

NEHA NEWS

A 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 two board members on the occasion of their departure from the board: Immediate Past-President Tom Butts and Region 4 Vice-President Kim Carlton.



Immediate Past-President Tom Butts, MSc, REHS, leaves the board after 5 years of dedicated service and leadership. In 2020, he was elected as second vice-president and served as a national officer from 2020–2025 and as president of the association from 2023–2024.

During this time, Butts was on numerous committees such as Finance, Policy and Bylaws, Membership, Endowment, and Nominations. He also chaired the ad-hoc Siting (not sitting) Committee that included board and staff members and addressed the path forward for NEHA's facility needs as our lease renewal was coming up. This committee evaluated a range of operation models and recommended moving to the smaller Denver office that NEHA now occupies. Butts most recently served on the Governance and Nominations Committee, where all involved wrapped up work on updating the policy manual for the board, addressed ongoing organizational needs, and oversaw the nomination process for our annual election.

As he reflected on the past 5 years (joining board calls as COVID-19 ramped up in spring 2020), Butts feels the experience has been an exciting and challenging journey from the start. The organization did an amazing job pivoting to a fully virtual AEC in 2021 and never missed an opportunity to support the profession along the way. A board retreat provided the group with an opportunity to connect, listen, and learn. It opened the discussion we are still having today about our primary focus and the multitude of other should or could do activities that would benefit our membership and the profession.

During his year as president, Butts worked with the board, a consultant, and executive leadership to create a Board Policy Manual to guide the board into the future. During this process, there were numerous interesting and challenging discussions with the board on how to create the right approach to board operations as NEHA continues to evolve to serve members and the profession. Butts is proud that this board committed the extra time, thought, and effort needed to develop a manual that will empower both our

board and staff leadership. Also developed at the end of this process were proposed revisions to the organization's bylaws. As Butts stated, "The work on the policy manual was tedious, but we owe each of the board members a big thank you for the effort to get to this point and the continued contributions that will be needed to improve that living board guidance document."

During his tenure on the board, it was important to ensure continued support for and recognition of environmental public health practitioners and the key role they play in protecting communities from adverse health impacts. Butts hopes he was able to encourage an active role for environmental health professionals as evidence-based policy advocates. Additionally, he believes NEHA must seek ways to engage with newer staff to translate their enthusiasm, skills, and abilities into program and systems improvements in our environmental health practice and continue working to address climate change. Butts believes that a new focus on this part of the profession by NEHA is on the mark.

Butts further believes there are many milestones the NEHA staff have accomplished that will continue to provide value. Some of these examples include the commitment to world-class education, the open-access *Journal*, and sharpening the focus on engaging students in the environmental health workforce.

Butts has spent more than 30 years in the environmental health field. He earned a bachelor of science in environmental health from Colorado State University and a master of science in environmental science and engineering from Colorado School of Mines. He started his long career at the Tri-County Health Department as an environmental health specialist conducting a wide range of environmental health activities such as conducting inspections of individual sewage disposal systems, water supplies, restaurants, childcare centers, swimming pools, disease outbreaks, solid and hazardous waste complaints, and insect- and rodent-related complaints.

Butts then spent 15 years working with hazardous waste generators, spill response, household chemical collection programs, and local oversight of hazardous waste cleanups. In 2002, he was selected to lead the agency's new emergency preparedness and response program, where he played a key role in developing agency and regional response plans with staff and local and state agencies. Environmental health staff play key roles in all-hazard incident management and during response and recovery from natural disasters and other events.

He served as director of environmental health in 2008. For over 4 years, he managed programs including food safety, childcare, recreational waters, onsite wastewater treatment, vector control, body art, land use planning, and a variety of solid and hazardous waste activities. In this position, Butts actively worked with local agency peers across the state and with key state staff on program issues of both local and statewide interest to environmental public health. These efforts led to statute changes for food safety and onsite wastewater management programs. He also served the Colorado Directors

of Environmental Health from 2008–2013 as vice-president, president, and representative to the Colorado Association of Local Public Health Officials. The goal of this work was to represent both urban and rural perspectives in local, state, and national forums.

Before his retirement in 2017, Butts served as deputy director for nearly 5 years and oversaw and guided the directors of the Office of Human Resources, Division of Administration & Finance, Division of Environmental Health, and Office of Emergency Preparedness and Response. He enthusiastically supported the development of an agency strategic plan and managed that process. Since retirement in 2017, Butts has worked as an interim public health director or interim environmental health director for three local health agencies in Colorado. He currently works on environmental health programs as a consultant to a local health department. Butts was appointed to the Colorado State Board of Health in March 2019 and is serving his second term and is currently the board president.

Butts was recognized with the Milton M. Miller Award, the highest award from the Colorado Environmental Health Association (CEHA), in recognition of contributions and distinguished service in advancing the environmental health profession. Through CEHA, he has worked with the accredited environmental health program at Colorado State University and always enjoys judging the environmental health-oriented state science fair winners each year. Butts commented, “These activities and the interaction with students are always inspiring.”

In looking back on his time on the NEHA board and the importance of our profession, Butts stated, “In these extraordinary times, we must all support each other, our reliance on the scientific method, and our dedication to evidence-based practice. And remember, public health is an important part of environmental public health!” In closing, he shared, “Thank you all for making this journey enjoyable and providing your insight, perspective, and dedication to the profession we all love! Each of you has been a pleasure to serve with and work for.”



Region 4 Vice-President Kim Carlton, MPH, REHS/RS, leaves the board after 7 years of dedicated service and leadership from 2018–2025. She was initially appointed to complete the final year of Sharon Kline’s term in 2018 when Kline moved out of Region 4, and then went on to serve two additional terms. In looking back at her time on the board, Carlton stated,

“While I had no ‘official’ positions or duties, I was tapped a few times as a subject matter expert for various projects and events. Most recently, I was a panelist for NEHA’s World Food Safety Day

webinar, and I had the privilege of interviewing Erik Mettler at the 2025 AEC for a session about the future of food safety at the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).”

Over her 7 years on the board, Carlton served on a variety of committees, including the Affiliate Engagement, Credentialing, Marketing, Governance and Nominations, and the Annual Educational Conference (AEC) Committees. As chair of the Affiliate Engagement Committee for several years, she worked closely with NEHA staff to shape the current approach to building meaningful connections with affiliate states.

Some of her proudest moments came representing NEHA in Washington, DC, during the numerous Hill Day events. “Partnering with Niki Lemin from Region 6, we self-identified as ‘Team Midwest,’ making the rounds to legislators from our states to advocate for environmental health priorities,” Carlton fondly recalled. Further, during her years on the board, she was honored to receive several Presidential Citations from NEHA presidents for her contributions and commitment.

Serving during the COVID-19 pandemic brought unprecedented challenges as the board grappled with how best to support members during an evolving public health crisis. Carlton stated, “Through it all, it has been remarkable to witness NEHA’s transformation into the dynamic, forward-looking organization it is today—and to have played a role in guiding that growth has been deeply rewarding.”

Carlton currently serves as manager of the Retail Food Program at the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. Her work involves overseeing a team of dedicated supervisors and staff and coordinating with local boards of health to maintain consistent, high-quality inspections statewide. “I’m deeply engaged in advancing program consistency through FDA standards, policy development, and strategic planning,” shared Carlton.

Her career began at the local level, first as a code compliance officer for the City of Minneapolis and later as an environmental health specialist for the City of Saint Paul. Carlton eventually moved to the Minnesota Department of Health, where she spent more than a decade leading training, standardization, and outbreak response efforts in addition to program evaluation and delegation management. In 2025, Carlton received the Merit Award from the Minnesota Environmental Health Association (MEHA) for contributions to environmental health at both the state and national levels. She is a past president of MEHA and served 9 years on its board.

With more than 25 years of experience in public service, Carlton has built her career around strengthening regulatory systems, fostering cross-sector partnerships, and supporting workforce development. “Throughout, I’ve been a consistent voice for clear communication, data-driven decision-making, and collaboration between agencies. In the year ahead, I’m excited to continue my NEHA involvement as a mentor for the fifth cohort of the Environmental Health Leadership Academy,” commented Carlton.

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In reflecting on her time on the NEHA board, Carlton stated, “Serving on the board has been a truly transformative experience. Unlike an affiliate board, the national level is less about doing the day-to-day work and more about guiding the organization’s direction, trusting the talented staff to carry out the mission. It’s been incredible to connect with environmental health professionals from around the world—my network has grown beyond what I imagined. I’ve felt supported every step of the way and have made lifelong friends as a bonus!”

Recently Launched: Pillars of Governmental Environmental Public Health

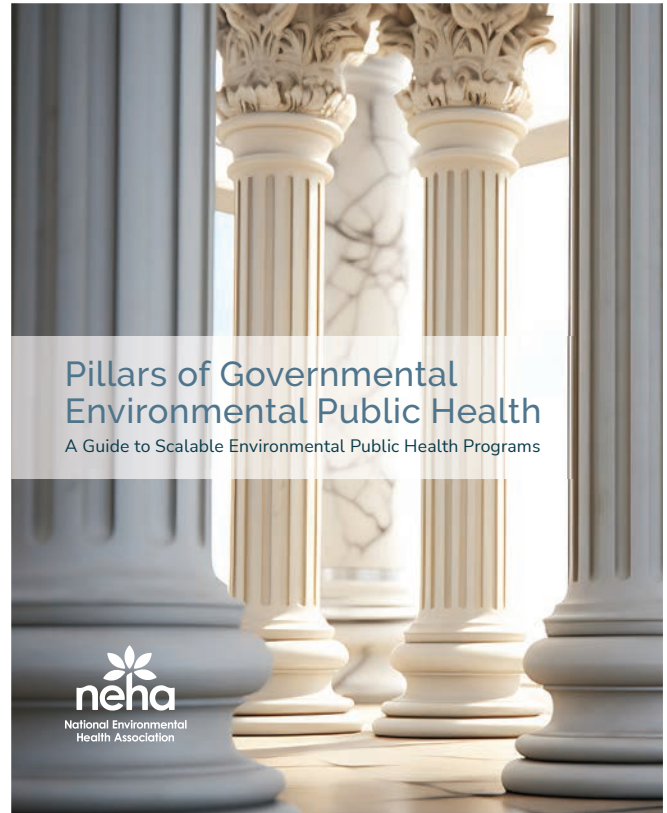
We are excited to release our most comprehensive guide for building and sustaining effective environmental public health programs at the local level. Developed with input from hundreds of professionals across 45 states, our new guide, *Pillars of Governmental Environmental Public Health*, covers 11 core areas and offers scalable, evidence-based strategies for communities of all sizes.

The 11 core areas covered in the guide include:

1. Food safety and protection
2. Swimming pools and recreational water safety
3. Onsite wastewater
4. School safety and inspections
5. Early childcare and daycare
6. Zoonoses and vector control
7. Emergency preparedness
8. Potable water
9. Lead prevention
10. Body art
11. Non-school institutions and licensed establishments

Key features of the guide include:

- Scalable guidelines adaptable to jurisdictions of any size
- Specific recommendations for staffing, education, equipment, and outcome measures
- Real-world insights from environmental public health professionals nationwide
- Secondary program guidance for climate health, air quality, healthy homes, and hazardous materials



Whether you are an environmental public health director seeking to strengthen existing programs, a manager advocating for resources, or a policymaker working to support public health infrastructure, this guide offers practical benchmarks and strategies to enhance environmental health services in your community. You can download the guide at www.neha.org/Pillars-of-Governmental-Environmental-Public-Health.

You can also check out the article published in last month's *Journal* that explores the research done for this guide. Visit www.neha.org/july-August-2025 to access the article. 🌸

Did You Know?

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

Find us at:

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- Facebook: www.facebook.com/neha.org
- X: <https://x.com/nehaorg>