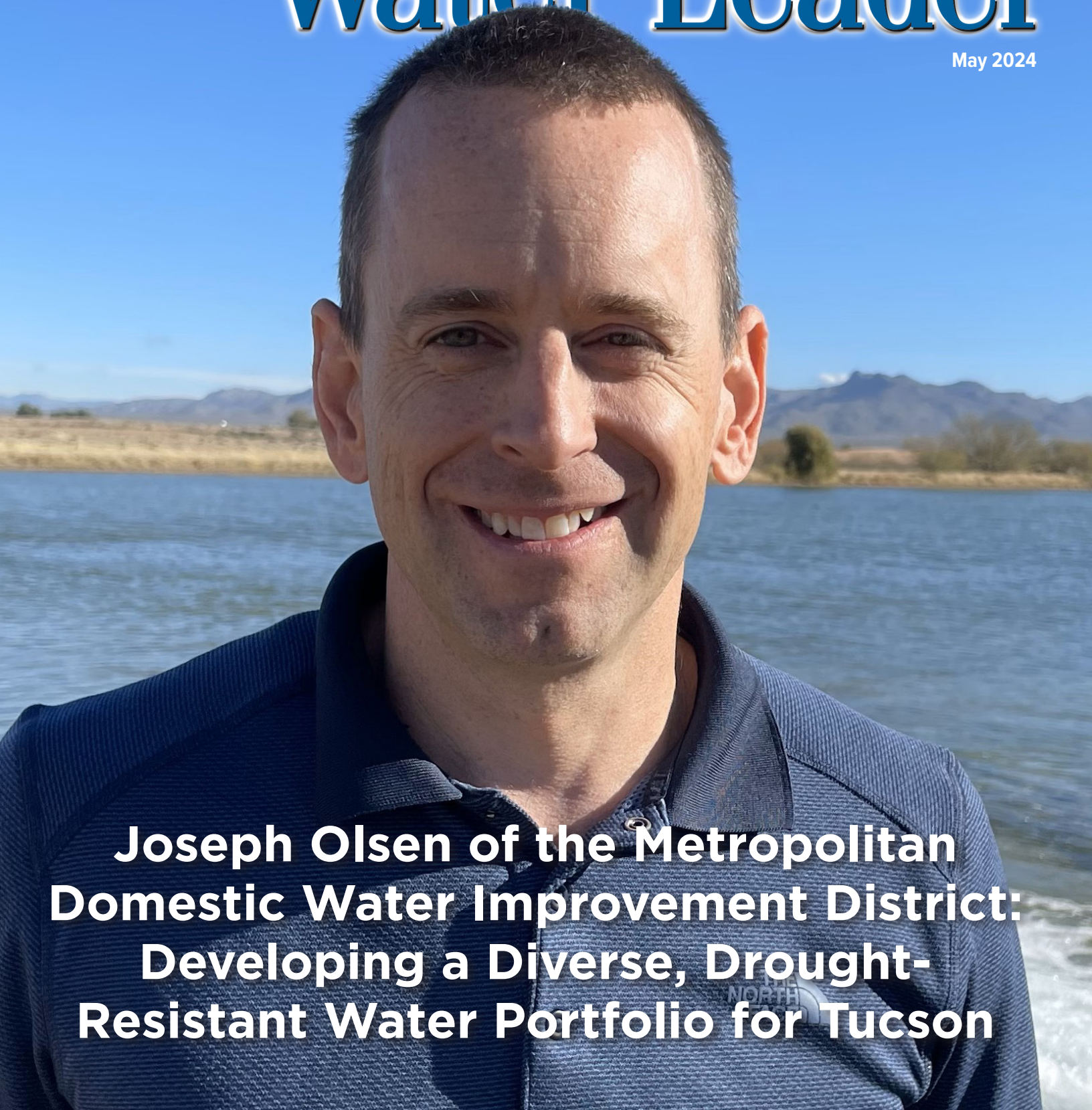


Municipal Water Leader

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**Joseph Olsen of the Metropolitan
Domestic Water Improvement District:
Developing a Diverse, Drought-
Resistant Water Portfolio for Tucson**



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Joseph Olsen of the Metropolitan Domestic Water Improvement District: Developing a Diverse, Drought-Resistant Water Portfolio for Tucson

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Do you have a story idea for an upcoming issue? Contact our editor-in-chief, Kris Polly, at kris.polly@waterstrategies.com.

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COVER PHOTO:

Joseph Olsen, General Manager, Metropolitan Domestic Water Improvement District. Photo courtesy of the Metro Water Domestic Water Improvement District.

WAC Solution Partners' Financial Tool Streamlines Accounting Processes for Utilities



WAC Solution Partners has served clients all across the country, from wastewater utilities with just a handful of customers to water utilities serving tens of thousands.

WAC Solution Partners' WACUtility enterprise resource planning (ERP) financial software offers municipal and public utilities a wide range of automated features, including built-in oversight and accounts payable tools, comprehensive approval workflows, inventory management, flexible reporting tools, and project accounting. The software offers customers the flexibility to integrate with any utility billing system. In this interview, Michael Pruet, a partner at WAC Solution Partners, explains how WACUtility's automated workflow can save utilities time and money.

Municipal Water Leader: Please tell us about your background and how you came to be in your current position.

Michael Pruet: I'm a certified public accountant, but I was never interested in auditing or taxes. I found my love in accounting software technology instead. I have been a partner at WAC Solution Partners for almost 25 years. Before that, I worked as a controller, a chief financial officer,

and an assistant vice president for both public and private companies and firms. I started my career when there was virtually no technology in the accounting department whatsoever. When personal computers were first introduced, there was no such thing as a help desk, training, or technical support, so companies called in whoever seemed to know the most. It was not part of my official job description, but it fell to me by default. This field has been a great melding of my all skills. I discovered that I had a knack for really understanding technology and software and making processes more efficient. In addition, I understand accounting quite intuitively—beyond the theories or the mechanics, the whole process seems to come naturally to me.

Municipal Water Leader: Please introduce WAC Solution Partners.

Michael Pruet: WAC Solution Partners is a boutique consulting firm specializing in consulting and selling ERP accounting software. Our flagship product, WACUtility, is

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published by Acumatica, and we add some special sauce to make it the best ERP and accounting software for private and public utilities. We have seven locations across the country, which gives us a local presence and a national reach. The firm represents other ERP software, but I am responsible for the utility practice. What makes us different? There are plenty of computer professionals who know a little about accounting and plenty of accounting professionals who are not comfortable with computer technology. WAC bridges the gap, providing highly specialized skills in both accounting and technology. We provide integration services to eliminate redundant data entry and associated errors. If needed, we can also provide custom programming services.

Municipal Water Leader: Please tell us about WACUtility.

Michael Pruet: WACUtility is a back-end, cloud-based accounting and ERP software-as-a-service program for organizations or municipalities that operate water, sewer, gas, electric, and wastewater utilities. It is powered by Acumatica Cloud ERP, a global software publisher with installations worldwide. We have configured Acumatica ERP for the utility industry, tailoring the workflow and dashboards and adding specialized features for reporting that are specific to the utility industry.

WACUtility is a comprehensive solution for managing all financial operations within a utility company. It handles expenses and accounts payable and generates financial reports for the board. One notable feature is its versatility in accommodating various reporting structures, allowing users to generate reports across multiple entities, divisions, plants, locations, and funds.

Users also benefit from the ability to reconcile accounts payable and purchase requisitions against budgetary allocations, maintaining financial plans. Of significant value is the comprehensive budget versus actual reporting feature, providing stakeholders with a detailed comparison of budgeted versus realized expenditures. WACUtility distinguishes itself through the inclusion of several specialized modules not commonly found in comparable systems, enhancing its value and effectiveness in financial management.

So, let me tell you about WACUtility’s technology—it’s pretty impressive. We’ve got a robust technology stack that plays nicely with just about any utility billing software out there. Some software options on the market kind of lock you in. They say, “Hey, if you want to use our billing software, you’ve got to use our financial or ERP software too.” But not us. We’re all about giving our customers options. You can take our top-of-the-line ERP and pair it up with whatever billing software suits your needs best. It’s like having the best of both worlds—flexibility and quality all rolled into one neat package.

Let’s talk about our inventory management—it’s top-notch. Some utilities like to keep a close eye on their inventory levels, setting minimums and maximums for reorder points and managing multiple warehouses. We’ve got all that covered in one convenient place. You can create purchase requisitions, get them approved, and seamlessly match them against your budget. Plus, we make it easy to match them with purchase orders, which can then be converted into accounts payable bills. And the best part? Our system has approval workflows baked right in, perfect for navigating the sometimes-complex hierarchy of approvals in the utility industry. It’s a game-changer for our clients, especially compared to the traditional paper trails or e-mail chains that often lead to things getting lost or forgotten.



A screengrab from the WACUtility software.

Now, let's talk about our accounts payable feature, which packs a punch with optical character recognition (OCR) capability. When a utility receives a bill in the mail, it's usually a manual function to process and approve it. But with WACUtility, vendors can simply e-mail the bill directly into our system. Our system takes it from there, reading the e-mail and automatically populating key fields like vendor details, dollar amounts, purchase order numbers, and more—all thanks to OCR. This not only saves time in the accounts payable department but also streamlines the approval process, eliminating the need for chasing down lost bills or forwarding e-mails for follow-up. And when it's approved, we've got a clear record of who approved it and when, thanks to our handy date and time stamps.

Our capabilities don't stop there. We seamlessly integrate with other functionalities, such as tracking acquisition costs and the depreciation of fixed assets, making monthly depreciation entries a breeze. Whether you're buying a fixed asset through accounts payable or through a purchase order, we've got you covered—we can even capitalize it right from the bill.

And let's not forget about our robust construction and project accounting module. Whether you're building a wastewater plant or making repairs or upgrades, this module has everything you need to manage your project costs effectively.

We also have a mobile app right out of the box. Board members can approve things right from their mobile phones, reducing the need for physical visits and streamlining the approval process. Plus, expense reporting is built right into WACUtility, making it easy for employees to snap photos of receipts while traveling and submit them for reimbursement. And when it comes to audits, there is no need for auditors to trek to the office and sift through boxes—we've got remote auditing capabilities that our clients love for their convenience.

In a nutshell, WACUtility isn't just your average utility management software—it's a comprehensive solution designed to make your life easier, whether you're in the office or on the go.

Municipal Water Leader: What does the process look like for a new customer who starts using your system?

Michael Pruet: We've got a wealth of experience working with various utilities, which means we understand their needs inside out. That's why we've baked those specific capabilities right into our software. But here's the kicker—we're not just a one-size-fits-all operation. We're more like a boutique shop, ready to customize the system to fit each customer.

It all starts with a deep-dive discovery process. We sit down with the utility and get to the nitty-gritty of what they're after. We chat about their current processes, their financial reporting requirements, and their preferences for how things get done. We ask about how they handle approvals, what features they can't live without, and what kind of reports their board likes to pore over.

Implementation typically takes anywhere from 60 to 120 days, depending on the scope of the project and the data migration involved. We offer both remote and onsite training, and we handle project management from start to finish. We set up the system and give it a thorough testing to make sure it's firing on all cylinders, and we're there to answer any questions or iron out any kinks that pop up along the way.

Once the new system goes live, we provide close support for a whole month, ready to tackle any lingering questions or issues, and after that, we're just a text, chat, phone call, or Zoom meeting away through our support portal. We can also do add-on projects to make further improvements or integrate new directives.


Municipal Water Leader: Who are the ideal customers for WACUtility, and how do you find new customers?

Michael Pruet: Any organization or municipality running a utility is right up our alley, including a public or private utility, a utility board, or a government agency. We've served clients all across the country, from wastewater utilities with just a handful of customers to water utilities serving tens of thousands. We find clients through a mix of word-of-mouth referrals and encounters at association shows and conferences. Plus, we're always on the lookout for partnerships with utility billing companies to expand our reach and help even more clients streamline their operations.

Municipal Water Leader: What is the best way for people to get in contact with you to find out whether this solution would work for them?

Michael Pruet: They can visit our website, www.utilityerpsoftware.com, or call (205) 547-2350. We're happy to talk to folks.

Municipal Water Leader: What is your vision for the future?

Michael Pruet: It's an exciting time in the world of utility billing systems—more and more independent providers are rolling out web- or cloud-based software. And you know what? We're all for it. Why? Because with WACUtility, we're already up in the clouds ourselves, so to speak. With our system already in the cloud, we're primed and ready for these companies to join us there. That means faster, more efficient integration and even smoother sailing for our clients. 



Michael Pruet is a partner of WAC Solution Partners. He can be contacted at michael.pruet@wacptrs.com or (205) 547-2350.