

WM-AWMA 2023 Spring Conference

Compliance and Beyond: Navigating a Changing Regulatory Landscape

Speaker Biographies (listed in chronological order)

ANNETTE SWITZER is director of the Air Quality Division (AQD) of the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE). Annette led AQD's Permit Section for seven years prior to being named director in early 2023. As Section Manager, she improved public participation by implementing enhancements to the engagement process and was heavily involved in an air permit lean process improvement that streamlined air permitting in Michigan. Annette began her civil service career as an air permit engineer where she used her education to work on the most complicated air permit applications. She is a proud graduate of Michigan Technological University with a bachelor's degree in environmental engineering. She maintains her professional engineers license and believes continuing to learn is an important part of leading her staff and other stakeholders through the highly technical world of air quality rules and regulations.

MIKE NELLER is a native of East Lansing, Michigan and currently the Director of the Remediation and Redevelopment Division of Michigan's Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE). Mike started off in EGLE in 2018 in the Materials Management Division as the Section Manager of the Radiological Protection Section before assuming his current position in December 2019. Prior to coming to work at the State of Michigan, Mike has enjoyed a varied and exciting career in many different vocations.

Mike attended college at the U.S. Naval Academy where he received his B.S. degree and was commissioned as a Naval Officer. Upon graduation he began his post graduate training and education as a nuclear engineer. Upon completion of this 12-month program he attended the Submarine Officer's Basic Course and began his over 25-year career as a Nuclear Submarine Officer. Mike served on four different submarines, both fast attack and strategic missile boats, and was the Commanding Officer of the USS Florida (SSBN 728) when it was part of the nation's strategic nuclear deterrence arsenal. Post 9-11 he was stationed overseas in Naples, Italy where he served as the Director of Submarine Operations in the Mediterranean and as the Chief of Staff of a multi-national intelligence gathering task force. Besides his time in operational assignments in the Navy, he served for two years on the Navy's Staff at the pentagon in addition to completing two tours of duty at two Universities (Cornell and Notre Dame) that had Naval Reserve Officer Training Units. While at Cornell he co-taught a course offered through the engineering department on Propulsion Systems and Ship Design and while at Notre Dame was both a Department Chair in addition to teaching a class on Leadership and Ethics.

After retirement from the Navy, Mike worked in manufacturing operations and maintenance at a solar panel company, a sportswear apparel company, and at an international company that manufactured household cleaning products. Prior to coming to EGLE, he was the Dean of Students at a private boarding school, Culver Academies, in Indiana for several years.

ELIZABETH (LIZ) BROWNE is director of the Materials Management Division in the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) where she manages the staff and programs. She oversees the hazardous and solid waste programs, radiological protection efforts, and sustainability programs, including the Office of Energy.

Liz has worked to merge the traditional waste programs with the pollution prevention, climate, and energy work that are vital to sustainability and Michigan's commitment to a circular economy: eliminating waste and pollution, keeping products and materials in use, and regenerating natural systems. A major effort involved a broad stakeholder group convened to update the solid waste statute to help transition Michigan away from a landfill focus and toward recycling.

Liz has worked in many of the programs that now make up EGLE. She has had management roles in the Superfund and Storage Tank programs. She also led the division responsible for wetlands, dunes, dams, and shorelines. Other stints included working with drinking water and the water-related revolving loan programs. Browne also led the emergency management program for EGLE's predecessor agency.

NATHAN SCHMIDT is a Chemical Security Inspector in Region 5 with the Integrated Operations Division (IOD) in the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the office within DHS responsible for chemical facility security regulations.

In this capacity, Mr. Schmidt serves as a regional inspector conducting inspections of facilities within the region on the Chemical Facility Anti-Terrorism Standards (CFATS) regulation. Mr. Schmidt is responsible for conducting Authorization/Compliance Inspections and Compliance Assistance Visits. He also conducts Outreach in the region with local, state, and federal partners. Mr. Schmidt has been with the CFATS program at DHS since November 2015.

Mr. Schmidt was honorably discharged from the U.S. Air Force in 2011. Mr. Schmidt experience includes military law enforcement, service in Operation Iraqi Freedom/Enduring Freedom, physical security member of several Air Force bases, and as a contract security guard for DHS from 2012-2015.

ALAN WALTS is Director of the Tribal and Multi-media Programs Office in U.S. EPA Region 5, which serves Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin and 35 federally-recognized tribes. This Office manages the Region's Tribal, International, National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Environmental Justice, Children's Health, Environmental Education, and Schools programs. Alan joined EPA Region 5 as a staff attorney in 1996; and from 2007-2019 directed Region 5's Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance. Alan is a graduate of Wesleyan University and the University of Michigan Law School.

CHARLIE TYSON is the Technology Activation Director for Michigan's Office of Future Mobility & Electrification (OFME). Launched in early 2020, the office works across state government, academia, and private industry to enhance Michigan's mobility ecosystem, including developing dynamic mobility and electrification policies and supporting the startup and scale up of emerging technologies and businesses.

In his role, Charlie develops and nurtures relationships with key mobility and technology stakeholders, including corporates, startups, investors, academia, municipalities, and government agencies. Through his work with OFME, Charlie connects emerging mobility companies to Michigan's advanced transportation industry through testing and pilot opportunities, matchmaking engagements, and public-private partnerships.

As OFME's Technology Activation Director, Charlie plays an integral role in the Michigan Mobility Funding Platform, a grant program to assist local and global companies in deploying, validating, and scaling their technology addressing challenges related to the movement of people and goods by air, land, or sea. In addition to curating real-world deployments addressing industry and community mobility challenges, Charlie oversees OFME's network of test site partners who offer key capabilities to prove out early-stage technologies in a confined environment.

In his free time Charlie enjoys traveling, being active outdoors with his dog, and spending time along the Great Lakes.

CHRIS ETHRIDGE is an Assistant Division Director for the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy – Air Quality Division where he oversees all compliance, enforcement, and permitting activities within the division. He has worked for the department for twenty-three years in both the air and water programs. Mr. Ethridge graduated from the University of Michigan – School of Natural Resources with a BS in Environmental Policy. In his free time, he enjoys spending time with his two teenage kids and lovable Labrador or fishing the Great Lakes.

KYLE KONWINSKI is a partner at Varnum Law who specializes in environmental and land-use litigation. Kyle has argued before the Michigan Supreme Court, first-chaired contested case hearings in the Michigan Administrative Hearing System, and has first-chaired numerous state-court environmental lawsuits. He has represented clients in relation to Part 31 NPDES discharge permits, Part 22 Groundwater Quality rules, Part 55 air permits, Part 201 remediation issues, Part 325 (Great Lakes Submerged Lands) sea wall permits, Part 353 sand dune permits, Part 17 (Michigan Environmental Protection Act) and various other regulatory issues. Kyle's cases have involved federal environmental laws too, such as the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act – aka Superfund (CERCLA) and the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA). Kyle has also successfully litigated numerous cases involving Michigan's Zoning Enabling Act.

Kyle has extensive experience representing many clients on matters relating to PFAS. His cases involving PFAS have involved the Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE), the United States EPA, municipalities, private plaintiffs and numerous environmental consultants.

CHRIS OCCHIPINTI is a Senior Project Professional and lead dispersion modeler at NTH Consultants, Ltd. He has 16 years of experience providing professional consulting services, specializing in air quality, to a broad range of clients. His technical expertise includes air dispersion modeling, major and minor source permitting, compliance auditing, and regulatory compliance studies. Mr. Occhipinti has provided consulting services to state agencies and public and private sector clients in the areas of emissions calculations, data analysis, data review, report writing, and quality assurance. He has a B.S. in Physics from Michigan Technological University and an M.S. in Atmospheric Science. He is a member of the West Michigan Air and Waste Management Association, and has been involved in the conference planning committees for many years.

TRACE McDONALD has been with the Air Quality Division since 1998 as a Grand Rapids district inspector, air dispersion modeler, and state implementation plan/rule writer. He's currently focused on ozone issues for the nonattainment areas in West Michigan as well as VOC and NOx rules. Someday, he hopes to stop spending all his money on his two (lovely) daughters' college tuition bills and more on shiny, powerful woodworking tools.

MARISSA VAERTEN is an Environmental Quality Analyst with the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy. She works in the State Implementation Plan (SIP) Development Unit which helps to prepare revisions and additions to the SIP and develop other federally required air quality submittals for the Environmental Protection Agency to work towards attainment of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards. Marissa is a graduate of Albion College and has worked with the state Air Quality Division for almost 4 years. A majority of her work has been focused on the Part 6 VOC RACT rules and additional work supporting the ozone standard.

RHONDA OYER is the Solid Waste Section Manager, Materials Management Division, in the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE). Rhonda joined EGLE in 1991 and has been "talking trash" ever since! Rhonda spent 10 years as an Enforcement Specialist specializing in administrative, civil, and criminal enforcement cases involving solid waste issues and scrap tires. She then served as Chief of the Sustainable Materials Management Unit for 15 years. In that position, she managed the statewide solid waste planning program, the scrap tire regulatory program, the electronic waste takeback program, the beneficial reuse program as well as multiple residential recycling and yard waste composting programs. She became the Solid Waste Section Manager in September 2016, where she continues to promote talking about "trash" in a different way and looking for other options on the materials management continuum.

JENINE CAMILLERI works for Michigan Department of Great Lakes, Energy and Environment in the Air Quality Division and supervises the Enforcement Unit.

She graduated from Michigan State University with a Bachelor of Science in Environmental and Natural Resource Policy Studies. She then went on to study environmental law at Northwestern School of Law of Lewis and Clark College in Portland, Oregon. She graduated from Lewis and Clark College with a Juris Doctorate and is a member of the Oregon State Bar.

Jenine has worked with EGLE since August 2013 in the Enforcement Units for the Air Quality Division and the Water Resources Division. She became the Enforcement Unit supervisor in June 2018. Prior to this, she worked for Oregon Department of Environmental Quality for 12 years. She worked as an Enforcement Specialist for the Air, Water and Waste programs. She also worked in the Water Quality Division as the State Stormwater Coordinator. Her passion is working on environmental justice policy and integrating environmental justice considerations into the state's air quality enforcement cases.