

## NEHA NEWS

**Note of Thanks to Our Departing Board Members**

The National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) is fortunate to have members who are willing to volunteer their time and energy to our organization through positions within our Board of Directors and on committees and work groups. Our board members also serve as subject matter experts, trainers, and peer reviewers for the organization. We would be remiss if we did not acknowledge the dedication and hard work of three board members on the occasion of their departure from the board: Immediate Past-President Roy Kroeger, Region 5 Vice-President Traci Michelson, and Region 7 Vice-President Tim Hatch.



**Immediate Past-President Roy Kroeger, MPH, REHS,** leaves the board after 16 years of dedicated service and leadership. He served as vice-president of Region 3 (Colorado, Montana, Utah, and Wyoming) for four consecutive terms between 2007 and 2018. In 2018, he was elected as second vice-president and served as a national officer from 2018–2023 and as president

from 2021–2022. And while his time on the board is at an end, Kroeger has indicated a willingness to continue to serve the association as a committee member, technical advisor, or in other roles as needed.

While on the board, Kroeger served on numerous standing committees including finance, policy and bylaws, membership, membership memorial, student engagement, Annual Educational Conference (AEC) planning, and nominations. Additionally, he served on several ad-hoc committees such as sustainability, response to the Deepwater Horizon event, and the search committee for a new executive director. Further, he has helped review and write new questions for several of the Registered Environmental Health Specialist/Registered Sanitarian (REHS/RS) and Certified Professional–Food Safety (CP-FS) credential exams. He has received numerous presidential citations during his 16 years.

Before serving on our board, Kroeger spent 8 years on the board of the Wyoming Environmental Health Association (WEHA). During this time he had the opportunity to learn more about NEHA by working with previous regional vice-presidents such as Jim Dingman and Tom Gonzales. Kroeger has been honored to receive all the awards offered by WEHA, including the Outstanding Environmental Health Specialist Award and the Arthur Williamson Award.

Water quality has always been a passion for Kroeger. After some academic twists and turns, he found his way to the accredited environmental health program at Colorado State University. He started his environmental health career as an intern for the Cheyenne–Laramie County Health Department in Cheyenne, Wyoming, where he took 1 week off after his internship

before starting as an environmental health specialist. He worked through every position within the department before becoming the environmental health director in 2019. He served in that role until retiring in 2022 after serving 29 years. Retirement was not the final chapter for Kroeger—he was retired for only 4 days before assuming the environmental health director position at El Paso County in Colorado.

Kroeger has been a respected professional and subject matter expert in numerous volunteer roles. Despite his interest in water quality, he has often been pulled toward food safety service. For nearly a decade, he has represented local public health agencies on the Governing Council with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Partnership for Food Protection. He has also represented NEHA on the Council to Improve Foodborne Illness Outbreak Response. Additionally, he continues to work with FDA, NEHA, the Association for Food and Drug Officials, and the International Food Protection Training Institute as a subject matter expert to develop a national food safety curriculum for all retail regulatory food safety professionals nationwide.

Another passion for Kroeger is that he enjoys teaching others about environmental health. That passion has allowed him to serve on the National Environmental Health Science and Protection Accreditation Council. During that time, he spoke with future environmental health students at several universities. He also worked with the State University of New York, College of Environmental Science and Forestry to achieve academic accreditation for their program. He also serves as an undergraduate advisor for the environmental health program at Colorado State University.

One of his greatest honors was when he had the opportunity to help train and mentor new environmental health professionals in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Following Hurricanes Irma and Marie that struck the islands in 2017, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention worked with NEHA to help the territory rebuild its environmental health workforce. “Having the opportunity to train and work with a group of people who wanted to make a difference in their community is something that I will never forget. These new professionals had so much to learn and our team had so little time to train them. The students were incredible and many continue to provide environmental health service to their communities today.”

In reflecting on his time on the board, Kroeger shared, “Serving NEHA and the great people in our profession has been an honor. There have been some challenges, such as replacing a long-tenured executive director and enduring the challenges presented by a global pandemic. There have been, however, more rewards. I had the opportunity to serve as president during the expansion of the association, both financially and in employment. I do not take credit for that growth; it was due to the hard work and dedication of an amazing group of employees and volunteers.”

“Much of the success that I have had is due to the great mentoring that I received from those who preceded me on the board.

I thank Sandra Long, Brian Collins, Bob Custard, Pricilla Oliver, Adam London, Keith Krinn, and Carolyn Harvey. I thank you all and others that were not mentioned by name. I must also thank my wife and family who supported travel over the past 16 years. My daughter and I even had the opportunity to travel together during her time as an environmental health professional in Denver. As part of my family, I must include some coworkers who often held down the fort when I was gone—my thanks to Tiffany Gaertner and Jennifer Escobedo,” Kroeger stated.



**Region 5 Vice-President Traci Michelson, MS, REHS, CP-FS**, leaves the board after 3 years of dedicated service and leadership from 2020–2023. Region 5 includes the following states: Arkansas, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, New Mexico, and Oklahoma. Over the past 3 years, she has been a member of the NEHA Food Safety Committee; participated on NEHA board committees

including AEC planning, affiliate engagement, and credentialing; participated in three Hill Days for the organization, and served as the legacy advisor to the Business & Industry Affiliate.

“It has been a fantastic 3 years participating on the board. The team has accomplished so much and I’m so proud to be a part of the growth and enhancements that we have accomplished,” stated Michelson. “I’ve met so many new people, learned more about the environment health profession than I ever thought possible, and helped to drive awareness and engagement within our affiliates and our industry. As the sole industry constituent on the board during my term, I’ve continued to support and push our Business & Industry Affiliate to engage and grow our collaboration efforts with NEHA and other state affiliates. It has been an interesting and fulfilling experience—I can’t thank NEHA and all its members enough for providing me with this opportunity. I’ll be a NEHA member and advocate for life!”

Michelson has spent more than 20 years in the food industry working in various food safety and quality auditor roles within regulatory, manufacturing, and food service sectors. She currently works for McDonald’s as a food safety manager and has worked for iconic brands like Brinker International, Darden Restaurants, Pepperidge Farm, and Smucker’s. Furthermore, Michelson is actively involved and volunteers in other professional associations like the Conference for Food Protection, Partners With a Common Purpose within the Association of Food and Drug Officials, National Restaurant Association, and National Council of Chain Restaurants within the National Retail Federation. She also was a past president and secretary/treasurer for the Business & Industry Affiliate.

“Being elected and participating on the NEHA Board of Directors has been one of the most impactful and rewarding experiences in my life. The staff and leadership at NEHA are amazing and I’ve

grown so much professionally and personally by being a part of this great community,” reflected Michelson. “If you are considering volunteering for an organization that puts its members, community, and profession first, NEHA is the one for you!”



**Region 7 Vice-President Tim Hatch, MPA, REHS**, leaves the board after 9 years of dedicated service and leadership from 2014–2023. Region 7 includes the following states: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. During his tenure on the board, he has served on numerous committees including chair of the AEC Planning Committee,

as well as a technical advisor and *Journal* peer reviewer. He was the first chair of the NEHA Global Engagement Committee and was on the committee in 2014–2015 that selected a new executive director. “I decided that three terms is a good point to where I have learned the association, given back, have become one of the ‘old heads,’ and worked to recruit new people, ideas, and diversity into this board,” stated Hatch.

Hatch was proud to serve his region and work in one of the most disaster-prone areas in the U.S. Hatch observed, “The Gulf and Atlantic states are home to some of the best environmental health practitioners in the country who not only serve their communities on a regular basis but also respond to unique and complex environmental health challenges after disasters like hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, oil spills, and hot and cold weather events. From 2013–2019, I was blessed to represent NEHA and environmental health in general through international training sessions on environmental health and disaster response.” These trainings were held in countries including Australia, Croatia, Indonesia, Mexico, New Zealand, Portugal, and the U.S. and U.S. Virgin Islands. Hatch was also a core contributor to the Understanding the Needs, Challenges, Opportunities, Vision, and Emerging Roles in Environmental Health (UNCOVER-EH) initiative led by NEHA, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and Baylor University in 2019.

Hatch began as a county-level environmental public health practitioner in 1995 and rose to the position of administrator, overseeing all public health services for an 11-county district. “I have always considered environmental health the core of public health. What matters most is human health, longevity, and environmental quality for a happy and safe existence. Environmental health practitioners ensure that,” commented Hatch.

From his first NEHA AEC in 2005, Hatch knew NEHA was the place to learn all he could about our profession. He was the first environmental health practitioner in Alabama in two decades to earn the NEHA REHS/RS credential in 2007. Since that time, he has mentored and encouraged a dozen more professionals to

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achieve this national credential. “Considering my environmental health career, two of my greatest accomplishments were bringing the knowledge of our profession into emergency preparedness and disaster response while serving as the public health lead during the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill and serving as incident commander for Alabama during a portion of the COVID-19 pandemic,” stated Hatch. “Looking forward, I would like to continue to provide whatever support I can to NEHA and its programs to further our profession. I plan to continue my involvement with my state affiliate and participate in NEHA functions, trainings, and conferences in the future.”

Hatch has been the recipient of numerous awards from both local and national organizations:

- Ansel C. Mullins Award Recipient, Alabama Environmental Health Association (AEHA), 1999
- CDC Environmental Public Health Leadership Institute Fellow for Cohort IV, 2008–2009
- Alabama Environmentalist of the Year Award Recipient, AEHA, 2009
- Frederick S. Wolfe Award, Alabama Public Health Association (ALPHA), 2012
- Howell Special Meritorious Service to Public Health Award, Southern Health Association, 2013
- Past Presidents Award, NEHA, 2014
- D.G. Gill, MD, Award, ALPHA, 2018
- Honorary commission as colonel in the Alabama National Guard by the adjutant general of Alabama, 2020

“I have enjoyed my 9 years as a member of the NEHA Board of Directors and am thankful for the experience,” reflected Hatch. “I hope that my service to the environmental health profession was valuable and please know it was done selflessly and with honor. I will forever remain a supporter of our mission, a champion for the cause, and an active member and credential holder. Long live NEHA and best wishes to this fine association.”

### New Wildfire Guide Now Available



We have a new tool for you! Now more than ever environmental public health professionals are on the front lines of wildfire response and recovery. We understand that even with plenty of all-hazard planning, the reality of the environmental health response to a wildfire can be daunting. These reasons are why we have created the first-ever wildfire guide just for our profession: the Wildfire Response Guide for Environmental Public Health Professionals.

The guide is intended for environmental public health professionals responding to a wildfire as part of an immediate response

or recovery process. It provides information needed in the event of a wildfire within a jurisdiction, with potential considerations and roles for environmental public health professionals. Furthermore, the guide outlines steps that can be taken before, during, and after a wildfire event. A number of guidance documents and weblinks are provided to review prior to a wildfire occurring. The guide also includes:

- Response and recovery objectives for each environmental health area
- Template messages
- Sample forms that can be used to meet objectives
- Recommended guidance documents
- Suggestions for cross-sector partnerships and policies

Check out the guide today at [www.neha.org/epr-wildfire-resources](http://www.neha.org/epr-wildfire-resources).

### Portal Open for the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program

The grant portal for Year 3 of the NEHA-Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Retail Flexible Funding Model (RFFM) Grant Program opened on August 16. This annual funding opportunity supports state, local, tribal, and territorial retail food regulatory programs to meet the FDA Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards. These grants are supported by FDA under award U2FFD007358.

Retail food safety programs can apply for a base grant (through one of two tracks) and up to three additional add-on grants (for Track 2 applicants and Track 3 grantees). Consider applying for:

- A Track 1 Development Base Grant with options to be a mentee and/or attend a self-assessment and verification audit (SA/VA) workshop.
- A Track 2 Development Base Grant with options to be a mentee, work on Standard 9, and/or attend retail training courses.
- Optional Add-On Grants:
  - » In addition to the options above, Track 2 applicants may also apply to be a mentor (instead of a mentee) and/or apply for a Special Projects Grant.
  - » Existing Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base Grantees may apply to be a mentor or a mentee, request funds for retail training courses, and/or apply for a Special Projects Grant.

### Changes for Year 3

Track 1 and Track 2 Development Base Grants now have combined applications that include options to request Mentee and Track-Appropriate Training funds (both are now 3-in-1 applications). Track 1 and Track 2 Base, Mentee, and Mentor funding are now fixed-amount awards for 2024, with payments based on objectives met (no receipts required for reimbursement).

The grant portal closes on **October 11!** Learn more at [www.neha.org/retail-grants](http://www.neha.org/retail-grants).

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### Join the Private Water Network



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If you are an expert working to keep private water sources safe, we invite you to become a member of our free Private Water Network (PWN). PWN is a virtual community of practice for people who work to protect the public's health from contaminants in private drinking water sources. PWN provides opportunities to connect with peers; share experiences, ideas, and resources; access timely and relevant guidance for existing and emerging issues; and build capacity to work more efficiently and effectively.

Members of PWN have access to benefits including:

- Resource library with more than 300 resources
- Access to participate in webinars, roundtable talks, and online chats
- Discussion forum
- Newsletter on current private water issues
- Event calendar
- Member directory
- Community-wide searchability

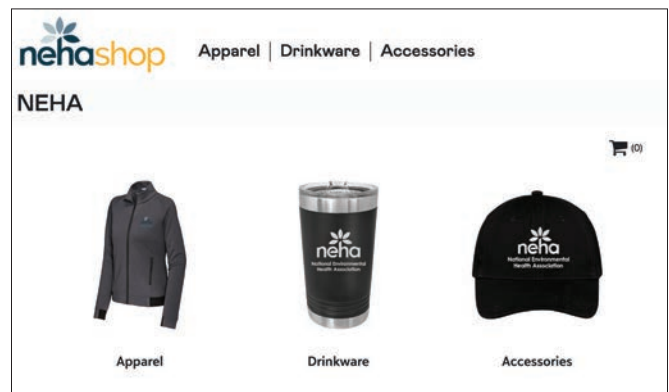
There is no cost to join PWN and you do not need to be a NEHA member to join. If you are a NEHA member, you can log in today using your NEHA login at <https://pwn.neha.org>. If you are not a member, first create a free MyNEHA account and use the same login information to log in to PWN at <https://pwn.neha.org>.

### Virtual Workshop: Impacts of Climate Change on Private Wells

We are hosting a virtual workshop—Impacts of Climate Change on Private Wells With a Focus on Groundwater Depletion, Microbiological Contamination, and Saltwater Intrusion—aimed at addressing the impacts of climate change on private drinking water systems and wells. The workshop will feature presentations and a roundtable discussion led by subject matter experts that will focus on groundwater depletion, saltwater intrusion, and microbiological contamination. Participants will have the opportunity to share experiences, challenges, and opportunities while earning continuing education contact hours from NEHA (up to 3 hours). We will also host two learning sessions to provide ongoing technical assistance, connecting workshop graduates with experts specializing in mitigating climate change impacts on groundwater.

The virtual workshop will be on September 12 at 12:30 p.m. ET. Register at [https://neha.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_ycliG5taQdOMMzMIKo6YTQ#](https://neha.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_ycliG5taQdOMMzMIKo6YTQ#).

### Show Your Support With NEHA-Branded Items



Check out our new online store of NEHA-branded items at <https://neha.checkoutstores.com>. Including apparel, drinkware, and accessories, you can find something to show off your pride in your association and profession. All items are produced on demand with no minimum to order and are shipped directly to you. We will also offer branded items for our AEC. Keep an eye out for what we will offer for the upcoming 2024 AEC in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

And your purchase supports students as a portion of the sale from these items purchased will go to the NEHA/AAS Scholarship Fund. Don't wait, get your items now! 🌱

## Did You Know?

You can stay in the loop every day with our social media. Find us on

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