

POOL HORIZONS

SUMMIT REPORT

BARCELONA
NOVEMBER 28TH
2023

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The inaugural Pool Horizons Summit took place in Barcelona on November 28th, 2023. It was a groundbreaking event uniting global swimming pool industry professionals to address social and environmental challenges. It featured keynote sessions, best in class projects, industry association insights and industry leader perspectives.



SUMMARY

Each session offered unique insights into the swimming pool industry, from historical perspectives to future trends, highlighting the importance of innovation, sustainability and social responsibility.

Keynote Session

→

Jeff Wiltse highlighted the evolution of swimming pools, emphasizing their role as communal spaces for social interaction and recreation and how they reflect societal changes.

Best in Class Projects

→

Andrew Ingram described the survival swimming centres in South Africa, illustrating their impact in reducing drowning incidents and teaching life-saving skills.

→

Victoria Prizzia shared insights into the POOL Exhibition in Philadelphia, showcasing how art and design can celebrate the cultural significance of swimming pools.

→

Kara Meyer detailed the +POOL project in New York City, a floating pool in the river, emphasizing its innovative design and environmental sustainability.

→

Karim Ziady discussed the Nager à Paris programme, highlighting its success in making swimming accessible to all Parisians.

Industry Associations

→

Sabeena Hickman (PHTA) presented the American perspective, focusing on industry standards, education and advocacy.

→

Agustí Ferrer (ASOFAP) gave insights into the Spanish market, discussing the challenges and opportunities in the European context.

Industry Leaders

→

Eloi Planes emphasised the need for a new narrative for the industry.

→

Jerome Pedretti focused on market trends, consumer behaviour and the importance of innovation.

→

Kevin Holleran talked about the importance of harvesting into the collective wisdom of the swimming pool industry.

→

Bruce Brooks discussed the future of swimming pools, highlighting sustainability and social impact as crucial factors.

EVENT PURPOSE AND OVERVIEW

POOL HORIZONS
SUMMIT 2023 REPORT

Event Purpose and Overview

The Pool Horizons summit brought together leading representatives of the global swimming pool industry, including professionals, innovators and world-class thinkers.

It was conceived as the first step of a visionary programme aimed at addressing the pressing social and environmental challenges that the swimming pool industry faces.

With a fresh perspective and a commitment to driving the industry

forward, the summit's ambition was to foster collaboration, innovation and sustainable practices. By bringing together diverse stakeholders, the Pool Horizons Summit paved the way for a brighter future for the swimming pool industry, benefiting both businesses and the communities they serve.

The Pool Horizons Summit aimed to promote discussion and provoke debate about the world of water, swimming and pools: it succeeded.



“I wasn’t expecting such an interesting brainstorming event. It really made me rethink our value proposition.”

“More and more people need to understand that this is the future.”

“It was very valuable to step back and think about the role of swimming pools, their true value and what this means for our industry.”

“I enjoyed each one of the excellent projects and the passion that they put into them.”

KEYNOTE SESSION

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The Promise of Swimming Pools as Community Spaces

Jeff Wiltse

*Professor of History
University of Montana
USA*



Jeff Wiltse is Professor of History at the University of Montana in the USA and the author of the critically acclaimed book “Contested Waters: A Social History of Swimming Pools in America”. He is a scholarly authority and influential public thinker on issues of social justice and racial inequality in the areas of sports and recreation. His research and scholarship focus on the social, cultural and political dimensions of public life in American cities during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He has published extensively on the history of swimming pools in the United States and on the historical roots of contemporary race-based swimming and drowning disparities.

The golden age of public pools

The 1920s and 1930s were the golden age of America’s public swimming pools - vibrant community spaces that were larger than life and bustling with diverse crowds seeking leisure and recreation. These expansive pools, coupled with ample open spaces, became symbols of communal engagement and lively social interaction. Notably, their construction during the Great Depression highlighted their unexpected yet vital role in societal wellbeing.

Social benefits and dark shadows

These public pools fostered community ties, promoted recreation and democratized swimming education, but this era also bore the ugly mark of racial discrimination, as segregated pools denied black Americans access, creating a haunting legacy that has a continuing impact: even today, swimming rates among black Americans are much lower than among white Americans.



Contemporary relevance and lessons

There are significant parallels between history and modern challenges. Community pools can offer potential solutions to global issues, from combating obesity by encouraging physical activity to addressing drowning risks through supervised pool environments. The relevance of these pools in today's context is striking. These spaces stand as antidotes to social isolation and screen addiction, fostering face-to-face interactions and improved mental wellbeing. Pools can play an important role in nurturing community bonds and enhancing social capital, crucial elements for a cohesive society.

Long-term consequences and future prospects

Past pool provisions have an enduring impact of on future generations. They foster a positive legacy in the creation of new consumers of swimming pools, illustrating how increased investment in community pools today could spark a sustained demand for aquatic facilities in the future, echoing the profound societal impact witnessed during America's swimming pool age.



“Public swimming pools built today increase social capital and generate long-term demand from future generations.”

Jeff Wiltse

BEST IN CLASS PROJECTS

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Survival Swimming Centres in South Africa

Andrew Ingram

*Drowning Prevention Manager
National Sea Rescue Institute
South Africa*



Andrew Ingram has dedicated 15 years to the National Sea Rescue Institute (NSRI) in South Africa. As the founder of the drowning prevention department, he leads various initiatives such as Safety Education, Survival Swimming, Pink Rescue Buoys, Beach Safety Cameras and Survival Swimming Centres. Andrew's expertise lies in designing innovative solutions to reduce drowning statistics in South Africa, where approximately 1500 fatal drownings occur annually. His focus is on understanding demographics, locations and developing prevention strategies.

Swimming pools from shipping containers

The NSRI in South Africa has ingeniously transformed standard 12-meter maritime shipping containers into portable swimming pools, in an effort to decrease mortality rates among young South Africans. These unique containers come with a skilled instructor, teaching children four essential water survival skills: mastering breathing control, understanding body orientation in water, learning to float and navigating a minimum distance of 5 meters through the water.

Portable water literacy in a safe environment

In South Africa, the ability to swim is a rarity, with only 15% of the population having this vital skill. The Survival Swimming Centres provide a safe environment where children can be taught to swim, and which can be moved to regions of South Africa without other safe swimming facilities. Children can be given a life skill that they would never have had the opportunity to learn, and a culture of swimming can be developed in a community where otherwise there was no chance of this happening.





“Through introducing a culture of swimming, and a sense of worth and pride, we can build incredible communities.”

Andrew Ingram

A collaborative approach to overcoming challenges

Coordinated by Andrew Ingram, the Survival Swimming Centres have been created by an ecosystem of companies from the swimming pool industry. They are an example of how organisations can join forces to tackle the challenges of a project efficiently, effectively and sustainably. By leveraging each other's strengths, resources and expertise, they have created a powerful platform that makes the most of the knowledge and experience within the swimming pool industry.

An educational project that fosters communities

The Survival Swimming Centre project is an initiative that not only teaches children the basics of water safety, but also helps create spaces that foster communication and collaboration within local communities.

[Watch the video](#)

POOL Exhibition Philadelphia

Victoria Prizzia

Founder and Chief Executive Officer
Habithèque, USA



Victoria Prizzia has led Habithèque, an interpretive planning and design studio in Pipersville, Pennsylvania, USA, since 2007. They create award-winning interpretation programs, crafting experiences that increase public engagement with water. Habithèque is known for exhibitions and cultural activations that seamlessly integrate art, history and science through innovative storytelling. Victoria Prizzia believes that igniting the heart and mind creates a fertile landscape for learning. Self-discovery, curiosity and pushing the boundaries of knowledge are integral to her work. Each project is seen as a gateway to creative expansion and social change.

A social history of swimming pools in community life

POOL is a 437 square-metre, multi-disciplinary museum exhibition exploring the history and contemporary implications of segregated swimming in America. The exhibition investigates the role of public pools in communities, with the goal of deepening understanding of the connection between water, social justice, personal wellbeing and public health. Weaving together history, storytelling, scholarship, and place-based learning, POOL immerses guests in a collection of original visitor experiences, commissioned art installations, and rarely seen archival film footage and photographs.

Present-day effects of past discrimination

POOL features the voices and work of Black artists, swimming champions, aquatic activists and scholars, to illuminate a history of segregated swimming and its connection to the present day. Past racial discrimination at swimming pools, coupled with a general shift of funds away from public pools to private swimming and recreational opportunities, have had a significant and lasting impact on Black communities. According to reports from the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, Black children and teenagers are almost six times as likely as white children to drown in a swimming pool. USA Swimming reports that 69% of Black children have little to no swimming ability, compared with 42% of white children.





Connection to water: survival, recreation and cultural tradition

POOL illuminates drowning as a global “neglected public health threat” and emphasises the importance of resources for the development of a lifesaving skill. It builds awareness about the vital health benefits of swimming and access to water.

The benefits of promoting a swimming culture

Investing in infrastructure that promotes a culture of swimming offers a wellspring of benefits. POOL demonstrates that the act of swimming together can transform the lives of individuals. Vibrant and welcoming public pools can function as the heart of a community and be a haven of personal development and recreation for people of all ages.



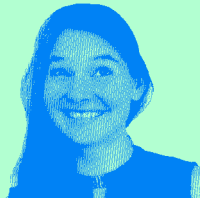
“Swimming pools contribute to the wellbeing of individuals, families and the social fabric of communities.”

Victoria Prizzia

[Watch the video](#)

+POOL Project, New York City

Kara Meyer
Managing Director
+Pool
New York, USA



Kara Meyer helped start +POOL in 2015 and is managing director of the not-for-profit organisation, driving policy change to open up safe public access to the waters around New York City (NYC) for swimming. She has mobilised local community members, leading to a major directive to city agencies from the NYC Mayor's office that new frameworks should be developed that support safe public access to water. Kara Meyer passionately believes in free and safe access to the river for all and is a steward of recreation, environmental education and public space for the community.



How a plus-shaped pool launched a movement

+POOL is an NYC-based not-for-profit organisation, born out of an idea for a plus-shaped water-filtering floating swimming pool that captured the public imagination. +POOL has launched a movement in NYC to reclaim urban waters for swimming and inspired a series of urban swimming initiatives worldwide. As the organisation works to push new policy to create safe public access to NYC waters and support the building of its floating pool concept, it also works to educate the public on the issues affecting water quality and promote water stewardship and water safety education.

Public space innovation

The +POOL project was born as an exercise in innovating urban architecture and rethinking public spaces. This initiative is particularly important in cities like New York City, where space comes at a premium and every square metre needs to be used strategically. By bringing together leading experts in the field, the project aims to find new solutions for urban designs that will improve public life and create more liveable spaces.



“This project’s architecture and design have inspired many to envision swimming in the river once again.”

Kara Meyer

Citizens return to the river

The citizens of New York have not enjoyed the great rivers that surround their city since the beginning of the last century. But that’s about to change. By engaging with stakeholders, community groups, local residents and organisations, the +POOL project is charting a course to open the city’s rivers as safe, public swimming areas.

21st century aquatic facility

Sanitary requirements impose the need to find innovative filtration systems, while the design of +POOL aims to find a contemporary approach to the concept of the pool itself. + POOL is designed as four pools in one: a pool for children, a sports pool, a lap pool and a lounge pool. Each can be used independently, combined to form an Olympic-length pool or opened completely into an 800 m² pool. Its universally recognisable shape and unusual offshore siting immediately position + POOL as an iconic piece of public infrastructure. +Pool is the perfect opportunity to rethink pool design for the modern age.

[Watch the video](#)

Nager à Paris

Karim Ziady

*Councillor for Local Sport
City of Paris, France*



Karim Ziady was elected as a councillor for the City of Paris in 2020. He is responsible for local sport, in the department for Sport and the Olympic and Paralympic Games, which will be held in Paris in the summer of 2024. He stresses the multifaceted significance of public swimming pools in Paris as spaces that are cultural hubs, promoting social mixing and community cohesion, transcending boundaries of gender, class and age. He sees them as essential services, not intended for profit, but serving diverse societal needs.

An unprecedented investment in the swimming pools of Paris

Introduced in 2015, the Nager à Paris programme is an ambitious plan by the city council of the French capital aimed at upgrading the city's existing swimming pools and creating new pools. The plan has an investment budget of €150 million and 104 measures designed to achieve 100m² of recreational water for every 10,000 inhabitants of Paris and its districts. Nager à Paris is an unprecedented plan to modernise Paris's public swimming pools, with a very clear focus on their social impact.



Citizen participation

Faced with the obsolescence of the capital's swimming pools, the city council undertook to act to improve swimming facilities in Paris. The initiative began with a far-reaching consultation with sports and swimming clubs and the general public to design the Nager à Paris plan. The 104 measures involve modernising Paris's 39 existing public swimming pools and 9 school swimming pools, building 11 new pools and improving the operation, services and sustainability of all the city's swimming facilities.

Accessibility and inclusivity

The programme prioritises accessibility, aiming to make pools available to all, including individuals with disabilities. It focuses on addressing the alarming percentage of children lacking swimming skills by integrating lessons into school curriculums.

“We believe that swimming facilities are essential public infrastructure, improving the wellbeing and satisfaction of our citizens.”

Karim Ziady

Enjoying the River Seine: future initiatives

In response to climate change and rising urban temperatures, Nager à Paris explores future plans to utilise the River Seine for swimming activities. During the Olympic and Paralympic Games, the river will be the stage for open-water and triathlon swimming events. Part of the games' legacy proposal includes creating open-air swimming areas, aligning with the city's ecological transition and offering Parisians new ways to engage with their environment.

[Watch the video](#)



INDUSTRY ASSOCIATIONS

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Vision and Challenges from an American Perspective

Sabeena Hickman

*President and Chief Executive Officer
Pool and Hot Tub Alliance (PHTA)
USA*



Sabeena Hickman has been CEO of the Pool & Hot Tub Alliance (PHTA) in the USA since 2019. The PHTA is the world's oldest and largest association representing swimming pool, spa and hot tub manufacturers, manufacturers' agents, builders, designers, distributors, suppliers, installers, retailers and service technicians. It offers education and resources for its members and advocates for and promotes the benefits of the aquatics industry. The PHTA facilitates the expansion of swimming, water safety and related research and outreach activities aimed at introducing more people to swimming, making swimming environments safer and keeping pools open to serve communities.

Swimming pool industry trends

The average annual growth of the residential in-ground swimming pool market over the past ten years has been about 6.8%. Concrete pools still lead the way, with 61%, then vinyl at 26% and fiberglass at 13%. There are approximately 8.5 million residential pools in the USA, and their maintenance and renovation is an important part of the market.

“Despite the challenges, the swimming pool and hot tub industry sustains growth and innovation.”

Sabeena Hickman

Challenges

The process of obtaining permits for pool construction continues to be a source of frustration for pool builders, and their customers, leading to delays and long lead times. Difficulties in obtaining materials and equipment for all types of pools are also a problem. To address the ongoing issue of a shortage of labour in the industry, the PHTA has an extensive programme aimed at increasing awareness about careers in the industry and encouraging talent to apply for jobs in aquatics. The association's members talk to potential applicants about why they chose the pool and hot tub industry. And it's because it's fun. It's because they're creating backyard oases and wonderful experiences for families.

Vision and Challenges from a Spanish Perspective

Agustí Ferrer

Managing Director

Asociación Española de Profesionales del Sector Piscinas (ASOFAP)

Spain



Agustí Ferrer is the managing director of the Asociación Española de Profesionales del Sector Piscinas (ASOFAP), the Spanish swimming pool industry association. ASOFAP was created in 1999 as a non-profit association with the purpose of representing and defending the interests of companies operating in the swimming pool industry in Spain and promoting technical and economic development in the industry.

Swimming contributes to the economy

People in Spain love swimming pools. Across all sectors of society, the health and community benefits of swimming pools are appreciated. And the swimming pool industry makes a significant contribution to the economy: 28,000 swimming pools were built in 2023 in Spain. Hotels that have swimming pools attract more customers and can charge higher prices, something that is very important in a country like Spain where tourism is a major part of the economy.

“The industry is continuously working to achieve our positive vision of the future.”

Agustí Ferrer

A problem of perception

One big challenge that the swimming pool industry in Spain has, however, is the perception of the sustainability, or lack of sustainability, of swimming pools, especially the idea that they consume a lot of water. This is a major issue in a country like Spain, where there is a general scarcity of water and, at the moment, a serious drought situation. Product innovation to make pools even more efficient and sustainable is essential, but the industry must also improve its communication to explain that the reality today is that swimming pools are installations that in terms of water consumption are demonstrably very efficient.

INDUSTRY LEADERS

POOL HORIZONS
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Reinventing the Narrative

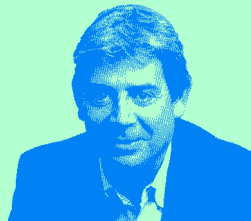
Eloi Planes

President

Piscina & Wellness Barcelona

Executive Chairman

Fluidra



Eloi Planes has a lifelong connection to the world of swimming pools: the year he was born, his father founded Spanish multinational pool manufacturer Fluidra. Passionate about the pool sector, its evolution, its ability to adapt and its impact on people's lives, he is an active member of the board of trustees of the Fluidra Foundation, whose mission is to ensure that everyone has access to pools, swimming and the therapeutic benefits they provide.

Changing the story

The swimming pool industry needs to reinvent its narrative. The public perception of pools - leading to limitations on pool sizes or restrictions on water use or a lack of swimming skills - needs to be challenged. The story should not be one of leisure for the wealthy, but of social transformation, prioritising health, wellbeing and environmental responsibility.

Strength through collaboration

Faced with growing challenges like climate change-induced droughts, the industry must respond to them collectively, globally, by promoting debate, sharing positive social and environmental impacts, and leveraging the industry's efforts to initiate a paradigm shift in the sector's outlook.

“The swimming pool sector needs to renew its narrative and place the benefits of swimming pools at its heart.”

Eloi Planes

The Importance of Innovation

Jerome Pedretti

*Executive Vice President
and Chief Executive Officer, Pool
Pentair*



Jerome Pedretti is an executive vice president of Pentair and chief executive officer of the company's pool segment, having joined the business in 2005 and serving in various roles before his present one. Pentair focuses on innovation to create a better world through smart, sustainable water solutions.

Innovation as a force for good

Innovation is crucially important for the swimming pool industry, because it will be the force of good in the years to come. There is already great innovation in the industry, but it can do even more. And it can do even more by collaborating within the industry, but also beyond the industry, with governing bodies, with educational organisations, communities, associations and research institutes. Collaboration will make the industry much stronger.

A catalyst of change

The swimming pool industry has a role to play in being a catalyst of change. It is headed in the right direction, which will help societal wellbeing and the sustainability of swimming pools. And those are challenges it needs to take on, for individuals, families, communities, societies and for the planet overall. But this will require the participation of the whole industry. Everybody's energy, enthusiasm and collaboration will be needed to solve those challenges.

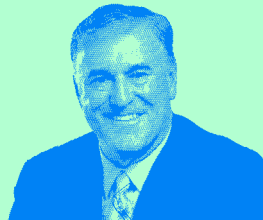
“We have a role to play to shape this industry and be the catalyst of change.”

Jerome Pedretti

Harvesting the Swimming Pool Industry's Collective Wisdom

Kevin Holleran

*President and Chief Executive Officer
Hayward Holdings Inc*



Kevin Holleran is president and chief executive officer of Hayward, a leading provider of environmentally friendly and energy-efficient products for swimming pools. Founded in 1925, Hayward has always been committed to being a good steward of the environment and the company's solutions have allowed it to uphold sustainability. Kevin Holleran spent many hours of his formative years at the community pool in Woodstock, New York, or "putting himself in harm's way" swimming in local reservoirs.

Making an impact

The swimming pool industry isn't just about pools and hot tubs; it's about environmental sustainability, social wellbeing and shaping communities worldwide. Each discussion, every idea exchanged contributes to a larger narrative of how the industry can make a positive impact on the planet and the lives of people around us.

Turning potential into reality

Active participation is crucial. The swimming pool industry thrives on diverse perspectives and insights that fuel the engine of progress, harnessing the potential for change and turning it into reality. It is essential to engage, ask tough questions and challenge each other, so that the industry's collective wisdom can be harvested, thereby cultivating game-changing strategies that will drive the swimming pool industry forward.

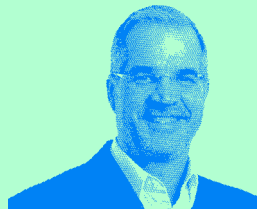
“Our industry isn't just about swimming pools - it's about environmental sustainability, personal and social wellbeing, and shaping communities.”

Kevin Holleran

Sustainability and Social Impact: The Future of Swimming Pools

Bruce Brooks

*Chief Executive Officer
Fluidra*



Bruce Brooks has been chief executive officer of Fluidra since 2018. Fluidra is a multinational group listed on the Spanish Stock Exchange that was founded in 1969 and is the global leader in the pool and wellness industry. The company's stated purpose is to enhance people's lives through innovative and sustainable solutions that transform the way people enjoy water for recreation and health.

Shaping the dialogue and inspiring action

Environmental sustainability and social impact are the guiding principles steering the swimming pool industry's future. The commitment to integrating these principles into practice is not just a choice; it's a responsibility. Tackling both is the swimming pool industry taking back control of the narrative. Implementing these ideals requires collective effort. The leaders of the swimming pool industry hold the power to set examples, drive change and inspire widespread adoption of sustainable practices locally, nationally and globally. The future holds promises of collective action and collaborative projects and initiatives.

“I'm an impassioned believer in swimming pools and the impact that they can have on life in the world.”

Bruce Brooks

Putting pools in perspective

The first Pool Horizons Summit was an incredible journey of knowledge and inspiration, a wealth of insights and profound perspectives. Industry visions and challenges, survival swimming initiatives, the historical narrative reminding us of the evolution of swimming pools and their social significance, the power of creative spaces to transform our perceptions of aquatic environments and ambitious community swimming projects all showcased the global reach of the industry's shared goals in fostering sustainable aquatic spaces. The importance of teaching everyone to swim was also stressed. From an industry perspective, if we teach a child to swim, we create a lifetime customer.

A future of collective commitment and responsibility

The swimming pool sector, with its innovative strides and unwavering commitment, has the potential to shape a future where sustainability and social impact aren't just aspirations but realities. Let's create a future where every dive into a pool is a leap towards a sustainable and socially responsible world.

NEXT STEPS

POOL HORIZONS
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Next Steps

The inaugural Pool Horizons Summit marked the beginning of the Pool Horizons initiative. Throughout 2024, Pool Horizons will organise working groups that will address how the swimming pool industry can respond to today's social and environmental challenges.

The working groups will:

- Share knowledge and expertise
- Gather information and insights
- Participate in discussions and contribute to dialogue
- Validate output for publication
- Act as a permanent meeting point

The Pool Horizons working groups will address the following challenges:

Health and ageing populations

Swimming pools as promoters of improved global health and healthy ageing.



Community development

Swimming pools as key infrastructure for the development of smarter and happier communities.



Sustainability and the environment

Swimming pools at the centre of the creation of human spaces compatible with restoring and protecting the environment.



Water and safety

Swimming pools as safe spaces for acquiring aquatic literacy.



Do you have knowledge or experience in the areas of health and safety, community improvement or environmental sustainability? Are you passionate about helping the swimming pool industry make a difference to society? If you would like to be involved in a Pool Horizons working group, you can find more information at poolhorizons.com or send an email to secretariat@poolhorizons.com. Pool Horizons looks forward to hearing from you!

