

Recognizing DEQ's Ambassadors of Public Service

2024 Theme: Operational Excellence

Environmental Quality Commission Meeting
May 23, 2024

Adam Coutu, Operations and Policy Analyst – Water Quality

“Adam holds a commanding knowledge of the state budgeting processes and systems, and has deftly applied that knowledge to the successful management of DEQ’s most complicated budget area – the Water Quality Division. His attention to detail, deep history and knowledge of the agency’s budget and state processes, and careful analysis assures that the agency is always equipped with helpful, timely and accurate information when it makes decisions.”



Cheryl Grabham, Materials Management Program Manager

“Cheryl leads DEQ’s Product Stewardship team in the implementation of landmark legislation to update Oregon’s outdated recycling system to be more equitable, resilient and protective of the environment. Her approach has exemplified operational excellence by prioritizing the involvement of members of the public and impacted groups statewide and creating a model for more equitably distributing the costs and benefits of the recycling system.”



Svetlana Lazarev, Fuel Tank Seismic Stability Program Analyst

"Svetlana exemplifies operational excellence in all her work delivering the highest quality technical and policy evaluations. Her work is thoroughly researched, immaculately communicated both internally and externally, timely delivered, and always done with strategic outcomes and efficiency in mind."



Kristen Martin, Air Quality Modeler – Air Technical Services

“Kristen brings a positive, inclusive energy with exceptional technical expertise and experience to whatever project she is involved and makes it a point to coach and mentor other staff to solve complex environmental problems. She always brings a solution-based approach while engaging both internal and external interested parties on challenging issues.”



Lesley Merrick, Water Quality Assessment Program Lead

“Lesley Merrick started her role as the Water Quality Assessment Program Lead in 2022, in the critical stage of the 2022 Integrated Report. She led the team and accomplished on-time submittal of the report to the EPA. The Integrated Report is a comprehensive report with an extremely short timeline, and it takes a huge effort to coordinate and collaborate with different DEQ programs. Lesley continues to improve the program in new ways.”



Vanessa Rose, TMDL Basin Coordinator

“Vanessa began working as a TMDL (a study and plan to address nonpoint source water pollution) basin coordinator in the Watershed Management Section in 2022 and is involved in multiple TMDL projects in Eastern Oregon. She places a high value on communication and engagement, looking for ways to improve DEQ outreach and strengthen partnerships in the future. For these efforts, Vanessa has received kudos for her professionalism from community representatives, agency staff, and leadership.”



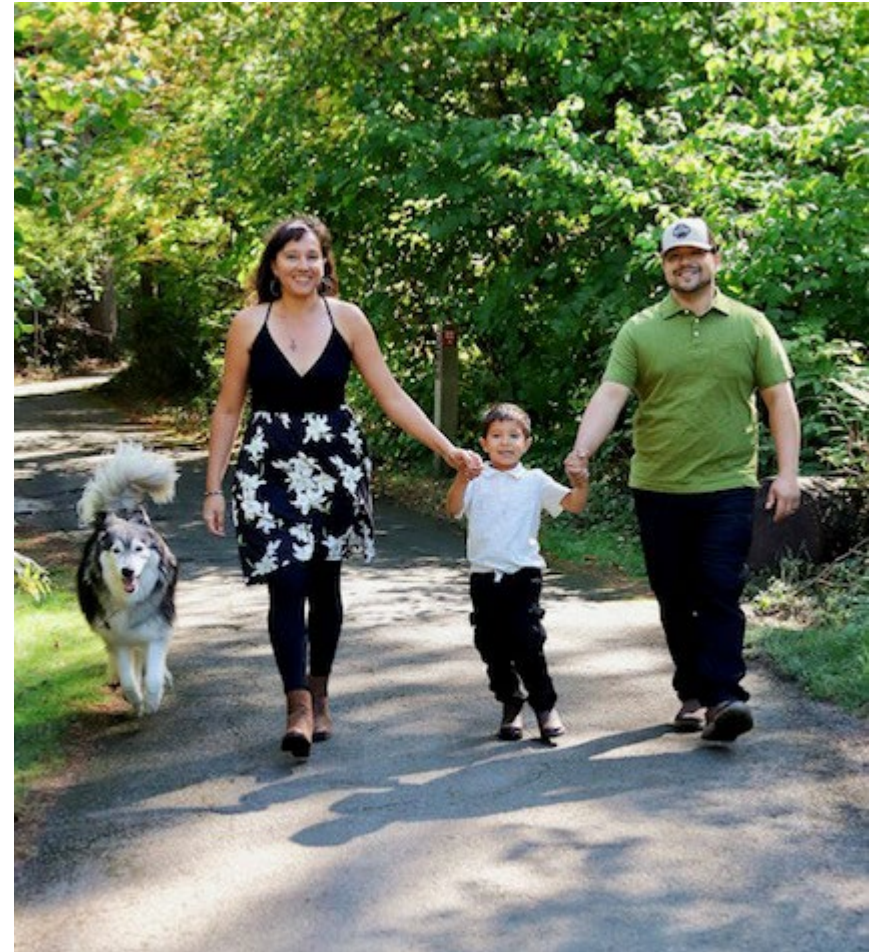
Kathleen Schuckman, Air Quality Monitoring Operations and Data Systems Specialist

“Over many years, Kathleen has worked tirelessly to ensure that the AQI is operational, accurate, and available to Oregonians when they need it. She has managed continuous air quality data for 21 years, and maintained Oregon’s AQI for 10 years. Kathleen’s consistent efforts make the whole section’s work accessible and serves a crucial (though often invisible) role as a public service ambassador. As Oregonians continue to feel the impact of wildfires and other threats to air quality, Kathleen’s work on maintaining and improving the AQI remain essential, and we appreciate those efforts every day at DEQ.”



Julie Ulibarri, CWSRF Technical Specialist

“Julie Ulibarri is a Clean Water State Revolving Fund Technical Specialist in DEQ’s Western Region. She embodies operational excellence by providing excellent customer service to loan applicants and continually working on program improvements. Julie spearheaded work to increase visibility of the fund to Tribal nations after noticing that Tribes were not applying for DEQ loans even though they were eligible. Julie advocated for and received support to develop technical assistance material directed to Tribes and reached out to Tribes. She also ensured that her coworkers were engaged and empowered to assist.”



Joe Westersund, Senior Air Quality Engineer

“Whether it’s reviewing complex control systems at industrial facilities, working with DEQ air quality programs to design a new data collection or processing system, or creating and implementing the Best Available Emissions Reduction program, Joe works with an eye towards removing barriers, streamlining processes, and creating more value for the customer. Joe’s heart is as big as his strategic brain, ensuring inclusiveness in our materials and service to Oregon’s diverse communities and businesses.”



Leela Yellesetty, Data and Information Governance Officer

"Leela Yellesetty leads DEQ's Information Governance Team, which is currently creating a data governance program for the agency. A member of DEQ's DEI Council and affinity groups, she is inclusive in her work, bringing voices to the table that have not traditionally had opportunity to shape agency policy and processes. Leela is a strong advocate for ensuring that all DEQ employees are treated with the respect and dignity they deserve. She is not afraid to speak up and seek responsive action when she identifies inequities."



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