

NEHA NEWS

NEHA Government Affairs Updates

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Hill Day

The National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) held our sixth annual Hill Day on Thursday, February 23. The NEHA Board of Directors and several of our members met with 53 members of the U.S. Congress from the House of Representative and Senate, as well as both parties who serve on appropriations committees. These individuals are the decision makers who determine how much funding each federal agency receives.

Overall, 14 members of our board participated along with a new member from New Jersey, members from Texas and California, and two members from Colorado. Other board members from Alabama, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Ohio, and Oregon also participated. Further, our members from the state affiliates in Connecticut and Florida participated to discuss environmental health with congressional offices from their states.

We met with 53 congressional offices, mainly congressional appropriators from the House and Senate (31 Democratic offices and 18 Republican offices). Of the visits, five were from offices in Colorado, five were from Maryland, four were from Alabama, four were from California, and three each were from Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Oregon, Texas and Wyoming. We had two visits to offices from Kentucky, New Jersey, and Utah. One visit was to the office of Senator Patty Murray (D-WA).

Our meetings focused on appropriations to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and National Center for Environmental Health within the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), highlighting the importance of federal funding for food safety and other environmental health objectives to the state and local environmental health profession. Our work is vital as we are the only association that advocates solely for environmental health and the environmental health profession before Congress.

During our meetings, we asked Congress to consider the following:

- Fund the CDC National Center for Environmental Health at \$300 million and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry at \$95 million.
- Fund the FDA Federal and State Initiative that supports food safety inspections at \$140 million and \$35 million for states to purchase equipment to serve healthier meals and improve food safety.
- Encourage the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to include environmental health within the Public Health Workforce Loan Repayment Program.
- Share with congressional offices the importance of environmental health to state and local public health agencies.

Senator John Barrasso (R-WY) wanted to meet with NEHA Immediate Past-President Roy Kroeger, and was scheduled to join

the call. Kroeger noted that Senator Barrasso was an advocate for food safety when he served in the Wyoming state legislature. Other members were highly interested in our activities, especially on red tide in Florida, onsite wastewater in Alabama, and the recent train derailment in Ohio.

In the context of national politics, these visits are essential to any association promoting their profession. Congress pays attention to those groups that actively promote their profession and supports funding for federal agencies and activities that provide for their profession. Congress needs to hear and know that these efforts have an impact on their constituents and communities. While Hill Day is just one day, we are committed to continuing our efforts to advocate for the environmental health profession. You can view all our government activities at www.neha.org/advocacy.

Support Letters

We submitted a support letter to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and HRSA in February 2022. The letter requested HRSA to ensure that the environmental health workforce is included in the Public Health Workforce Loan Repayment Program. This program was authorized by the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023 as part of the PREVENT Pandemics Act and is essential in ensuring the public health workforce needed for the future. We also requested that the President's Budget for Fiscal Year 2024 should include at least \$100 million for the Public Health Workforce Loan Repayment Program.

We also submitted a letter to FDA in January 2023. The letter presented how we can assist FDA with recommendations outlined in the Reagan-Udall Foundation report to improve our nation's food safety system. We focused on three key recommendations outlined in the report: 1) the U.S. food safety system structure, 2) personnel and workforce, and 3) advocacy for financial support.

You can view all our letters and sign-ons at www.neha.org/letters.

NEHA Releases 2022 Annual Report

In March 2022, we released our 2022 Annual Report that summarizes the achievements of the organization to build, sustain, and empower an effective environmental health workforce. The report demonstrates our continued commitment to being an essential partner and an influential voice in environmental health.

In addition to words from NEHA Executive Director Dr. David Dyjack and NEHA President Dr. D. Gary Brown, the report provides a visual picture of our achievements under the following headings:

- **Inspiring & Providing Professional Development:** One of the key ways we work to build and sustain the workforce is through education. Learn about our up-to-date training and educational offerings that help environmental health professionals protect their communities and improve health outcomes.

- **Uncovering Research & Creating Resources:** While environmental health has been practiced for centuries, changes to our society and physical environment require our profession to stay up-to-the-minute on the evolving practice. We highlight our publications, discussions, and announcements that aid our members in meeting this challenge.
- **Supporting the Profession Across the Globe & Life Span:** Two keys vital to the success of our profession are adequate support for our work and trust in our abilities and knowledge. In this section we explore our investments and programs that support professionals who work on the front lines of environmental public health.
- **Elevating the Organization, Profession, & Workforce:** Environmental health is often invisible—to the public, lawmakers, and even funders. Learn in this section how we work to raise the visibility of NEHA and elevate the workforce through communication, marketing, and government affairs.
- **Connecting & Partnering for Better Outcomes:** Our work can be tough and our resources light. We highlight the brain trust of environmental health professionals we brought together to address systemic, ongoing, and emerging issues to provide a place for support and the sharing of best practices.
- **Minding the Dollars & Data:** None of our work is possible without funding to staff the organization, invest in communities, or generate data to demonstrate our effectiveness. We explore our focus on meaningful financial tracking and data and IT integration to enhance our ability to make informed decisions and provide relevant data to the workforce.

The 2022 Annual Report can be viewed at www.neha.org/annual-reports. The webpage also includes annual reports from 2016–2021.

Anniversary Celebration for the Private Water Network

We celebrated the 3-year anniversary of the Private Water Network (PWN) in March. PWN is a virtual community of practice for individuals working to protect the public's health from contaminants in private drinking water sources. PWN aims to be a one-stop-shop resource for peer learning and information exchange for professionals who serve communities with private drinking water systems.

The mission of PWN is to build a sustainable community for professionals who work to support private water programs and to build capacity to protect public health more effectively and efficiently. PWN also provides a way to connect with peers; to share experiences, insights, and resources; and to gain access to timely and relevant guidance for existing and emerging issues.

To celebrate the anniversary and National Groundwater Awareness Week (held on March 5–11, 2023), we hosted a series of events focused on the challenges and opportunities related to standardizing private well data:

- **Twitter Chat:** Managing private wells for public health protection requires data not only from well water sampling but also on

well characteristics such as type of well, depth of well, and the people using the wells. Continued efforts to increase the number and frequency of well testing are needed, but new data collection activities for wells and their users are also necessary. We initiated a conversation on Twitter on March 6 about the challenges, opportunities, and priorities regarding private well data and what we can do to respond to emerging and existing issues. You can view the chat on @privatewater.net or via #PWNChat.

- **Flash Webinar—New Hampshire's Well Water Dashboard and Ongoing User Testing and Community Outreach:** This webinar held on March 7 featured Samuel Harris from the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services who shared insights on New Hampshire's Well Water Dashboard and ongoing user testing and community outreach.
- **Panel Session—Developing Approaches to Estimate the Number of Private Wells Within a Jurisdiction:** In this panel session held on March 8, Judy Manners and Rose Galbraith provided an overview of a pilot study focused on estimating the number of private wells and private well users within a jurisdiction, determining private well testing distribution in the region, and assessing the risk of contaminant exposures and water quality issues affecting private well users.

Thank you for joining us to celebrate the anniversary of PWN. You can learn more about PWN, including other resources and how to join, at www.neha.org/private-water-network.

New! Self-Assessment and Verification Audit Course Series

We invite you to participate in the new self-guided, online Self-Assessment and Verification Audit (SA/VA) Course Series. This series is now available to help your jurisdiction navigate the Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards (Retail Program Standards) from FDA. In addition, the series is available to you at any time.

The series consists of 10 self-guided courses that provide relevant information and instruction for retail program enrollment or advancement in conformance with the Retail Program Standards. The self-paced series:

- Walks you through the SA/VA process.
- Allows you to choose which Retail Program Standard(s) to focus on.
- Allows you to return to the content any time.
- Can be completed on your timeline and at your own pace.
- Includes content identical to the face-to-face SA/VA course.
- Includes examples from sample jurisdictions.

Learn more at www.neha.org/retail-grants-sava.

NEHA Staff Profile

As part of tradition, we feature new staff members in the *Journal* around the time of their 1-year anniversary. These profiles give you an opportunity to get to know our staff better and to learn more

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about the great programs and activities going on in your association. This month we are pleased to introduce you to one NEHA staff member. Contact information for all NEHA staff can be found on pages 46 and 47.



Alfonso Valadez

I joined NEHA in April 2022 as a membership services representative. I have an extensive background in customer service and hold an associate degree in computer programming. I am also an ordained deacon for the Catholic Church in the Archdiocese of Denver. Prior to NEHA, I was employed by the

Colorado Bar Association and worked with state and local attorneys regarding their membership needs.

My duties at NEHA are to assist our membership and credentialing team with the following tasks:

- Ensuring members are getting the right benefits (e.g., access to E-Learning, the *Journal of Environmental Health*, membership discounts, etc.).
- Troubleshooting and independently resolving member issues.
- Overseeing our membership renewal process.
- Assisting with membership engagement and marketing efforts such as blog posts and marketing campaigns.
- Assisting with fundraising efforts.
- Creating and sending invoices and receipts and processing payments for our members and customers.
- Running membership reports.

Journey to Cuba



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We have an exciting opportunity for environmental health professionals to join our private delegation to Havana, Cuba, on November 2–6, 2023. We will explore Cuba's rich and varied cultural heritage and go beyond tourist corridors by

engaging with local environmental health professionals, officials, engineers, entrepreneurs, musicians, and artists who will offer in-depth commentary on health policies, economics, environmental justice, art, history, architecture, and culture. The trip is being organized by CLE Abroad, a provider of customized educational travel programs around the world. The trip is open to all individuals over 18 years.

Registration costs range between \$2,900 and \$4,225 depending on selected accommodations. For each registration, \$150 will be contributed to our scholarship fund. Registration fees include:

- Accommodations, as selected

- Ground transportation, including airport transfers
- Full-time program escort and local tour guides
- Daily breakfast and select meals with beverages
- Admission to all activities
- Educational programming with up to 7 continuing education contact hours available

Register before the early-bird deadline on June 1 to save \$350. Please note that airfare, a Cuban Tourist Card, additional meals or beverages, gratuities, COVID-19 testing, and trip insurance are not included in registration fees.

Learn more at www.neha.org/cuba.

Highlights of the NEHA 2023 AEC



The NEHA 2023 Annual Educational Conference (AEC) & Exhibition—to be held on July 31–August 3 in New Orleans, Louisiana—aims to “Raise the Voice of the Environmental Health Workforce.” Over the 4 days of the conference, along with 3 days of preconference offerings, the 2023 AEC is packed full of knowledgeable speakers,

informative sessions and trainings, networking opportunities, and fun events. Learn more at www.neha.org/aec.

Featured Sessions

With over 350 speakers and 250 concurrent educational sessions planned for 10 different environmental health tracks, the 2023 AEC is packed with educational opportunities for anyone working in the field of environmental health. We also have planned five different featured sessions that will explore a variety of timely and pressing environmental health topics. Learn more at www.neha.org/aec-featured-sessions.

- **Keynote Address (July 31):** We are pleased to have Dr. Maureen Lichtveld, professor and dean of the School of Public Health at the University of Pittsburgh, open our conference with an address on “Communities and Climate Through the Lens of Environmental Health Practice.” Communities, especially those facing intransigent inequities, rely on environmental health practitioners to counter these insults and strengthen community resilience. Dr. Lichtveld will examine the triple threats many communities face—pollution, disasters, and climate change—and will discuss local and global examples; discuss gaps in environmental health practice, policy, and science; and propose a road map for action.
- **Grand Educational Session Kickoff (August 1):** We have brought together a panel of regional experts to present a symposium on rodent control. The symposium will explore how to use effective communication, control practices, and resources to elevate your rodent control program. Panelists include Dr. Claudia Riegel, director of the City of New Orleans Mosquito, Termite, and Rodent Control Board; Dr. Imelda K.

Moise, associate professor and director of Global Health Studies at the University of Miami; and Janet A. Hurley, senior extension program specialist in integrated pest management (IPM) at Texas A&M.

- **Keynote Address (August 1):** In this Keynote Address, Lt. General Russel L. Honoré, U.S. Army (retired) and an authority on leadership, safety, and global preparedness, will speak to our attendees on “Leadership: Getting the Difficult Job Done.” In a time when leadership is more important than ever, Lt. General Honoré will present the topic with a no-nonsense, devisive approach to leadership, vision, and resiliency.
- **Grand Educational Session Kickoff (August 2):** Presented by the NEHA Business & Industry affiliate, this session will explore “The Conundrum of Food Safety Culture: Breaking Through Barriers to Drive Improvement.” Given the competing priorities in business, how do our food industry leaders maintain a balance and account for food safety when making decisions? In this panel discussion, executive leadership from top retail and food service industries will share how their organizations achieve and maintain a culture of food safety despite rising inflation, workforce shortages, extreme weather, pandemic recovery, and food defense.
- **Closing Session (August 3):** We are pleased to announce that Frank Yiannis will be speaking at our Closing Session. Yiannis is a food safety executive and former deputy commissioner for Food Policy and Response at FDA.

Events

No AEC would be complete without some events to bring us together for networking and learning opportunities. You can learn more at www.neha.org/aec-events.

- **Exhibition Grand Opening (July 31):** Connect with your peers and industry leaders to learn about the latest products and services for environmental health professionals.
- **Student Reception (August 1):** The future of our profession depends on the next generation. Come share your insights (and business cards) with environmental health students at this casual event. Students, come with your questions!
- **Photo Exhibition and Contest (August 1):** Enjoy an evening with Gina Bare, photographer and NEHA staff member, who will share her photography and showcase the photos of contest winners. We will also discuss the impact photography can have when communicating about environmental health.
- **Town Hall Assembly (August 2):** Join NEHA President Dr. D. Gary Brown for breakfast and a recap of the year’s accomplishments on behalf of the environmental health profession.
- **Raising Your Voice Networking Event (August 2):** Join your fellow environmental health professionals for food, beverages, music, and conversation.

Preconference Offerings

Add to your 2023 AEC experience by attending one of our many preconference workshops and trainings. A full listing of these

offerings can be found at www.neha.org/aec-preconference. Here are just a few of the exciting workshops and trainings we are offering this year.

- **Certified Professional–Food Safety (CP-FS) Credential Review Course (July 29–30):** This 2-day refresher course is designed to enhance your preparation for the NEHA CP-FS credential exam and will cover exam content areas. Participants are expected to have prior food safety knowledge and training equal to the eligibility requirements to sit for the exam. *Fee: \$449 for NEHA members and \$549 for nonmembers. Registration includes the CP-FS Study Package (CP-FS Study Guide (4th edition) and CP-FS flash cards).*
- **Registered Environmental Health Specialist/Registered Sanitarian (REHS/RS) Credential Review Course (July 29–31):** This 2.5-day refresher course is designed to enhance your preparation for the NEHA REHS/RS credential exam and will cover exam content areas. Participants are expected to have a solid foundation of environmental health knowledge and training equal to the eligibility requirements to sit for the exam. *Fee: \$549 for NEHA members and \$649 for nonmembers. Registration includes the REHS/RS Study Guide (5th edition).*
- **Body Art Facility Inspector Training (July 30 and July 31):** This introductory-level course focuses on the fundamentals of body art facility inspection. It includes a body art facility inspection simulation, in-person equipment demonstrations, job aids, resources, and more. The training will also cover public health risks, communication, infection control, inspection procedures and requirements, and equipment review. *Fee: \$150 for NEHA members and \$200 for nonmembers.*
- **Council for the Model Aquatic Health Code: Certified Pool Operator (CPO) Fusion Course (July 30):** This 1-day CPO Fusion Course prepares attendees to be certified or recertified as a CPO. Attendees will complete one half of the course online at their own pace and then will attend the 1-day course at the AEC for certification. *Fee: \$350.*
- **Council for the Model Aquatic Health Code: Certified Public Health Pool Inspector Course (July 31):** This new, 1-day certification course is designed just for public health officials. Based on the Model Aquatic Health Code from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the course provides the information needed to confidently inspect commercial pools. This course is a pilot offering and attendees will be able to provide input to guide finalization of the course. *Fee: \$200.*
- **Environmental Health and Land Reuse (EHLR) Immersion Training (July 29–31):** This interactive 2.5-day training aims to increase the skills of the environmental health workforce to engage in land reuse and redevelopment. The training takes a deeper dive into the first three modules of our original EHLR Basic Training, which focuses on community engagement, evaluation, and risk communication. Participants will earn 20 CE contact hours after completion of the training. *Fee: \$25 for NEHA members and \$50 for nonmembers.* ❀