Instructor Information – short biography and credentials or Brochure w/instructor bios: Biofest 2026

https://nwbiofest.org/speakers/

SPEAKERS



Deidre Bartlett, C.E.T.

Manager Biosolids Operations, Gold Bar WWTP, EPCOR Water Services

Born and raised in Eastern Canada, Deidre Bartlett brings both heart and grit to everything she does. Now based in Edmonton, Alberta, working for EPCOR Utilities Inc. she has spent over 10 years championing environmental sustainability through biosolids management. Deidre is known for her strategic thinking and knack for turning operational hurdles into cost-saving, forward-looking initiatives.

Outside of work, Deidre seeks balance in nature in addition to touring water and wastewater facilities along the way. She loves traveling during the slower seasons of biosolids management, tuning into gripping true crime podcasts, and spending time outdoors—whether that's a hike in the woods or just soaking in a quiet prairie sunset.



Asmita Bhandari

Graduate Student | Washington State University

Asmita Bhandari is currently pursuing her Ph.D. at Washington State University, where her research focuses on how different cropping systems and fertilizer practices affect soil health and microbial communities. She earned her master's degree in environmental science from Kentucky State University, where she worked on soil health and water quality. Originally from Nepal, Asmita is passionate about farming and is committed to using research to help farmers solve practical problems.



Will Bowdish

Fifth-Generation Farmer, Goldendale

Will Bowdish is a fifth-generation farmer from Goldendale, Washington, where he grew up working on his family's farm. He now manages the operation alongside his brothers, producing hay, grain, and cattle. Since 2013, their farm has incorporated biosolids into their fertilizer program, alongside regenerative practices like cover cropping and polyculture to improve soil health. Will brings a practical, firsthand perspective on how these approaches support long-term productivity and sustainability on their farm.



Dr. Sally Brown

University of Washington

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Sally Brown is a Professor at the University of Washington. Sally Brown received her MS and PhD under Dr. Rufus Chaney in 1996 at the University of Maryland. Her dissertation was on the Long-term effects of biosolids application on agricultural soils. Her work with biosolids started there and hasn't stopped since. She is a Fellow in the Soil Science Society of America and was a two term member of the National Academy of Science Committee on Soil Science. She writes a monthly column for BioCycle Magazine and Northwest Biosolids Resource Library for members only.



David Butman

University of Washington

David Butman grew up outside Boston, MA in the city of Gloucester. After completing an economics major in college, he continued to finish a double major with environmental science. Post college, he worked as a fisheries observer for the National Marine Fisheries Service through the North Atlantic, and finally he got too cold in the winter. From there he worked for the State of Massachusetts in the Dept. of Environmental Protection as a watershed analysis. Following his time in Boston, he moved to Woods Hole, MA where he worked as a research assistant at Woodwell Climate Research Center estimating biomass throughout the forests of Siberia from space borne satellites. At this point, he was hooked on satellites and research, returned to the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, where he completed a dual masters and PhD focusing on carbon cycling in inland water systems. This developed into a Post-Doc with the U.S.G.S and finally led to his position here at the University of Washington where he works to understand the cycling of carbon from land through soils and into aquatic systems. His real life is spent with his wife and two kids frightened by the future but also involved with robotics, hiking, growing things, and generally looking around and realizing what we need to save.

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Kurt Carstens

Owner of Coulee Creek Farms, Inc. | City of Spokane, Biosolids Land Application Program

Kurt and his son Kyle are 5th and 6th generation wheat and barley farmers located in Reardan, WA. One of the original farmers in the program, Kurt has been using biosolids from the City of Spokane since the early 1990's. In addition to farming, Kurt served on the Washington Barley Commission for 9 years. With a natural curiosity for soil science and conservation, he continues to commit 500+ acres per year for application.



Holly Davies

DOH

Dr. Holly Davies is a senior toxicologist at the Washington State Department of Health. Her work focuses on evaluating uses of toxic chemicals, including chemicals of emerging concern and persistent, bioaccumulative, and toxic chemicals (PBTs), and identifying actions needed to protect human health with an emphasis on prevention and safer alternatives. Her work on committees includes co-chairing the Interstate Chemicals Clearinghouse Work Group on PFAS and serving on EPA's Science Advisory Committee on Chemicals (SACC). Before joining the state her experience was in academic teaching and research in genetics and developmental biology. Her Ph.D. in Genetics and postdoctoral

research are on mammalian reproduction and development, transcription factors, and genomics.



Dan Eberhardt

TAGRO Supervisor, City of Tacoma's Environmental Services Department

Dan Eberhardt is the TAGRO Supervisor for the City of Tacoma's Environmental Services Department and the program's primary subject matter expert. With extensive experience in biosolids processing, product development, and facility operations, Dan oversees day-to-day operation of TAGRO's manufacturing and production while maintaining the support of nearly 100 community gardens. His work centers on optimizing material quality, maintaining regulatory compliance, and advancing sustainable resource recovery practices. Dan is known for his practical expertise, hands-on leadership style, and deep knowledge of biosolids management, making him a key contributor to TAGRO's continued innovation and community value.



James Dunbar, P.E

JAMES DUNBAR is the Board President for Northwest Biosolids Association for the past 5 years. Northwest Biosolids is the leading regional association in the United States committed to the safe and beneficial use of biosolids and other organic residuals. Jim is also the General Manager for Lystek International. Lystek is North America's leading

advanced technology provider servicing the clean water sector. He is based in northern California and is responsible for overall site operations, engineering, and business development for the US Market. Jim is a graduate of the University of Notre Dame in Civil Engineering, earned an MBA from St. Xavier University, and is a Professional Engineer in 6 states. He also serves on the California Department of Food and Agriculture Speciality Crop Technical Review Committee and is an officer in CRROPS, a national association of private companies in the wastewater service market.



Jake Finlinson

Agricultural Project Manager | King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks, Wastewater Treatment Division, Resource Recovery Section

Jake Finlinson is the Agriculture Project Manager with King County's Biosolids Program. Jake started his career with King County in 1998 working 16 years as an Environmental Scientist with Road Services Division and the last 11 years with Wastewater Treatment Division. Jake manages King County's agricultural biosolids land application services contracts and continues to build relationships with agricultural partners across the Northwest by promoting beneficial use of biosolids, soil health concepts, and supporting biosolids research efforts.

Jake graduated from the University of Washington with a degree in Geography/Geographic Information Systems and is Washington Agriculture and Forestry Leadership Program Alumni. When not traveling to farms across the state, Jake spends time with his family and enjoys various outdoor activities.

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David Godley

Owners of Godley Farms, Inc. | City of Spokane, Biosolids Land Application Program

David and his brother Jeff are 2nd generation wheat and barley farmers located in Reardan, WA. Their father was one of the founding farmers of the land application program, starting a relationship with the City of Spokane in 1984. The Godley brothers have continued the tradition of dry land wheat farming using biosolids as a source of fertilizer. We don't have enough biosolids to keep up with him, he is always trying to get more biosolids!!

Jake graduated from the University of Washington with a degree in Geography/Geographic Information Systems and is Washington Agriculture and Forestry Leadership Program Alumni. When not traveling to farms across the state, Jake spends time with his family and enjoys various outdoor activities.



Manon Fisher

Brown and Caldwell

Manon is a strategic advisor with Brown and Caldwell who helps utilities tackle complex challenges related to biosolids, resource recovery, adaptive planning, and organizational strategy. Before joining Brown and Caldwell, she spent nearly a decade with the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, where she worked on everything from biosolids and

biogas to recycled water and resource recovery programs. Today, she partners with utilities across the western United States to navigate change, manage uncertainty, and turn big ideas into practical action. A first-generation American raised between cultures, coastlines, and road trips, Manon developed an early appreciation for both resourcefulness and adventure. When she's not facilitating workshops or talking biosolids, you'll likely find her gardening, making pottery, camping out of her van, or planning her next trip in search of good food, beautiful landscapes, and interesting conversations.



Markus Flury, PhD

Markus Flury is a Professor at Washington State University in the Department of Crop and Soil Sciences. He received his PhD from the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich. His research interests include flow and transport in porous media, fate and transport of colloids and nanoparticles, characterization of water flow and solute transport in the vadose zone, soil physical instrumentation and their applications, and sustainable use of soil resources.



Dan Freedman, PE

Director of Technology and Innovation | Metro Water Recovery

Dan is the Director of Technology & Innovation at Metro Water Recovery, where he leads a team of process engineers, data scientists, and instrument specialists focused on

optimizing operations and advancing innovative solutions that support Metro's vision of being a responsible leader and an innovative clean water partner. Originally from Ohio, Dan earned his bachelor's degree in civil engineering from the University of Akron and began his consulting career in Columbus before seeking out the browner pastures of Colorado. After earning a master's degree in environmental engineering from the Colorado School of Mines, he returned to consulting and eventually found his way to Metro—and to the wonderful world of wastewater and biosolids—where, in fact, the grass really is greener.



Ed Fritz, P.E. BCEE

Wastewater Polymer Fundamentals

Ed is a process expert for residuals handling processes and has designed residuals handling equipment for facilities nationwide. He works with both design teams and operations teams to help build, run, troubleshoot, and optimize solids processes. He is a licensed professional engineer, a board certified environmental engineer, and a certified wastewater operator. He has authored and contributed to many industry publications. Ed is the current chair of the South Carolina WEA Residuals and Biosolids Committee.



Mike Gates

Biosolids Land Application Program Manager, Clean Water Services

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Mike Gates is the Biosolids Land Application Program Manager for Clean Water Services, where he oversees an agricultural land application program managing approximately 11,000 dry tons of biosolids annually across more than 20,000 acres of permitted farmland. He is responsible for regulatory compliance, land application operations, and biosolids program optimization. Mike holds a degree in Environmental Science and has more than 20 years of experience in the wastewater industry, including 12 years as a wastewater operator and the past 8 years managing biosolids programs. His areas of expertise include centrifuge optimization, polymer optimization, precision biosolids application. Mike serves on the Northwest Biosolids Board of Directors and enjoys sharing practical lessons learned that help operators improve safety, efficiency, and program performance.



Deirdre Griffin-Lahue, PhD

Deirdre Griffin LaHue is an Associate Professor of Soil Quality and Sustainable Soil Management at Washington State University, based at the Northwestern Washington Research & Extension Center (NWREC) in Mount Vernon. Her research focuses on the impacts of agricultural practices on soil health, microbial communities, and the functions they provide. She takes a systems approach to understanding dynamics of soil organic matter, microbes, and nutrients in agriculture to help improve the resilience of cropping systems. Deirdre received her M.S. and Ph.D. in Soils & Biogeochemistry from UC Davis, where she studied the effects of soil amendments and irrigation management on soil carbon and nitrogen dynamics, soil health, and system productivity and profitability. Originally from Maryland, Deirdre earned her B.S. at the University of Maryland in Environmental Science and Policy.

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Corrin Hamburg

City of Anacortes

Corrin is the laboratory supervisor for the City of Anacortes Wastewater Treatment Plant. Her experience ranges from secondary education to contract laboratories. She works hard to ensure Anacortes meets regulatory compliance for the plant and the incinerator. She is dedicated to fostering communication among wastewater operators to facilitate shared learning from both successes and mistakes.



Will Hausa

Assistant Division Manager, City of Tacoma's Environmental Services Department

Will Hausa is the Assistant Division Manager for Environmental Services in Tacoma, WA, overseeing biosolids management programs, operational planning, and resource recovery initiatives. Will focuses on sustainable materials management strategies that strengthen TAGRO products, improve environmental outcomes, and support regional customers. His team's work centers on innovation, regulatory compliance, and advancing beneficial-use practices.

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Ava E. Heathman

Agricultural Research Tech., Graduate Student | WSU-LDRS

Eastern Washington born and raised on a Hereford cattle ranch and dryland wheat farm, Ava Heathman is extremely passionate about dryland agriculture research and working to help farmers throughout the inland Pacific Northwest. She works as an Agricultural Research Tech. in the research program at the WSU – Lind Dryland Research Station. She supervises, monitors, and conducts all aspects of numerous field and laboratory experiments. Ava also maintains, repairs, and fabricates equipment used for experiments. Ava holds a B.S. degree in biology from Eastern Washington University and is currently working on a M.S. in Soil Science from Washington State University.



Emily Kijowski

Statewide Biosolids Coordinator | WA State Department of Ecology

Emily Kijowski is the Statewide Biosolids Coordinator for Washington State Department of Ecology. In 2019 she began working at the Department of Ecology to manage the process to renew the Statewide General Permit for Biosolids Management, including its reorganization. After the permit issuance she transitioned into the Statewide Coordinator role to oversee implementation of the permit and program statewide. During her time with Ecology she has prioritized consistent program implementation across the state and

keeping informed about contaminants of concern. Most recently the focus has been on the presence of PFAS in biosolids as a result of their use in manufacturing of industrial and household consumer products upstream of wastewater treatment plants.



Chris Maher

Senior Operations Analyst | Clean Water Services

Chris Maher graduated from Colorado State University with a BS in Chemistry and began his career in wastewater as an operator at the Upper Blue Sanitation District in Breckenridge, CO where he worked for 13 years and earned his MS degree in Environmental Engineering through the Illinois Institute of Technology. He has been with Clean Water Services for 12 years as an Oregon Grade IV Certified Wastewater Operator. He is currently a Senior Operations Analyst in the Research and Innovation Department.



Ted Merrell

Co-Founder | Merrell Bros., Inc.

Ted Merrell, Co-Founder of Merrell Bros., Inc., a leading biosolids industry service provider focused on beneficial reuse, treatment, processing, and developing new markets for biosolids products. For more than 40 years, Merrell Bros. has served clients throughout the

United States and is blessed with over 250 dedicated co-workers who are committed to providing the best sustainable solutions possible.



Jake Miller

Return Home

Jake is Return Home's Regional Partnership Manager, specializing in coordinating education, materials, resources, and training for funeral homes throughout the West Coast (and South Carolina). Jake was born and raised in the Pacific Northwest (Tacoma/Gig Harbor) and therefore enjoys predictable PNW hobbies such as snowboarding, fishing and golfing, all with a Rainier in hand if available. Naturally, he is exceptionally friendly. Jake is what many would call a cradle funeral professional. He started working in the death care industry at the young age of 16, beginning in grounds crew and advancing to funeral director intern. Jake has experience in every aspect of the funeral business which gives him unparalleled perspective when helping families plan exactly what they want for end-of-life care. After joining the Return Home team, Jake quickly learned to leave behind his prim and proper attitude. He is now a partner in all our escapades, and is occasionally featured on our social media if we can capture him on camera (Return Home's very own Big Foot). Jake has joined the Return Home family of funeral professionals finally allowed to express themselves and who they are. Jake is excited to talk about gentle sustainable funeral options – how to make that accessible for everyone.



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Benjamin Morgan, M.A

Senior Fellow | Center for Risk Communications

Benjamin Morgan is one of Canada's leading crisis communication professionals, speakers, presenters, and workshop facilitators. Discover core principles of and tools that support effective communications in high stress, high concern situations and environments. He has been trained and coached by one of the world-leading risk and crisis communication practitioners, Dr. Vincent Covello.



Ben Nydegger

Sr. Operations Manager for Water Renewal, City of Boise, Idaho

Ben has served as the Operations Sr. Manager for the City of Boise for 1.5 years. Prior to his current role, he managed the Biosolids Program for the City of Boise and the City-owned Twenty Mile South Farm. He received a degree in Environmental Health from Boise State University and loves being a part of the meaningful work in his hometown. In his spare time you will find him enjoying the Idaho outdoors, rafting mountain biking, and snowboarding with his wife and two teenage girls.



Adam Parmenter

HDR, Inc.

Adam has been with HDR for over 23 years and is HDR's Biosolids Practice Group leader. A majority of his biosolids expertise comes from working at facilities with operations and maintenance staff. He has design, construction, and operation experience on multiple biosolids treatment and conveyance technologies that come with lessons-learned on what worked and what didn't. His comprehensive biosolids knowledge gives reverence for the well-established technologies and a skeptical yet optimistic-eye for new technologies.Adam has been with HDR for over 23 years and is HDR's Biosolids Practice Group leader. A majority of his biosolids expertise comes from working at facilities with operations and maintenance staff. He has design, construction, and operation experience on multiple biosolids treatment and conveyance technologies that come with lessons-learned on what worked and what didn't. His comprehensive biosolids knowledge gives reverence for the well-established technologies and a skeptical yet optimistic-eye for new technologies.



Ian Pepper

Regents Professor at the University of Arizona

Dr. Pepper is a Regents Professor at the University of Arizona. He is also Director of the University of Arizona Water & Environmental Technology Center (WET), and Director of the Water and Energy Sustainable Technology Center (WEST). Dr. Pepper is an environmental microbiologist whose research has focused on soil and water quality and land application of biosolids. His expertise has been recognized by membership on 6 National Academy of Science Committees, including the 2002 Committee that evaluated land application. Dr. Pepper is a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the American Academy of Microbiology, the Soil Science Society of America, and the American Society of Agronomy. He is also a Board Certified Environmental Scientist within the American Academy of Environmental Engineers and Scientists. He is the author or co-author of 10 textbooks; 50 book chapters; and over 250 peer-review journal articles.Recent

research contributions have focused on Wastewater-based Epidemiology related to Covid-19, and evaluation of indirect exposure to PFAS from land application of biosolids.



Cory Prusha

Oak Harbor Clean Water Facility

While getting his degree in chemistry, Cory worked as an intern at the local wastewater plant. After graduating, he spent some time in manufacturing before ultimately deciding that's not where his heart was. With the encouragement of his wife, he began studying for the wastewater operator certification test, passed, and found work in lovely Oak Harbor on Whidbey Island. They bought a home and raised a Very Good Dog there. Cory often plays banjo for his chickens in the backyard.



Landon Reigelman

King County Wastewater

Landon Reigelman is the Biosolids Lead for King County's Wastewater Treatment Division. Originally a wastewater regulator with the State of Florida, Landon's passion for public service led him to the Pacific Northwest to build a fulfilling career in utility operations. A University of Florida graduate with an M.S. in Soil and Water Science, Landon is deeply

committed to sustainability, safeguarding environmental resources, and delivering dependable public service.



Dave Ruud

Operations Manager | Boulder Park Incorporated

David Ruud is a fourth-generation cattle rancher living on his family's original homestead in Douglas County, Washington near the Town of Waterville. The ranch was homesteaded by great-grandfather, Ole Ruud, in 1883. David was born and raised in Waterville and graduated from Waterville High School in 1980. He attended the University of Pacific and graduated from the University of Washington in 1984 with a degree in political science. After college he began cattle ranching and working on neighboring farms. He is married with three children. He has been the Operations Manager for Boulder Park Inc. since 1995. David oversees daily operations for the Boulder Park Project Beneficial Use Facility, one of the largest biosolids land application projects in the country and the largest in Washington State serving 45 wastewater treatment facilities and managing over 120k wet tons of biosolids annually



Eddie Simons

Southwest Region Biosolids Coordinator | WA State Department of Ecology

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Eddie Simons is a Southwest Region Biosolids Coordinator for Washington State Department of Ecology. He started with Ecology in 2022, using his lifetime of agricultural experience to become the Ag Rate specialist for the Biosolids Program. His experience includes working in the fertilizer and ag-chem industry, university research (including plant breeding), fertilizer and pesticide regulation, and a term as president of the Association of American Plant Food Control Officials serving as chair or vice-chair of the Biostimulants, Environmental Affairs, and Uniform Bills committees.



Shirlee Tan

King County

Shirlee Tan is the Senior Toxicologist for the Seattle & King County Public Health Department where she serves as a technical advisor for the department on issues related to chemical exposures, impacts and policies. She works directly with communities and individuals to reduce chemical exposures and harms. Dr. Tan serves on numerous advisory groups focused on chemical policy and regulation around chemical use, toxics cleanup, and environmental justice, most recently completing a term as Chair of EPA's Children's Health Protection Advisory Committee (CHPAC). Dr. Tan has 25 years of experience in the fields of biology, particularly in the areas of chemical regulation, children's health, endocrine disruption, and science policy. She holds a PhD in cell and molecular biology from the University of San Diego, CA and conducted her postdoctoral research studying dopaminergic receptors and neurodegenerative pathways.

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Ryan Thode

President | Fire Mountain Farms

Ryan is a 3rd generation farmer and 2nd generation in biosolids recycling. After leaving the farm for 8 years to earn a BS in Diesel Technology and work on marine diesels around the world, he returned to the farm in 2012. Fire Mountain Farms runs 100 head of beef cattle and produces hay on 600 acres, with approximately 1,200 acres permitted for biosolids in Washington. In addition, Fire Mountain Farms is a licensed contractor performing lagoon clean-outs and liquid land application in Washington, Idaho, Oregon, and Montana.



Brian Walker

City of Anacortes

Brian has extensive experience developing and managing successful class A biosolids programs. His decades of experience led him to his current role as the City of Anacortes Wastewater Treatment Plant Manager. Here he is working diligently to ensure a robust future for the City's biosolids handling program.

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Katie Webb

Katie Webb is a PhD candidate in Environmental Public Health at the University of Washington. Her research focuses on the intersection of food systems and climate change. Katie holds a Master of Public Health degree from the University of California, Berkeley and a Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology from Stanford University. Outside work, Katie enjoys exploring new places with her family, experimenting with recipes, and appreciating the beauty of nature in a variety of ways.



Ken Windram

Hayden Area Regional Sewer Board (HARSB)

50 years' experience in wastewater operations and management working at over 50 wastewater treatment facilities from 50,000 gallons per day to 450 million gallons per day capacity. Wastewater licenses: New York Grade 2, Massachusetts Grade 7, Indiana Grade 4, Hawaii Grade 4, Washington Grade 4, Idaho Grade 4. I have worked for Envirotech Operating Service, Metcalf & Eddy, USFilter, and Veolia Water. I was the USFilter project manager for the design, build, own and operate 13 MGD Honouliuli Water Recycling Facility (largest water recycling project in Hawaii (2000)). My current position is administrator, responsible charge operator at the Hayden Area Regional Sewer Board. Degree in Environmental Technology for the State University of New York.

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