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Use of the
Model Aquatic
Health Code

À la Carte,
Not All-Inclusive



NEHA MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Zachary M. Ehrlich, MPH, DrPH, REHS

Camden County Department of Health and Human Services

The National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) is shining a spotlight on the people within our membership through this feature in the *Journal*. This month, we are pleased to introduce you to Dr. Zachary Ehrlich, a public health planner at the Camden County Department of Health and Human Services in New Jersey. He has held this position for 1 year and has worked in the environmental health profession for 12 years.

In his position, he supports the development, implementation, and evaluation of public health programs that strengthen community health and organizational capacity. Dr. Ehrlich's work includes helping to design quality improvement mechanisms, monitoring program outcomes, optimizing resource use, and identifying opportunities to streamline operations. He also facilitates collaboration across teams and supports systems-level planning to improve the delivery of public health services.

Why did you join NEHA, and what aspects of membership have you found most valuable to your career?

I joined NEHA before my professional career even began, when I was still an undergraduate student exploring environmental health. At the time, I wanted to connect with like-minded professionals, access educational resources, and become more immersed in the broader environmental health community. Over time, NEHA has helped me see the depth and diversity of environmental health practice across the country. The most valuable part of my membership has been the connections I have made with professionals nationwide. Those relationships have given me opportunities to collaborate, exchange fresh ideas, learn from colleagues, and better understand how different health departments approach similar challenges.

Why did you choose the environmental health field?

I chose the environmental health field because it brought together two areas I had always cared deeply about: 1) environmental science and 2) public health. Growing up, I felt very connected to nature and was drawn to stories about protecting the environment, from *Captain Planet and the Planeteers* to *FernGully: The Last Rainforest*. Environmental health felt like the place where that early connection to the natural world met the practical work of protecting people and communities. Looking back, environmental health was the perfect fit because it allowed me to combine science, service, community protection, and my lifelong interest in the environment.

What hobbies, activities, or causes are you passionate about?

Outside of work, I enjoy genealogy, fantasy video games and novels, gardening, and tending to my indoor plants. I have always been drawn to stories, histories, and worlds that help us better understand people, places, and the connections between them. Genealogy allows me to explore family history and identity, while fantasy gives me a creative outlet and a sense of wonder.

I am also passionate about causes related to environmental protection, sustainability, humanitarian rights, LGBTQIA+ rights, and animal welfare. These causes reflect many of the same values that drew me to environmental health: protecting communities, supporting vulnerable populations, caring for the world around us, and working toward a healthier and more just future.

What accomplishment are you most proud of?

The accomplishment I am most proud of is earning my DrPH. For me, it represents much more than an academic achievement. It reflects years of hard work, persistence, growth, and the ability to keep moving forward while navigating personal struggles, societal stigma, barriers, and hardships as a queer person. Earning my DrPH affirmed that my voice, experiences, and perspective belong in public health leadership.

I hope to use that accomplishment to not only advance my own work but also help lead the way for others who may see themselves in the communities I represent and in me. I am proud of what the degree means professionally, but I am equally proud of what it symbolizes personally: resilience, representation, and a commitment to creating space for others.

What was the best professional advice given to you?

The best professional advice I have received is that showing up is half the battle, and doing what you love is the other half. To me, that advice is a reminder that consistency, presence, and commitment matter. So much of professional growth comes from being willing to show up, learn, listen, contribute, and keep going, even when the work is challenging.

The second part is just as important. When you care about the work you are doing, it gives you a sense of purpose and helps sustain you through the difficult moments. Public health can be demanding, and our work is often done behind the scenes, but doing work that aligns with your values makes it meaningful.

We thank Dr. Zachary Ehrlich for sharing with us! 🌸