

10 things you need to know from Gwi this month



The world of water through the eyes of GWi publisher [Christopher Gasson](#)

1. *The World Bank launched the Water Forward mission.*

The idea is to get the whole water industry aligned behind the objective of [delivering water security to 1 billion people](#). All of the major multilateral development banks – together with the Secretary-General of the UN – lined up to support it at the launch during the World Bank's Spring Meeting. There are [three things which are new and different about the initiative](#): it is explained in terms of its economic impact, rather than its human rights or climate impact; it aims to use country compacts to achieve the governance changes necessary to make water more investible; and it is not just about the Bank: we all have our part to play. The Bank's Global Director for Water will outline what he wants from the private sector at the [Global Water Summit](#). Meanwhile, you can read about what our jaded ex-World Banker columnist [Joel Kolker](#) thinks about it [here](#).

2. *You have to be quick to make it in the data centre water business.*

Fifteen years ago, if you were in the water business you needed a China strategy, because having one would double your share price. The same is true of the data centre market today, and it is equally scary. The main challenge is the speed at which it moves, both from a technology perspective (direct liquid cooling is growing fast), and in terms of what is expected of suppliers. Our [market map of the opportunities in the data centre business](#) has all the details you need. Veolia seems to be ahead of the curve. It has rebranded its service offering to the sector as 'Data Center Resource 360', and announced a target of delivering [€1 billion of annual revenues from data centre and microelectronics customers](#) by 2030.

3. *The lithium industry and the water industry are coming together in Chile.*

The Chilean state lithium company's environment manager Julio García Marín explained his [Salar Futuro strategy](#) to our Industry Editor [Charlotte Oakes](#). It involves a combination of evaporation ponds and direct extraction that produces more lithium, recovers more water, uses less brine, and eliminates freshwater abstraction from the eastern Salar basin in Chile's arid north. High-recovery reverse osmosis plays an important role. Salar de Atacama produces a lithium brine with a concentration range of 1,500-1,800mg/l, compared with 300-700mg/l for Salar de Uyuni in Bolivia. Meanwhile, our technology editor [Charlie Walker](#) has been looking into [attempts to concentrate lithium from produced water in Texas' Permian Basin](#). It is a tough challenge: the concentration is 10-30 mg/l.

4. *The next big industrial market looks like "ZLD" in India.*

The growing industrial base, tougher regulation in key states, and pressure on water resources [are driving demand for zero liquid discharge systems](#) (although what Indian water professionals call ZLD would probably be called MLD, or minimum liquid discharge, elsewhere in the world). What will really make the market take off, however, is a more developed market for resource recovery. Selling salts recovered from industrial waste streams sustains the ZLD market in China, according to our industrial markets analyst [Muskaan Arora](#).

5. *US municipal spending is heading towards \$100 billion/year.*

Our US editor Luke Bratt predicts that the [annual utility spend on water will reach \\$100 billion](#) for the first time in 2030, with Texas, Florida, and California being responsible for more than a third of that total. The top line sounds bullish, but the detail of the report explains that reduced federal funding means we should expect slower growth in the second half of this decade than we enjoyed in the first half. [I wonder whether growth in the European water market will outpace that of the US market](#) over the next few years.

6. *The Corpus Christi water saga continues.*

The water crisis in the south Texas city continues to attract more attention than feasible solutions. An outfit called [AXE H2O](#) has come up with a [proposal for a 150MGD \(567,750m3/d\) desal plant](#) to serve the broader Texas Coastal Bend. The AI

Source: Water Intelligence Magazine (May 2026).



rendering on the [company's website](#) suggests that AXE will use a mash-up of RO, MED, and lightsaber technology to deliver water, while the project's leadership consists of two retired USAF major-generals and a guy who made Ibuprofen until January last year. That is not the worst of it. The City has also received a proposal from atmospheric water generator Aquaria Water Systems. Using AWGs to generate the 113,550m³/d of water that the original desal proposal would produce would probably require around 1.2GW of power (efficient AWGs consume around 260kWh/m³). That is significantly more power than the entire city currently consumes. A Level One Water Emergency is expected to be declared in the City some time around September. The rating agencies have taken a dim view of the farce: [S&P downgraded the utility by two notches this week](#).

7. *As the Gulf localises, opportunities open out elsewhere.*

Abu Dhabi's NMDC and Spain's Lantania Aguas have been awarded the engineering, procurement and construction contract for the 272,765m³/d Fujairah I IWP. It is the first joint award since NMDC announced plans to take over Lantania earlier this year, and marks another step towards the localisation of the Gulf desal market. Other markets are looking more open to international competition. Chile is in the process of streamlining its permitting system, which looks like a great bet: we published an analysis of the pipeline of future projects [here](#). Israel's [IDE, meanwhile, is looking for growth in India](#).

8. *An Egyptian construction giant will shortly become the world's third-largest desalter.*

[Hassan Allam Holdings is expected to complete the acquisition of Metipro](#), the project delivery arm of Metito, "within weeks". The company ranks behind Acciona and Veolia as the third-largest desal plant supplier in the world, according to [GWI DesalData](#), and it is also a major player in the wastewater treatment market. Metito Utilities will continue as a project developer, while Metichem, the related chemical supply business, is still looking for a buyer.

9. *Affordability is going to bite investor-owned utilities.*

The [Governor of Pennsylvania has written to utility CEOs and their Public Utility Commission regulators threatening to rein them in](#) if they don't behave. "I believe the 20th century utility model is broken – we can no longer simply prioritize corporate profitability to drive infrastructure development," Josh Shapiro wrote. "We have reached a tipping point, and this is a moment to put your customers first and change the behaviours causing rate increases." It could make things very difficult for American Water and Essential Utilities, which have a combined rate base of more than \$15 billion in the state, and are in the process of merging. Although Shapiro is unlikely to pursue remunicipalisation, he could threaten to force open the books of the utility holding companies and expose the extent to which they are arbitraging the differential between holdco and operating company debt to juice their equity returns.

10. *There is a little bit of money in used toilet paper.*

GWI technology analyst [Kelly Thompson](#) has been looking at the market for [cellulose recovery technology](#). Pilot projects in the Netherlands and the UK are finding a small market for wastewater cellulose in the construction industry. They are also finding that skimming off the cellulose before it reaches the wastewater treatment plant improves the process efficiency, increasing plant capacity and boosting resilience to wet weather events.

Source: Water Intelligence Magazine (May 2026).

