

## NEHA NEWS

**NEHA's Celebration of World Environmental Health Day**

By Maddie Gustafson ([mgustafson@neha.org](mailto:mgustafson@neha.org))

The National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) was honored to join the International Federation of Environmental Health in celebrating World Environmental Health Day on September 26, 2019. This partnership was built to raise global awareness about today's most pressing environmental health concerns. This year's theme was "Climate Change Challenges, Time for Global Environmental Health to Act in Unison."

Climate change is the greatest threat to global health we currently face. It harms health by decreasing the quality of air we breathe, increasing our exposure to more frequent and intense extreme weather events, increasing extremes of precipitation including flooding and drought, expanding the geographic distribution and number of disease-carrying vectors, and exacerbating health inequities. Around the world, these impacts increase the risk of chronic and infectious diseases, harm mental health and well-being, threaten the safety and security of our communities, trigger food insecurity, and place a disproportionate burden on vulnerable populations.

In the spirit of this event, NEHA developed a declaration on climate and health, held a Twitter chat, developed a toolkit, and reduced its own carbon emissions. The declaration included NEHA's commitment to spreading awareness of the environmental health workforce through the World Environmental Health Day activities. All the activities and how to navigate the Twitter chat were documented in the toolkit. The Twitter chat sparked conversation between partners and allies to discuss how climate impacts health, highlight the role of environmental health professionals in protecting communities, and build resilience. The declaration and toolkit can be found at [www.neha.org/news-events/latest-news/celebrate-world-environmental-health-day-2019-neha](http://www.neha.org/news-events/latest-news/celebrate-world-environmental-health-day-2019-neha).

In addition to these activities, NEHA wanted to reduce its organizational environmental impact on World Environmental Health Day. As such, World Environmental Health Day was an organization-wide telework day. Instituting an organization-wide telework day is a great way to collectively participate by working from home and cutting back on staff vehicle carbon emissions for the day.

To estimate the impact of the organization-wide telework day, NEHA conducted an emissions survey of all staff. NEHA staff answered a series of 10 questions about their morning and evening commutes to work and length of time spent in the car, as well as gas mileage of staff cars. Employees who work remotely or take public transportation completed the survey as well. The results showed that an organization-wide telework day eliminated the emission of over 650 pounds of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) into the atmosphere. In addition to the World Environmental Health Day telework day, NEHA staff have the option to work remotely one day a week. By implementing a one telework day per week policy, NEHA has cut its staff's yearly CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by over 34,000 pounds.

With a successful event in 2019, we are excited for World Environmental Health Day 2020!

**NEHA Releases UNCOVER EH Visual Abstract**

By Maddie Gustafson ([mgustafson@neha.org](mailto:mgustafson@neha.org))

A December 2019 article published in *Environmental Health Perspectives*—from a team of researchers at Baylor University, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA)—examines the challenges and needs in the environmental health workforce (<https://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/doi/10.1289/EHP5161>). Understanding the Needs, Challenges, Opportunities, Vision, and Emerging Roles in Environmental Health (UNCOVER EH) is a groundbreaking study that describes the environmental health workforce. In the new article, "Environmental Health Practice Challenges and Research Needs for U.S. Health Departments," the authors present results from UNCOVER EH identified through an online survey and in-person focus group interviews of over 1,700 environmental health professionals from health departments across the nation.

To complement the release of the article, NEHA has designed a visual abstract ([www.neha.org/membership-communities/get-involved/day-in-life/uncover-environmental-health-workforce-visual](http://www.neha.org/membership-communities/get-involved/day-in-life/uncover-environmental-health-workforce-visual)). A visual abstract is the graphic equivalent to a written abstract. Much like an infographic, it is tailored to be comprehensible by all audiences through visuals, health literate text, and a high-level summary of the article's findings. This visual abstract was unique as we translated qualitative results into a graphic representation. The visual abstract provides a nice complement to the article, conveying the importance of the environmental health workforce, exploring six key challenge areas it is facing, and describing recommendations for the environmental health practice.

The environmental health workforce is critical to the public health delivery system. In fact, environmental health is one of the largest segments in the public health workforce, second only to public health nursing. Environmental health professionals have unique and specialized knowledge to diagnose, intervene, and prevent emerging threats. The primary focus of the workforce is to protect the health of communities through addressing environmental factors that affect health, including air quality, food safety, and vector control. The role of the workforce is of growing importance and this new article highlights the continued utility of environmental health professionals as we face emerging environmental health issues in a rapidly changing field.

The article presents six different challenges that environmental health professionals face, which are highlighted in the visual abstract. Thematic analysis of the survey results led to the identification of food safety, vectors and public health pests, healthy homes, wastewater management, drinking water quality, and emerging issues as six primary environmental health topic areas.

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Having identified these key areas by environmental health professionals, the article additionally shares several problem statements identified through the focus group discussions for each of the challenge areas. These results can inform future priorities for the field.

Results from the key topics and problem statements can inform recommendations for environmental health practice. Three main topic areas are included in the recommendations, which include training, research, and partnerships. The training topic area focuses on professional credentials, academic preparation, and strategic national training. The research topic area recommends translational science partnerships, nontraditional partnerships, and joint leadership programs. Finally, the article recommends that partnerships highlight strategic research initiatives and integration with existing programs. From the Registered Environmental Health Specialist/Registered Sanitarian credentials to robust science-based education, cross-disciplinary public health leadership programs, and translational research teams, these recommendations can better prepare the environmental health workforce.

Through the UNCOVER EH research project ([www.neha.org/uncover-eh](http://www.neha.org/uncover-eh)), the needs and challenges of the environmental health workforce have been identified. This new groundbreaking study has never been done before and the results are essential to advance the needs of environmental health professionals.

### NEHA Staff Profiles

As part of tradition, NEHA features new staff members in the *Journal* around the time of their 1-year anniversaries. These profiles give you an opportunity to get to know the NEHA staff better and to learn more about the great programs and activities going on in your association. This month we are pleased to introduce you to two NEHA staff members. Contact information for all NEHA staff can be found on page 40.

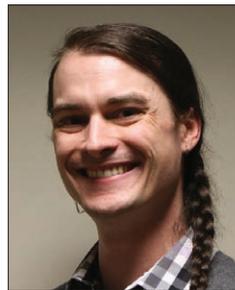


#### Lindsy Darnell

I joined NEHA in March 2019 as the executive assistant to Dr. David Dyjack. In my role, I have a plethora of responsibilities that include scheduling, booking travel, external and internal communication, general coordination, and anything else that is asked of me. Recently, I've started to assist with accounts payable.

Born and raised in Houston, Texas, I grew up playing tennis. I carried that passion on with me through college, where I played tennis for the first year. I graduated with a bachelor's degree in elementary education, followed by a master of arts in teaching, from the University of Arkansas (Woo Pig!). After graduating, I packed up and moved to Dallas, Texas, where I taught elementary math for 4 years and met my husband. In summer 2016, his job brought us out to Colorado, where I taught for another year. After much thought, I decided to take my career in a different path and found myself at NEHA. I knew I loved helping others and wanted to be a part of an organization that makes a difference, which is one of the things I love about NEHA.

In my personal life, I live with my husband in a suburb south of Denver. We have two golden retrievers, Izzy and Teddy, who constantly keep us on our toes. I love to hike, run, walk my dogs, and play tennis. I also enjoy skiing in the winter (when it's not too cold).



#### Cole Wilson

I was born and raised in Littleton, Colorado, and plan to spend the rest of my life here. In my free time I enjoy rock climbing, video games, and crochet. I graduated from Colorado State University with a degree in sociology. After college I spent several years working in the medical and recreational cannabis industry managing dispensaries. It was

a fun and exciting industry but not quite what I was looking for, which is why I joined NEHA in February 2019.

I have found an engaging and inspiring atmosphere of people at NEHA who are committed to environmental health. I am so excited to be a part of this team. In my role as training logistics and administrative coordinator, I get to travel all over the country to assist with Food and Drug Administration training programs. In these trainings, my team and I meet with local sanitarians and health inspectors and provide training to enable them to better keep the public safe and healthy. I have had the opportunity to meet many wonderful people and have gained a better understanding of food safety and its relationship to environmental health. 🐞

## Did You Know?

You can stay in the loop every day with NEHA's social media presence. Find NEHA on

- Facebook: [www.facebook.com/NEHA.org](https://www.facebook.com/NEHA.org)
- Twitter: <https://twitter.com/NEHAorg>
- LinkedIn: [www.linkedin.com/company/national-environmental-health-association](https://www.linkedin.com/company/national-environmental-health-association)