.

Infrastructure and disaster recovery involve intricate funding rules, environmental regulations, technical designs, and compliance frameworks. Yet residents facing damaged homes need clarity, not bureaucracy.

Kirk excels at:

- » Explaining debris disposal procedures in straightforward terms
- » Communicating flood mitigation benefits to community members
- » Clarifying FEMA documentation requirements for staff
- » Presenting infrastructure investments in ways that highlight public value and resilience

He recognizes that public trust depends on transparency. By demystifying processes and clearly explaining how systems function, he reduces confusion and builds confidence.

His communication style bridges engineers, policymakers, field crews, elected officials, and residents. In public meetings, he translates hydrology into practical implications. In emergency briefings, he converts regulatory language into operational checklists. Internally, he ensures teams understand both what they are doing and why it matters.

This ability to translate complexity into clarity strengthens every project he leads.

PROJECT EXAMPLE

2011 - 2012, Kittitas County Flood Control Zone District Formation

Prior to the formation of the Flood Control Zone District, Kittitas County had spent millions of taxpayer dollars responding to and recovering from repeated flood disasters. The County lacked dedicated funding for flood recovery outside of the County Road Fund, and mitigation efforts were largely reactive—implemented only after disasters had already caused significant damage. To better protect residents, businesses, and essential public services, Kirk, as Public Works Director, and County leaders proposed the creation of a countywide Flood Control Zone District funded through a property tax increase. The proposal faced strong opposition, as many vocal citizens were firmly against additional taxes and proactive spending.

Kirk led the public outreach that played a pivotal role in building public understanding and support. Through numerous public outreach meetings, he helped citizens recognize the long-term financial and community benefits of investing in prevention rather than relying solely on costly

JOB-RELATED TECHNICAL & MANAGERIAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS >>



Kirk with Mentees and Colleagues

What truly distinguishes him is his enduring commitment to mentoring and guiding others, particularly women, as they pursue their professional goals.

I joined APWA in 2007, at a time when there were few, if any, women working in public works. Although APWA provided a supportive community, I initially felt intimidated and hesitant to participate fully. Early in my involvement, I met Kirk, whose inclusive and welcoming leadership mentorship, and genuine encouragement made a profound impact on me.

Beyond his professional contributions, Kirk has shaped the careers of numerous public works professionals. Personally, his guidance played a pivotal role in my own advancement – I was honored to become the first female Assistant City Manager in 2020, an accomplishment I directly attribute to Kirk's unwavering support and mentorship.

— Debbie Sullivan
Assistant City Manager
City of Olympia
Past Chapter President

post-disaster recovery. He also developed clear, accessible policy and materials that equipped public officials to effectively communicate and defend the need for the District. Ultimately, the Flood Control Zone District was established, and voters approved its funding through a ballot initiative—due in large part to Kirk's leadership and engagement efforts. The District continues to fund flood maintenance, capital improvement projects, property protection, and risk mitigation efforts, helping safeguard individuals, businesses, and local government from catastrophic loss.

MENTORSHIP

Across a four-decade career, Kirk has consistently invested in people as intentionally as he has invested in infrastructure. Beginning with his first management role in 1985 as a Utility Operations Manager and continuing through his current position as Director of Public Works at Perteet, he has maintained long-term formal mentor-mentee relationships. For Kirk, mentorship has never been incidental — it has been a deliberate professional responsibility.

When asked to identify his greatest accomplishments, Kirk does not point to capital programs, disaster deployments, or policy leadership. Instead, he cites his work with individuals. That response speaks volumes about his values. He measures success not only in projects completed, but in professionals developed.

The impact of his mentorship is evident in letters of reference and in the careers of those he has guided. Many of his formal mentees — and colleagues influenced by his leadership — now serve in senior public works, engineering, and public service roles. The seeds he planted through steady guidance, honest counsel, and practical instruction have matured into capable leaders. In several instances, Kirk's mentorship has supported emerging professionals through early leadership responsibilities, disaster deployments, and progression into senior public works roles.

Former Kittitas County Commissioner Paul Jewell captured this influence clearly:

"From day one, Kirk served as an indispensable mentor, patiently teaching me the responsibilities, priorities, and practical realities of a county public works department. His guidance was a foundation for my effectiveness as an elected official."

His mentorship is further reflected in his long-standing involvement with APWA, where he actively encourages emerging professionals to engage with the association and develop leadership skills within the profession.

JOB-RELATED TECHNICAL & MANAGERIAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS >>



He doesn't just make people feel welcome to our public works community; he makes them feel wanted, needed, and an important part of it. As outstanding leaders do, he inspires me and the next generation of leaders to generate and maintain connections and work hard for the public good instead of recognition.

— Jennifer Saugen, PE
Director of Central Washington Design
Perteet Inc.

Kirk's mentorship bridges technical knowledge, institutional wisdom, and ethical leadership — ensuring the profession remains strong for generations to come.

LEADERSHIP WITHOUT SPOTLIGHT

Kirk Holmes' leadership is defined not by visibility, but by sustained service. In 2018, he received his APWA Chapter's Pillar Award — recognition that reflects mentorship, encouragement, and commitment to the profession without seeking personal recognition.

A member of APWA since 1998, Kirk's long-term engagement includes serving as Chapter President (2016), Executive Board Member, Emergency Management Committee Member (2013–present), committee facilitator and panelist, and participant in mutual aid deployments. His involvement represents decades of institutional investment rather than short-term participation.

As Chapter President, he focused on strengthening professional development and reinforcing the integration of emergency management within public works. On the Emergency Management Committee, he has consistently provided steady, thoughtful leadership — elevating collaboration and practical solutions.

His participation in mutual aid deployments further reflects his service-driven approach. When neighboring jurisdictions face disaster impacts, he steps forward to support recovery efforts, prioritizing collective response over jurisdictional recognition.

Kirk also leads through mentorship, encouraging emerging professionals to engage in APWA and strengthening team capacity across disciplines.

His leadership builds institutions, develops people, and strengthens systems — quietly, consistently, and with lasting impact.



Kirk Holmes, Occasional Snow Plow Driver



Flood Plain Training Exercise

*He has done everything from driving
a snowplow to leading agencies
through disaster recovery.*

**— Jennifer Saugen, PE
Director of Central Washington Design
Pertec Inc.**

An unconventional educational path based originally in construction management led Kirk to later seek out specialized certifications to expand his understanding of a broad range of public works service areas

Degrees:

- » AS, Construction Management, Green River Community College, 1980 - 1982
- » Microbiology, Lind Benton Community College, 1992 - 1994
- » Water Resources Management, Montana State University, 1999

Certifications:

- » Certified American Water Works Association Utility Risk and Resiliency Program Manager
- » Water Distribution Manager, 1988 - 2004
- » Water Treatment Plant Operator, 1997 - 2004
- » APWA Northwest Public Works Institute, 2004
- » National Incident Management System/Incident Command Structure
 - IS 100, 200, 300, 400, 700, and 800
- » Disaster Debris Management Specialist G-202

Additional Training

- » APWA WA 2 times per year, since initial membership
- » PWX 2019
- » Northwest Regional Floodplain Management Association Conferences - Annually
- » Partners in Emergency Preparedness Conference - Annually
- » Washington State Emergency Managers Association Conferences - Annually
- » NEBC – Future Energy Conference 2013



Kirk participating in conference life at an APWA Conference

What truly sets Kirk apart is his ability to build trust across organizations and disciplines. He communicates clearly, collaborates effectively and consistently prioritizes the needs of the stakeholders.

— Crystal L. Donner, PE
President, Perteet Inc.
(Previous APWA Top Ten Award Recipient)

Kirk enjoys sharing his diverse knowledge through presentations and articles. Some items of note include his ongoing curriculum development with the Northwest Public Works Institute, run by the Washington and Oregon APWA Chapters. He also was one of the first presenters to shift quickly to webinars during the Covid shutdown, completing a webinar series on Crisis Leadership.

Instructor NWPWI

- » Northwest Public Works Institute (WA and OR APWA Chapters)
 - o 2023, Present, Lead Instructor
 - o 2024, Present, Program Director – Emergency Management Essentials for Public Works Professionals

Publications

APWA WA Public Works Magazine

- » [SPRING 2026, LEADING IN CRUNCH TIME](#)
- » [SPRING 2025, AN INTRODUCTION TO THE WASHINGTON STATE EMERGENCY COUNCIL](#)
- » [SPRING 2024, THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF PUBLIC WORKS IN HAZARD MITIGATION PLANNING](#)
- » [SPRING 2023, FEMA'S PUBLIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAM](#)
- » [SPRING 2022, PLANNING FOR THE 'BIG ONE' AND OTHER INFRASTRUCTURE INCIDENTS](#)
- » [SPRING 2021, IMPLEMENTATION OF HAZARD MITIGATION PLANNING FOR PUBLIC WORKS](#)
- » [SPRING 2020, APWA AND THE WASHINGTON STATE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL](#)
- » [FALL 2018, BELLEVUE LAUNCHES AN EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS INITIATIVE](#)

Presentations

Washington State Chapter American Public Works Association

- » Spring Conference 2026, Leading in Crunch Time
- » Fall Conference 2025, Federal Funding Roundtable
- » Spring Conference 2023, Mentorship Success Stories – Tips and Tricks
- » Spring Conference 2022, Catastrophic Loss of the Critical Transportation Lifeline – What Now?
- » Fall Conference 2021, Understanding Mitigation Planning and Funding
- » Webinar Series 2020, Crisis Leadership: Continuity of Operations Planning, panelist



- » Spring Conference 2017, One Leader's Response – A Story of Experience and Innovation
- » Fall Conference 2015, Pre-Conference Workshop – Cascadia Rising Ramp-up Event
- » Fall Conference 2014, Public Works Directors Roundtable
- » Spring Conference 2013, Integrating Public Works and Emergency Operations - Facilitator
- » Spring Conference 2010, Leadership Panel
- » Fall Conference 2008, Hazard Assessments
- Northwest Regional Floodplain Management Association**
- » 2025, Keynote Speaker - Emergency Management State of Affairs
- American Public Works Association**
- » PWX 2019, Bellevue Transportation Department Preparedness Initiative
- Partners in Emergency Preparedness Conference**
- » 2021, What Public Works Agencies Do to Support other First Responders
- » 2016, Business Continuity Planning – A Primer
- » 2014, Mapping Wildfire Progressions and Damage Assessments
- » 2013, Integrating Public Works into Your Emergency Operations Center
- Washington State Emergency Managers Association**
- » State Conference 2013, Integrating APWA into Emergency Management
- NEBC – Future Energy Conference**
- » 2011, Permitting Large Commercial Wind Farms
- Montana Rural Water Association**
- » 1999, Hazard Assessments for Rural Water Systems
- Montana Joint Appropriations Committee**
- » 1998, Treasure State Endowment Program



Kirk has been a member of APWA for 28 years over which time he has volunteered for five committees, served on the Board of Directors and held the role of Chapter President. He has worked on statewide emergency management task forces and at the state level as a liaison to the Governor's office through the Washington State Emergency Management Council as the current co-chair in partnership with the Director of the Emergency Management Division. He's also been an active participant in his local school district educational foundation and as a board member, including president leader for the Kittitas County Chamber of Commerce. This experience included serving and supporting the communities' economic challenges experienced through Covid. Kirk also served as a youth sports coach and high school sports official for over 15 years.

Community Activities

American Public Works Association (APWA)

- » 1998, Member
- » 2016, Chapter President
- » 2013, Present, Emergency Management Committee
- » 2013, Executive Board
- » 2010 – 2013, Membership Committee
- » 2009 – 2010, CAEC Committee
- » 2006 – 2009, Construction Specifications Committee
- » 2015 - 2022, Awards Committee
- » 2001 - 2004, Government Affairs
- » 2015 – 2016, PWX Conference Committee
- » 2009 to 2011, Board of Directors

Washington State Emergency Management Division

Emergency Management Council (reports policy and legislative needs to the Governor)

- » 2025 - 2026, Co-Chair
- » 2019, Associate Member
- » 2016 – 2022, Statewide Catastrophic Incident Planning Team (SCRIPT)
 - 2021 – 2022, SCRIPT Co-chair
 - 2021, SCRIPT Mass Care Workgroup
 - 2018 - 2020, SCRIPT Water Infrastructure Workgroup



Liberty County



APWA Chapter Board Retreat 2016

Washington State Mutual Aid System (WAMAS)

- » 2023 - Present, Committee Member

Washington State Emergency Managers Association

- » 2011 – Present, Member

Kittitas County Chamber of Commerce

- » 2019 - 2022, Board Chair
- » 2016 - 2019, Board Member

Ellensburg School District

- » 2016 - 2020, Education Foundation, Board Member
- » 2005 – 2020, Youth Sports Coach
- » 2005 – 2022, High School Sports Official

Kittitas Valley Healthcare Public Health

- » 2020 - 2021, Vaccination Clinic Volunteer

WARN – Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network

- » 2000 – 2011, Associate Member

North Central Montana Regional Water Association

- » 1998 - 2000, Town of Chester Liaison

American Water Works Association

- » 1986 - 1998, Member



2018 Chapter Pillar Award

While Kirk Holmes has certainly delivered award-winning projects, the hallmark of his career has been something far less visible and far more enduring. Kirk does not simply complete projects; he builds initiatives. As reflected throughout his four decades of service, his work centers on long-range system integration: embedding emergency management into daily public works operations, institutionalizing debris management accountability, strengthening FEMA reimbursement practices, and aligning capital planning with hazard mitigation. These efforts unfold over years, sometimes decades and often span multiple jurisdictions, disciplines, and funding cycles. Because they are incremental, policy-driven, and systemic rather than ribbon-cutting events, they rarely fit neatly into traditional project award categories. Yet their impact is profound. Communities recover faster. Infrastructure is more resilient. Public funds are better protected. Public works is elevated as a strategic partner in statewide preparedness. The following recognitions represent visible milestones within a career defined not by singular achievements, but by sustained institutional advancement and long-term community resilience.

2018, APWA WA - Chapter Pillar Award

MIn 2018, Kirk was awarded the Chapter Pillar Award, in Honor of Richard (Dick) G. Andrews. The award recognizes an individual who exemplifies Dick's qualities of leadership, mentoring, encouragement, and serving behind the scenes without seeking recognition for himself as selected by the Board.

Kirk was given the award in recognition of the way he has championed many worthy causes, most notably Emergency Management and mentorship. During conferences Kirk is frequently found sharing words of encouragement with students, first-time attendees, emerging professionals, and others. One of Kirk's most honorable traits is that he measures his success by how much he is able to help others succeed. The Chapter is appreciative of the energy and innovations that Kirk has brought to our Chapter and is extremely proud of his accomplishments.



2016 FutureWise Award

2016, Pedestrian Improvements – Wenatchee, WA

As the principal-in-charge of this award-winning project, Kirk's team worked with the City of Wenatchee on the design of pedestrian improvements in downtown and neighborhoods adjacent to schools. One of the critical elements of this federally funded project was the installation of a pedestrian High-intensity Activated crossWalk (HAWK) beacon. Perteet also performed a warrant analysis, including a technical memorandum and signal timing for this crossing between transit stops and a DSHS office.



2016 Pedestrian Improvements



Letters

of Reference for Kirk Holmes

February 19, 2026

Re: APWA Top Ten Award Recommendation – Kirk Holmes

To Whom It May Concern,

It is my pleasure to recommend Kirk Holmes for recognition of his leadership role within public works. I have had the opportunity to work with Kirk for more than 20 years, and throughout that time he has consistently demonstrated exceptional leadership, professionalism, and an unwavering commitment to serving public agencies and the communities they support.

Kirk brings a strong service-oriented mindset to every engagement, with a clear focus on delivering meaningful results for public sector clients. Their work has been especially impactful in the areas of emergency management and preparedness, where he has shown both strategic vision and practical execution. Whether supporting agencies in developing preparedness plans, coordinating response efforts, or strengthening long-term resilience, Kirk approaches each challenge with thoughtfulness, urgency, and accountability.

What truly sets Kirk apart is their ability to build trust across organizations and disciplines. He communicates clearly, collaborates effectively, and consistently prioritizes the needs of stakeholders. Their calm, steady presence during high-pressure situations inspires confidence, and their ability to align teams around shared goals leads to successful outcomes even in complex environments.

Kirk has been a recognized leader in emergency management and preparedness, bringing both strategic insight and practical experience to this critical area of public service. Through his work on the Emergency Management and Preparedness Committee within the American Public Works Association Washington Chapter, he has helped shape statewide conversations around resilience, response coordination, and continuity planning. His leadership on this topic has strengthened collaboration among agencies, advanced best practices, and elevated the role of public works in disaster readiness and recovery. He consistently advocates for proactive planning, cross-jurisdictional coordination, and investment in preparedness—ensuring that communities are better equipped to respond effectively when challenges arise.

I have no hesitation in recommending Kirk. This is much deserved recognition of his leadership, dedication, and expertise in public works and emergency preparedness.

Best Regards,



Crystal L. Donner, PE
President
Perteet Inc. (previous APWA Top Ten Award Recipient)



STATE OF WASHINGTON
MILITARY DEPARTMENT
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT DIVISION

*MS: TA-20 Building 20 • Camp Murray, Washington 98430-5122
Phone: (253) 512-7000 • FAX: (253) 512-7200*

February 18, 2026

Awards Committee
American Public Works Association
1275 K Street, NW, Suite 750
Washington, DC 20005

Re: Top Ten Public Leaders of the Year Award

Dear Members of the Awards Committee:

It is my distinct honor to recommend Kirk Holmes for recognition as one of the nation's Top Ten Public Leaders of the Year. Over the course of our work together through the Washington State Emergency Management Division, the Statewide Catastrophic Incident Planning Team, and the State Emergency Management Council—most recently under his leadership as Chair—I have had the opportunity to witness firsthand Kirk's extraordinary commitment to public service and his lasting impact on the public works and emergency management professions.

Kirk's career reflects a rare blend of technical expertise, strategic foresight, and principled leadership. In every role he has held, he has demonstrated an unwavering focus on protecting communities, strengthening infrastructure, and advancing systems that serve the public good. His ability to bridge public works, emergency management, and intergovernmental coordination has been particularly valuable in an era defined by increasingly complex and cascading risks.

Through his work supporting statewide emergency management initiatives and catastrophic planning efforts, Kirk has consistently elevated collaboration across jurisdictions and disciplines. He brings clarity and calm to complex challenges, ensuring that planning efforts are grounded, actionable, and aligned with real-world operational needs. His contributions have helped shape a more resilient and coordinated approach to disaster preparedness and response across Washington.

As Chair of the State Emergency Management Council, Kirk exemplifies servant leadership. He fosters inclusive dialogue, encourages innovation, and maintains a steadfast commitment to professional integrity. Colleagues across local, Tribal, and state agencies trust his judgment and respect his ability to lead with both conviction and humility. He is equally adept at guiding policy-level discussions and engaging with practitioners in the field—an increasingly critical skill for today's public works leaders.

Beyond his formal roles, Kirk has been a mentor and role model throughout his career, investing in the next generation of public servants while setting a high bar for ethical leadership and public accountability. His career reflects not only personal excellence, but a sustained dedication to advancing the public works industry.

For these reasons, I offer my strongest recommendation of Kirk Holmes for the APWA Top Ten Public Leaders of the Year Award. His career-long service, cross-sector leadership, and enduring commitment to public safety and infrastructure excellence make him exceptionally deserving of this recognition.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Sharon Wallace". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Sharon" being more prominent than the last name "Wallace".

Sharon Wallace
Deputy Director



February 20, 2026

American Public Works Association
1275 K Street, NW Suite 750
Washington, DC 20005

Subject: Top Ten Public Works Leader of the Year Award
Kirk Holmes, Director of Public Works Emergency Division, Pertteet

To Whom It May Concern –

It is my sincere honor to recommend Kirk Holmes for the APWA Top Ten Public Works Leader of the Year Award. Kirk's exceptional leadership in the public works profession extends well beyond his technical expertise. What truly distinguishes him is his enduring commitment to mentoring and guiding others, particularly women, as they pursue their professional goals.

I joined APWA in 2007, at a time when there were few, if any, women working in public works. Although APWA provided a supportive community, I initially felt intimidated and hesitant to participate fully. Early in my involvement, I met Kirk, whose inclusive and welcoming leadership mentorship, and genuine encouragement made a profound impact on me. I could always rely on Kirk for his friendship, sound advice, and gracious guidance. With his encouragement, I eventually ran for a Board position and was proud to serve as APWA Chapter President in 2017 – an achievement that would not have been possible without his mentorship.

Kirk's longstanding and outstanding service to APWA is remarkable. He is a passionate advocate for local and county governments, working tirelessly to ensure they have reliable infrastructure, sustainable funding, and access to technical resources. Throughout his career, this dedication has been evident in every APWA role he has undertaken – including Chapter President in 2016, Chair of the Contract Administration and Education Committee, Awards Committee, and Emergency Management Committee. He has also served as a member of the Construction Specifications, Government Affairs, and Transportation Committees, in addition to serving as an instructor with the Northwest Public Works Institute.

Kirk's dedication to strengthening public infrastructure and supporting local and county governments is both noteworthy and inspiring. In his current role on the State Emergency Management Council, he continues to engage in collaborative discussions to identify solutions to mitigate the impacts of declining FEMA Public Assistant Program funding. His strategic thinking and pragmatic approach are vital to improving community resilience across the state.

Kirk Holmes exemplifies leadership, dedication, and service. He has influenced not only public works infrastructure and policy at the local and state levels but also the people who carry forward the mission of public works. I can think of no one more deserving of this recognition.

Best Regards,

Debbie L. Sullivan

Assistant City Manager
City of Olympia



Bureau of Fleet and Facilities

Michael Roy, Fleet Director

 @PortlandGov

 PortlandORGov

 portlandgov

February 17, 2026

American Public Works Association
1200 Main St., Suite 1400
Kansas City, MO 64105-2100

Re: Top Ten Public Works Leader of the Year Award

Dear Members of the Awards Committee,

It is my distinct honor to recommend Kirk Holmes for recognition as a Top Ten Public Works Leader of the Year. Kirk's career reflects the very best of our profession—operational excellence, unwavering integrity, commitment to professional development, and a deep belief in the mission of public service. I submit this recommendation both as a public works executive and as someone whose career was profoundly shaped by his leadership.

Kirk hired me in 2004 as a Facilities Maintenance Mechanic Technician at the City of Snoqualmie, where he was serving as Public Works Director. From my first day, he set a standard of professionalism and service that defined the culture of the organization. In 2006, he entrusted me with the opportunity to become the City's first Public Works Operations Manager—an act of confidence and mentorship that altered the course of my career and demonstrated his commitment to developing future leaders.

During my time working under his leadership, I served alongside Kirk through multiple emergency management events, including significant floods and severe ice storms. In each instance, he led with composure, strategic clarity, and a deep understanding of public works operations. His expertise spans snow and ice operations, water, sanitary sewer, storm water management, capital planning, and organizational development. At a time when Snoqualmie was among the fastest-growing cities in Washington State, Kirk implemented systems and operational frameworks that ensured reliable service delivery while positioning the department for long-term sustainability and resilience.

Kirk's leadership extended beyond municipal operations to the advancement of the profession itself. He actively promoted engagement within the American Public Works Association, encouraging staff participation in conferences, training, and chapter activities. His own service as an APWA Chapter President exemplified his commitment to professional stewardship. Inspired by his example, I later completed the APWA Emerging Leaders Academy and served on the board

of directors — opportunities I pursued because Kirk demonstrated that leadership includes investing in the broader public works community.

He later assumed the role of Public Works Director for Kittitas County, where he continued to oversee complex operations and emergency response functions. Even after our direct working relationship ended, Kirk remained a trusted mentor and advisor. His influence is enduring because it is rooted in authenticity and a genuine desire to see others succeed.

Most importantly, Kirk instills in those around him the understanding that public works is not simply a profession, but a calling grounded in service to community. He leads with accountability, humility, and respect. He builds capable teams, cultivates emerging leaders, and consistently elevates the organizations he serves.

When I applied for the Fleet Director position with the City of Portland, Oregon in 2018, Kirk unhesitatingly provided a professional reference on my behalf. Seven years later, I remain grateful for his continued support and credit him for laying the foundation for more than two decades of my career in public service.

Kirk Holmes embodies the leadership, vision, and dedication that the Top Ten Public Works Leader of the Year Award is intended to recognize. He represents the highest standards of our profession, and I offer my strongest possible recommendation for his selection.

Sincerely,



Michael Roy
Fleet Director
City of Portland, Oregon

February 15, 2026

Awards Committee

Top Ten Public Works Leader of the Year Award

American Public Works Association – Washington Chapter

RE: TOP TEN PUBLIC WORKS LEADER OF THE YEAR AWARD

Dear Awards Committee,

I am pleased to enthusiastically support the nomination of Kirk Holmes for APWA's Top Ten Public Works Leader of the Year. I have known Kirk since 2008, when I was first elected as a Kittitas County Commissioner with no prior public office experience. From day one, Kirk served as an indispensable mentor, patiently teaching me the responsibilities, priorities, and practical realities of a county public works department. His guidance was a foundation for my effectiveness as an elected official.

Kirk's leadership was tested and proven through one of the most challenging periods in our county's history. He joined just before the Great Recession and expertly helped the county navigate repeated service and personnel reductions while maintaining essential operations and public trust. During that same period, he stepped into the Interim Director of Building and Planning role while continuing as Director of Public Works, demonstrating versatility, dedication, and calm under pressure.

Kirk also played a central role in our disaster response and long-term resilience work. He was instrumental in coordinating and leading responses to catastrophic floods and large wildfires, and he contributed critically to our recovery efforts. When the county confronted complex legal and regulatory crises – including Growth Management Act noncompliance findings and unprecedented statewide groundwater withdrawal impacts – Kirk's sound judgment and collaborative approach were essential. He led efforts to bring the county into compliance with the National Flood Insurance Program for the first time and helped establish and pass the county's first Flood Control Zone District through a vote of the public, leaving a lasting legacy of improved public safety and fiscal prudence.

Beyond accomplishments, Kirk's leadership character sets him apart. He leads with enthusiasm, integrity, and an unapologetic belief in the capacity of local government to deliver meaningful services. He consistently invests in developing others, strengthening the bench of public servants around him. As a new commissioner, Kirk inspired me to raise my own standards for leadership and to believe that persistent effort and cooperative focus can yield remarkable results even under the most difficult circumstances.

For these reasons – his technical expertise, crisis leadership, institutional accomplishments, and his commitment to mentoring others – I strongly endorse Kirk Holmes for the Top Ten Public Works Leader of the Year Award. He represents the highest ideals of public works leadership and would be a deserving recipient of this honor.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Paul Jewell', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Paul Jewell
Former Kittitas County Commissioner



**Washington State
Department of Transportation**

Transportation Building
310 Maple Park Avenue S.E.
P.O. Box 47300
Olympia, WA 98504-7300
360-705-7000
TTY: 1-800-833-6388
www.wsdot.wa.gov

February 20, 2026

American Public Works Association
1275 K Street, NW, Suite 750
Washington, DC 20005

Re: Top Ten Public Works Leader of the Year Award

Dear Awards Committee,

It is my honor to endorse Kirk Holmes for the APWA Top Ten Award. Kirk's mentorship over the years has been a pillar of my career and I can't think of anyone more appropriate for the award.

I met Kirk Holmes in 2012, just as I was stepping into a new role as special projects coordinator at Chelan County Public Works. Kirk had been invited by department leadership for a site visit and discussion on the topic of flood control. That meeting initiated the special project to develop a new comprehensive emergency plan and led to the establishment of the flood control zone district in Chelan County in 2015. While we worked internally and with consultants, Kirk was a committed mentor through the process and during that time invited me to become involved in APWA.

That involvement grew to a 2-year term on the board of directors, led by then President Kirk Holmes, and the opportunity to participate in state and national forums. Always along the way, Kirk was checking in, sharing insight and giving heartfelt career advice that helped me strengthen my skills and take on new opportunities. In 2016, I started working at Link Transit and with the help of Kirk and his team in a new Wenatchee Perteeet office, Link Transit constructed it's first large capital project in over 20 years, the Willkommen Village bus stop, a groundbreaking facility for fast charging long distance rural transit in the growing community of Leavenworth. The project included new US 2 access road for transit, restrooms, illumination, parking, and facilities for fast charging all in the constraints of a Bavarian aesthetic that is required by the city code. This was an incredibly complex project funded by a Regional Mobility Grant, and Kirk's team guided my team at Link Transit through the work that built what is now an established landmark and regional transit hub.

I've always suspected that Kirk nominated me for Young Leader of the Year, an honor that I consider a highlight of my career in public works. During the recent flood damage closure of US 2, Kirk reached out to me to give me encouragement and guidance. He doesn't have to, but he knows it helps and he's been through it and his natural instinct is to help.

Kirk reached out last summer to invite me to share about my experience in emergency communications at the Northwest Public Works Institute and for the presentation I invited along Summer Derry, another WSDOT communicator who recently earned her Executive Public Information Officer certification. With feedback from Kirk, we've since revamped that presentation for best practices discussion internally and hope to share a guide for local agencies in 2026.

The best part is, I am not the only person Kirk has mentored locally. I know several people in the field and in the community who could share their version of this tale, who have learned from Kirk's leadership over the years.

The most important skills that Kirk taught me were to be curious and maintain connections. Kirk has thoughtfully and deliberately created connections in his years of service because Kirk is a natural leader and he knows we have to be solutions oriented and work together to make big things happen. This has ensured his projects have come together more effectively, his teams see more success, and the community benefits from his willingness to get into it and work hard. He has shaped my community and the state of Washington in sometimes more subtle ways, by creating resilient and aspirational solutions for towns, transit, counties, cities, and companies. And he's just a decent person who will remember your name and make you laugh.

Sincerely



Lauren P. Loebsock

Communications Manager, North Central Region



February 19, 2026

National Top Ten Public Leaders of the Year
Selection Committee

Dear Selection Committee:

I am pleased to submit this letter in strong support of Kirk Holmes' nomination for the prestigious National Top Ten Public Leaders of the Year award. By way of full disclosure, I have known Kirk Holmes since 1980, and I am also a godparent to one of his daughters, Abigail.

I owe my start in public works to Kirk. I worked for him from 1995 to approximately 2000, during which time Kirk served as the field supervisor at Mt. View Edgewood Water. In that role, I carved out the day-to-day operations and maintenance responsibilities that form the foundation of public utility, helping to define and shape those functions from the ground up. Because of Kirk's deep technical knowledge, I was able to become proficient in these activities, which in turn allowed me to advance my career significantly.

Although Mt. View Edgewood Water was a small utility, Kirk's philosophy and industry knowledge would translate to any scale. His direction always emphasized best practices and high-quality service, grounded in the belief that our customers deserved nothing less. Given the size of our work group, prioritization and adaptability were daily necessities—and Kirk instilled both with purpose and clarity.

That was the only period in which I worked directly under Kirk, as his pursuit of advancement took him to other organizations. While my own career choices kept me closer to home, I have continued to rely on Kirk for technical guidance on complex issues throughout the years. He has always been a phone call away, and his exceptional problem-solving ability has made him an invaluable resource to me.

Having been in this industry for 31 years, I have had the opportunity to work alongside and observe a great many professionals. Kirk's ability to convey technical "how-to" knowledge in a manner accessible to people at every level is a quality I have rarely encountered. This communication style, combined with his depth of industry expertise, is the very definition of mentorship.

I consider myself fortunate that Kirk introduced me to this career path. I can look back and say that on my most challenging days in public works, his example—his drive for knowledge, his effective problem solving, and his fearlessness in the face of difficulty—has helped carry me through. Kirk is both a great friend and someone I deeply respect. It is without reservation that I recommend Kirk Holmes as a National Top Ten Public Leader of the Year.

Sincerely,

Craig Hurley
Water Operations Manager
Lakehaven Water and Sewer District



CHELAN COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
316 WASHINGTON STREET
SUITE 402
WENATCHEE, WASHINGTON 98801
TELEPHONE (509) 667-6415

Eric P. Pierson, PE
DIRECTOR/COUNTY ENGINEER

February 6, 2026

American Public Works Association
2661 North Pearl Street #360
Tacoma, WA 98407

Re: Top Ten Public Works Leader of the Year Award

Dear Awards Committee,

I am honored to recommend **Kirk Holmes** as one of the top ten Public Works Leaders for 2026 for his effective and trusted public leadership, particularly in areas involving emergency management and disaster response.

Kirk Holmes has consistently demonstrated the qualities that define outstanding leadership in public life: integrity, sound judgment, and an unwavering commitment to public safety and service. His leadership reflects a clear understanding that effective governance is most visible during times of crisis, when calm decision-making and coordinated action are essential.

Notably, Mr. Holmes brings strong experience in **emergency management and flood response**, where preparation, interagency coordination, and rapid response are critical. He approaches emergencies with discipline and clarity, ensuring that response efforts are organized, communication is transparent, and resources are directed where they are needed most. His ability to remain composed under pressure and focus on both immediate response and long-term recovery has earned the confidence of colleagues, partners, and affected communities.

What sets Mr. Holmes apart is his ability to combine strategic foresight with practical execution. He listens carefully to diverse stakeholders, values expert input, and builds cooperation across agencies and jurisdictions. At the same time, he is decisive when circumstances demand it, always acting with accountability and respect for the people he serves.

Equally important is Mr. Holmes's character. He leads with humility, resilience, and a strong ethical foundation—qualities that are indispensable in emergency situations where public trust and clear leadership can make a critical difference.

I am confident that Kirk Holmes will continue to serve with distinction and will be a valuable asset in any public leadership role, particularly those involving emergency preparedness, flood response, and community resilience. I recommend him without reservation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jason Detamore". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letter of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Jason Detamore
Environmental Manager
Chelan County Public Works Department
Chelan County Flood Control Zone District

February 20, 2026

To the APWA National Awards Committee,

I am excited to submit this letter in support of Kirk Holmes for the American Public Works Association's National Top Ten Public Leaders of the Year Award. I have had the privilege of working with Kirk for over a decade on public works projects and within APWA, and I can say without hesitation that Kirk reflects the heart of public works leadership.

Kirk's professional career is rooted in public works and emergency management, with more than four decades of experience serving communities through infrastructure, utilities, and resilience-focused programs. He has done everything from driving a snowplow to leading agencies through disaster recovery. As documented in Kirk's professional record, he has dedicated his career to advancing public works projects that improve safety, reliability, and long-term stewardship of public assets. He also recognizes and elevates the work of both maintenance and engineering crews, teaching agency staff how to effectively tell the story of their work to public officials.

Kirk's influence on my own public works career has been meaningful and direct, and I consider him to be one of my most impactful mentors in the public works space. Both when I was formerly a city employee and now as a consultant, he has provided sound advice and encouragement, drawing on his more than 40 years of experience to share what he knows.

He is generous with his time in reviewing materials, sharing institutional knowledge, and reinforcing the importance of communication between agencies, stakeholders, and the public. I continually benefit from this mentorship and have witnessed numerous public works directors call Kirk and ask for his advice on a regular basis.

Kirk Holmes exemplifies the values of APWA in service, leadership, and dedication to the public good. He doesn't just make people feel welcome to our public works community; he makes them feel wanted, needed, and an important part of it. As outstanding leaders do, he inspires me and the next generation of leaders to generate and maintain connections and work hard for the public good instead of recognition. Kirk has had a career-long positive influence on fellow public works professionals. His career reflects the caliber of leadership, service, and professional integrity that the APWA National Top Ten Public Leaders Award is intended to recognize.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Saugen, PE
Director of Central Washington Design
Perteet Inc.

February 20, 2026

American Public Works Association
1200 Main Street, Suite 1400
Kansas City, MO 64105-2100

Re: Top Ten Public Works Leader of the Year Award Nomination
Letter of Recommendation for Kirk Holmes

Dear Nominating Committee,

I am honored to submit this letter of recommendation in support of Kirk Holmes for the APWA Top Ten Public Works Leaders of the Year Award. I have had the privilege of working with Kirk Holmes for the past eighteen years, first in a public agency and now as consultants, during which time he has been an exceptional leader, mentor, and advocate for both me and the public works profession.

Throughout his career, Kirk Holmes has exemplified APWA's core values of leadership, integrity, service, and excellence in public works. As a former President of the Washington State Chapter of APWA, Kirk remains active in the organization, representing the Chapter on a state-wide emergency management council, teaching courses at the Washington APWA Public Works Institute, and promoting the organization to clients and colleagues.

What truly distinguishes Kirk is his commitment to mentoring and developing people. He has an extraordinary ability to recognize potential and guide individuals toward confidence, leadership, and long-term success. His decades of experience working for public works agencies of all sizes and in a wide range of roles has given him the technical expertise, judgment, and real-life experience to make him a trusted and sought-after resource for public works professionals across Washington state. His clients and colleagues know that when facing a difficult situation, whether responding to a major disaster, navigating complex issues with elected officials, or making an important career decision, Kirk will take the time to listen, discuss, and provide advice and guidance.

Personally, Kirk has been instrumental in my own career progression. For eighteen years and across two employers, Kirk has been my leader, mentor, and collaborator. He encourages me to take on challenges I might not have otherwise pursued, provides thoughtful guidance, and models effective, ethical leadership in practice. His mentorship has shaped not only my professional growth, but also my approach to leadership and supporting others.

I can think of no individual more deserving of recognition as one of APWA's Top Ten Public Works Leaders of the Year. I offer my strongest recommendation and sincere appreciation for your consideration of Kirk Holmes for this distinguished honor.

Sincerely,



Christina Wollman, AICP CFM
Senior Planner



February 4, 2026

SUBJECT: Top Ten Public Works Leader of the Year Nomination
Kirk Holmes, Ellensburg, Washington

It is my pleasure to recommend Kirk Holmes for the Top Ten Public Works Leader of the Year Award.

I had the pleasure of working with Kirk when he was a member of the Ellensburg School District Education Foundation.

The three things I appreciated most about working with Kirk included his visionary outlook, his ability to make connections, and his kindness.

Kirk Holmes is a visionary. He frequently brought great ideas to our board both on ways to improve the effectiveness of the board, and on how to enhance the functions of the group. His ideas were usually practical, and they often led to the implementation of some new programs and processes.

Kirk also did a great job of helping connect our small non-profit to businesses in town. These connections helped us to foster lasting relationships, which have led to continued partnerships.

Finally, Kirk is one of the nicest guys you'll ever meet. I have never heard him speak ill of anyone else, nor have I ever heard anyone speak ill of him. He is genuine, kind, and honest...traits which are becoming more and more difficult to find in the business world.

Although I can't speak to Kirk's work as a civil engineer, I am happy to recommend him for this award based upon his commitment to volunteerism, and for his positive contributions in our community. Finally, if the award was simply based upon one's character, Kirk should win hands down. It is my pleasure to work with him, and it is certainly my pleasure to recommend him for this award.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mike McCloskey".

Mike McCloskey
Past President