

Ohio Journal of Environmental Health

2nd Quarter 2026

From the Vault: A 1997 Perspective

Also in this issue...

- President's Message
- District Director's Message



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President's Message

Justin Rechichar, MPH, MBA, MHHS, REHS
Lorain County Public Health

Greetings!

As I begin my term as President of the Ohio Environmental Health Association, I am honored and humbled to serve such a dedicated group of environmental health professionals. Our members represent the very best of public health in Ohio, working every day to protect communities through education, code compliance, outreach, emergency response, and advocacy. Environmental health is a profession I care deeply about because of the direct impact it has on the health, safety, and quality of life within our communities. It is a privilege to help lead an organization that continues to promote and support the environmental health profession across our state.



I would also like to sincerely thank everyone who helped make our Annual Educational Conference this past April such a success. Events like this require tremendous effort behind the scenes, and that success reflects the dedication of our volunteers, committee members, speakers, sponsors, exhibitors, and attendees. Thank you to everyone who contributed their time and expertise to provide valuable educational and networking opportunities for our members. The conference continues to be one of the premier opportunities

for environmental health professionals across Ohio to collaborate, learn, and grow.

Throughout my career, I have seen firsthand the impact that leadership, collaboration, and professional engagement can have on public health outcomes. I look forward to working alongside our Board of Directors, district leadership, committee members, and membership as we continue moving OEHA forward. As our profession evolves, so do the opportunities to expand professional development, elevate our voice, and ensure environmental health remains a priority in public health conversations throughout Ohio.

As President, several priorities will guide my focus this year. One of my primary goals is increasing membership engagement across all levels of the organization. OEHA has an incredible amount of talent, knowledge, and experience within its membership, and I encourage more members to become involved in committees, districts, educational opportunities, and leadership roles. Our organization is strongest when members feel connected, valued, and empowered to contribute.

Another key priority is ensuring the financial responsibility and long-term sustainability of OEHA. Through thoughtful planning, strong partnerships, successful conferences, sponsorships, and active membership participation, we can continue building a stable and successful organization for the future.

I also encourage all members, whether you are new to the profession or a long-time environmental health professional, to become more involved in OEHA. Our committees and district organizations offer excellent opportunities to network, develop leadership skills, and help shape the future of environmental health in Ohio. If you are interested in getting involved, please reach out to any OEHA Board Member, district officer, or committee chair. Your ideas and participation are essential to the continued success of our organization.

Thank you again for the opportunity to serve as your President. I look forward to working with all of you as we continue advancing environmental health, supporting our members, and protecting the health of communities across

Ohio. Together, we can continue building a stronger profession and healthier communities throughout our state.

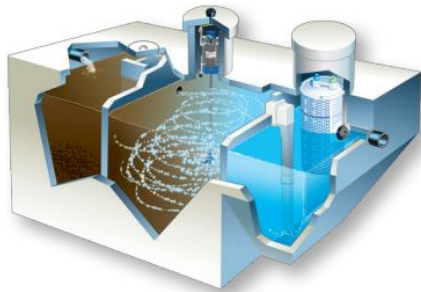
Justin Rechichar
 President
 Ohio Environmental Health Association

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Featured District Director's Message: Northeast

Sara Cochrane, MGIS, REHS
Summit County Public Health

Hello! I am Sara Cochrane the Northeast District Director. In 2014, I earned my Bachelor's degree in Environmental Geography from Kent State University. Like most, I had no true



idea what I wanted to do besides continue my education with a Master's Degree. In the meantime, however, I applied for a summer job at Summit County Public Health and my career in public health began when I was hired as a Mosquito Control Technician. My passion for environmental health grew exponentially and after the season ended, I pursued a Masters in Geography as I continued to work part-time at the health department.

In the fall of 2015, I applied for a full time position within the Emergency Preparedness program at SCPH and to my surprise, I was offered the job! However, I decided to put completing my Master's degree on hold after a while and focus on work. Since my new position was mainly funded on grant money, I knew I would have to become a Sanitarian (i.e. Environmental Health Specialist) and after two years, I transitioned to the Food and Recreation program. There I developed new skills and gained valuable knowledge that would help me along my public health journey. I graduated in

August of 2019 with a Masters in GIS and in 2020, I transitioned to the Water Quality program.



Finally in 2022 I returned to my roots- I became the Vector

Control Coordinator in the Healthy Homes Program and climbed the ranks in 2023 and became a supervisor! Now, I oversee multiple programs within Healthy Homes, including property nuisance & housing complaints, body art, animal bites and rabies prevention, Mosquito Control and so much more!

I am incredibly fortunate to have worked across many different programs within environmental health, shaping me into a well-rounded public health professional. My exposure to the full scope and impact of environmental health has created a deep passion for protecting and promoting health and wellbeing in all



communities. Furthermore, as a District Director in OEHA, I am exposed to all the behind-the-scenes work being done to support public health and it's truly amazing! I encourage you to maintain your membership with OEHA, join a committee and also attend your local conference. The Northeast Fall Educational Conference is October 13-14, 2026 at the Hilton Garden Inn in Twinsburg OH. Conference information will be coming out soon so I encourage you to continue to check out our website for updates.

Sincerely,

Sara Cochrane, MGIS, REHS
OEHA Northeast District Director
Environmental Supervisor for Summit County
Public Health
scochrane@schd.org



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Have a grant, educational opportunity, move, promotion, or other announcement you would like to share? Please email a member of the publications committee.

Open Positions

(For the full current listing go to:

<https://www.ohiocha.org/aws/OEHA/pt/sp/careers>)

- **Grant Program Manager**
Cuyahoga County Board of Health
- **Plumbing Inspector**
Richland Public Health
- **Administrative Assistant**
Delaware Public Health District
- **REHS/EHST**
Licking County Health Department
- **Sales Coordinator**
Arrow Senior Living
- **REHS/EHST**
Delaware Public Health District
- **Vector Control Technician**
Greene County Combined Health District
- **REHS/EHST**
Wood County Health Department
- **Administrative Specialist**
Cuyahoga County Board of Health
- **REHS/EHST**
Clinton County Health District
- **Licensed Practical Nurse**
Cuyahoga County Board of Health
- **REHS/EHST**
Portage County Combined Health District
- **REHS (Summer contractor)**
Greene County Public Health
- **Mosquito Control Program Seasonal**
Ottawa County Health Department
- **EH Summer Intern**
Butler County General Health District
- **Public Health Nurse**
Cuyahoga County Board of Health

- **Grant Coordinator**
Cuyahoga County Board of Health
- **Sales Coordinator**
Vitalia Highland Heights
- **Summer Intern**
Miami County Public Health
- **REHS/EHST**
Butler County General Health District
- **REHS/EHST**
Brown County Health Department
- **Restaurant Food Safety Consultant**
National Evermore Services
- **Director of Environmental Health**
Crawford County Public Health
- **REHS/EHST**
Ashland County Health Department
- **REHS/EHST**
Franklin County Public Health
- **Plumbing Inspector**
Miami County Public Health

Educational Opportunities

- **AOHC New Employee Training** – July 8, 2026; Delaware, Ohio
- **2026 AOHC Fall Conference** – September 21-23, 2026; Dublin, Ohio
- **NW OEHA Fall Conference** – October 1-2, 2026; Sandusky, Ohio
- **NE OEHA Fall Conference** – October 13-14, 2026; Twinsburg, Ohio
- **AOHC LEHDS** – October, 27-28, 2026; Dublin, Ohio
- **AOHC Finance for HDs** – October 27-28, 2026; Dublin, Ohio
- **AOHC New Employee Training** – November, 4, 2026; Delaware, Ohio

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From the Vault: A 1997 Perspective

This article was originally published in the Journal in 1997 vol. 47 no. 6 pg. 150-151 and explores current events of interest to the environmental health practitioner of the time.

President's Message From James J. Smith, R.S.



With the passing of September and the coming of October, it's hard to believe summer is past; the leaves are turning colors; time goes by so quickly. I am in the process of reaching the mid-point of my President's term.

In writing this message I would like to share with the membership the text of my speech given at all four of the fall district meetings entitled, "OEHA, Where Are We Heading?"

It is so important that we positively network with other local agencies and other entities and also focus on our community (communities), whether a city or general health district. We are in an excellent position of promoting our local communities and facilitating the correction of problems as they arise, but we must have thick skins to avoid becoming defensive in controversial situations. We can not take criticism personally, and should not conduct ourselves in such a way to attract unnecessary criticism. A problem many of us experience is that understandable tendency to become cynical in our positions as registered sanitarians. However, this tendency must be avoided and fought with all of our might, because cynicism significantly hinders our ability to reach our full effectiveness and leads us to be defensive and even bitter in our approach to everyday situations. The nature of our profession provides such a rich opportunity to provide leadership in our communities. State and federal governments are too detached and remote from the people to provide one-on-one leadership opportunities. We all have those opportunities on a daily basis. Regardless of your own religious beliefs, you all surely can see the unique opportunities we have to provide leadership and represent our own personal convictions for serving mankind. The "service" aspect of our profession is the single most important aspect of being a governmental employee. Whenever we lose focus of this "bottom line," we are placing our throats against the blade of public criticism. We simply must keep in mind that we exist because the public needs our services and supports our existence. We do not thrive in a vacuum to enforce laws and rules as a completely independent entity. Many times, our failure to recognize *why* we exist and *why* the Ohio Revised Code and the Ohio Administrative Code exists, leads us to become obstructive to the very people that we should be leading and providing education and assistance. Fostering the

perception that we are "environmental enforcers" that people are wise to avoid is likely the main reason why the passage of levies is a difficult proposition for local health departments. The ripple effect of failed levies causes a hardship for nursing and WIC services too.

My message to you is that the true and greatest involvement for our profession and our respective departments should come from us! It is true that improvements are needed in our programs, in our departments, and from the state health department; but these changes pale in comparison to the improvement that can be gained by changing our own attitudes and the way we conduct our business. Government is self-limiting, and always will be. We will always have problems and challenges, regardless of where these problems originate, but we still have the greatest control over how these situations are corrected. Our public relation skills, including a heavy dose of patience, graciousness, and above all, humility, will see us through to successful resolution, regardless of extenuating circumstances that are beyond our control. Our ability to step back from a problem situation and try to understand it from a different perspective will enable us to see our way through.

Food service, rabies, sewage, water, solid waste, hazardous waste, swimming pools, etc. are all programs that we need to focus on and provide improvement at local levels. Don't excuse away problems on ODH and antiquated rules. Focus on maximizing efficiency and prioritizing within existing programs. Our professionalism and sound judgment is usually sufficient to address problems and meet public needs. We must project ourselves in a positive way and nurture working relationships with other agencies and public service organizations. By doing these things, the Association will keep its autonomy as well as progressing and heading in the right direction to achieve those goals and objectives established to represent a unified voice in public health.

Furthermore, these are hectic times. It seems that all of our programs are in a state of change. Hopefully, this all bodes well for the future of our profession.

The following information is an update on the various topics:

Food - As required by amended substitute House Bill 113, the board has provided three names of

From the Vault: A 1997 Perspective

This article was originally published in the Journal in 1997 vol. 47 no. 6 pg. 150-151 and explores current events of interest to the environmental health practitioner of the time.

individuals to ODH and ODA for an appointment to the Food Safety Council. By the time you read this, the individual will have been selected and in place to represent our interests in finally resolving many issues involving the regulation of the food service industry.

Sewage - The various workshops established under the Program Improvement Plan are in the process of working on their tasks. Hopefully, a fine product will result and the long overdue improvements needed in this program will finally be realized.

Solid Waste - House Bill 536 is being supported by OEHA because it improves the funding mechanisms for local health departments to conduct their solid waste programs.

Tattoo and Body Piercing Establishments - Now that HB 25 has been enacted into law, local health departments must prepare for the implementation of this mandatory program. OEHA has supplied names of experienced registered sanitarians with well-run, established programs in their respective local health departments to assist ODH with drafting requirements for HB 25. If you do not already have a city or county program, begin establishing a rapport with any operators in your health district.

Rabies - ODH has put together a draft bill which would require the mandatory rabies vaccination of dogs, cats, and ferrets. It is encouraging that this draft bill was produced in a timely fashion so that we can continue our momentum and address this vital public health issue.

Water - ODH should have released the draft bill of the model private water system program for discussion purposes by this time. There are fundamental concerns about the model that must be addressed before OEHA will allow our endorsement. These issues involve the removal of the program's current mandatory status, licensing of sanitarians independent of the R.S., and the provision for allowing private inspectors, among other issues. An ad hoc committee of the state coordinating committee on

ground water has been working on producing a well construction standards document, which will be incorporated into the model program when it is adopted.

R.S. Exam - OEHA has the agreement of AOHC to set the passing point for the exam at 70%, which is consistent with 25 other states. A key issue is the proper preparation for taking the exam; for there is a strong correlation between participation in an exam preparation course and passing the exam. Please review OEHA's "White Paper," also included in this *Journal*, petitioning the State Board of Sanitarian Registration to adopt the 70% passing score. The following is the action taken by the board regarding the proposed amendment to section 4736-9-03 passing point:

J. Lucia moved to recommend that the passing score be set at 60% effective June 1, 1998. Effective June 1, 1999, the passing score shall be established at 65%. On June 1, 2000, the passing score shall be established at 70%. The motion was seconded by Monica Eakin. The vote was unanimous, and the motion carried.

Before the Board formally adopts this proposed rule amendment, a public hearing will be conducted pursuant to Section 119.03 of the Ohio Revised Code to receive oral and/or written comments. The hearing is scheduled for April 6, 1998.

Congratulations to Mark McDonnell, R.S.; Pete Kowal, R.S.; and also others who had input in putting this excellent "White Paper" together for the profession's benefit.

In closing, I would like to say, "thank you," to all the 1997 District Directors and their planning committees for their excellent facilities and most impressive fall programs I had the pleasure of attending. I will have more to say about my visit at each of the district's meetings in my next President's message. On behalf of my family, we would like to wish everyone within the Association a very special holiday greeting and a happy new year.

Important Notice

The OEHA Board is forming a committee to develop expectations and customer service guidelines for the Ohio Department of Health, Bureau of Local Services. Discussions have already begun with the Director of Health regarding this matter. The committee is expected to conclude its discussions and present a formal report to the Board by March 1, 1998. Anyone interested in serving on this committee or contributing to this effort should contact Charles Patterson at 800-554-7447.

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