

2026 Spring Conference, Unicoi State Park & Lodge, Helen, GA

12:30 PM – 1:30 PM Keynote Address (Master Hall 1-4, 3rd Floor)



Jeff Cown, Director - Georgia EPD

Jeff Cown is Director of the Environmental Protection Division (EPD) for the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR), a position he has held since August 2023. He is a 33-year veteran of the Georgia DNR with extensive experience in solid waste, landfill, and materials management regulation.

Mr. Cown spent more than a decade as Chief of EPD's Land Protection Branch, where he led statewide programs overseeing landfill permitting and compliance, solid waste and scrap tire management, surface mining, hazardous waste, and site remediation. He also served as Director of Georgia's State Parks & Historic Sites Division from 2018 to 2023.

He holds a Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Engineering from the University of Georgia and is a graduate of the Institute of Georgia Environmental Leadership (IGEL).

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2:00 PM – 3:30 PM Technical Session (Master Hall 1-4, 3rd Floor):

Panel Discussion - “Safety as a Core Value”



Suki Janssen, Athens-Clarke County

Suki Janssen is the Director of the Athens-Clarke County (ACC) Solid Waste Department and has been with ACC for twenty-three years. Biggest work accomplishment to-date was bringing a Center for Hard to Recycle Materials (CHaRM) to Georgia. She is the current Solid Waste Association of North America Georgia (SWANA) Chapter current International Advisory Council Member, Road-E-O Chairperson and Safety Committee Member. She is running for the SWANA National Board as Secretary. Please vote! She is the current Georgia Composting Council Secretary. She is a SWANA certified Landfill Operator and Class Instructor since 2005 and SWANA Recycling Systems Manager certified since 2007 and Composting Programs Manager certified since 2013. She published a children’s book about nature’s best recycler, the vulture - There Goes the Neighborhood. She is married to Chris Janssen, a retired middle school math teacher, and lives with two dogs and two snakes in her favorite town in Georgia - Athens.



Freddie Hardy, Athens-Clarke County

Freddie Hardy is a Solid Waste Collection Administrator with Athens-Clarke County.



Chris Jones, Meriwether Site Solutions

Chris Jones has served as the Vice President of Asset Management at Meriwether Site Solutions since April 2023. Based in Villa Rica, Georgia, he brings extensive experience in asset management and previously worked in product support for managed accounts at Yancey Bros. Co. for nearly 25 years.

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Panel Discussion - “Safety as a Core Value”



Brian Edgemon, Meriwether Site Solutions

Brian Edgemon serves as the Safety Director for Meriwether Site Solutions.



Justin Rice, Midwest Recycling Sales

Justin Rice is the president of Midwest Recycling Services and Services, Inc., based in Cartersville, Georgia. Justin has been in the industry for over 25 years. He purchased Midwest Recycling over 16 years ago. The company performs equipment installation and maintenance in Materials Recovery Facilities all over the US (and overseas!) for new facilities and retrofits. Midwest and Justin hold contractor’s licenses in several states across the US. Justin provides equipment selection and layout for MRF owners and operators that best fits their needs, working to address challenges while ensuring efficient and safe MRF operations. Justin also has several other businesses focused in waste management, waste diversion, materials recovery, and recycling.



Paul Mitchell, Republic Services

Paul Mitchell is with Republic Services in the General Manager Accelerated Program.

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2:00 PM – 3:30 PM Technical Session (Master Hall 1-4, 3rd Floor):

“Where Oh Where Does Our Glass Go, And How and Why?”



Abbey Patterson, NAIMA

Abbey Mullaney Patterson is the Sustainability Director for NAIMA (North American Insulation Manufacturer’s Association). For over a decade Abbey managed municipal contracts as Market Development Manager for the second largest waste and recycling company in the U.S. In that position she became the intermediary between locally elected officials and the waste company, allowing her to better understand the political and economic drivers associated with waste and recycling collection services. Abbey has also been involved in recycling and sustainable practices for sporting arenas and events. She designed and implemented recycling and waste management infrastructures for three Olympic Organizing Committees - Atlanta in 1996, Sydney, Australia in 2000 and Salt Lake City in 2002. Abbey draws from her 25 years of experience in the industry to provide zero waste solutions for both the public and private sectors. She is a 2023 member of the Institute for Georgia Environmental Leadership (IGEL) and past board member of the Georgia Recycling Coalition and Live Thrive.



Jamey Moran, Rippleglass

Jamey Moran is the Metro Atlanta Program Manager for Ripple Glass. Ripple Glass was born out of a Kansas City brewery’s passion to run a zero-landfill business. Keeping beer bottles out of landfills was just the beginning, as Ripple helps more and more glass achieve a second life.

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4:00 PM – 5:30 PM Technical Session (Master Hall 1-4, 3rd Floor):

“Landfill Microbiology and Why It Matters”



Stephen Descher, SCS Engineers

Stephen Descher is a Senior Project Manager and Atlanta Office Manager for SCS Engineers, where he has been for 8 years. Stephen started his career in solid waste as a Landfill Gas Technician with Allied Waste. He then worked as an Environmental Manager with Allied in Birmingham with responsibility for 3 landfills in northern Alabama before moving back to Atlanta to work with Golder Associates for 10 years. Stephen has a BS in Applied Biology from Georgia Tech with an emphasis in Environmental Microbiology and attended the University of Arizona where he pursued an MS in Environmental Science, again focusing on Microbiology. Stephen’s primary duties at SCS include managing landfill gas system compliance, permitting, reporting, and data analysis projects as well as a variety of other environmental projects.



Deya Bowers, SCS Engineers

Deya Bowers is a Staff Professional at SCS Engineers with a BS in Environmental Science from Davidson College. Since joining the firm in 2021, she has supported landfill gas and environmental compliance projects for clients across the Southeast. Her work focuses on solid waste regulatory compliance, including Title V permitting, monitoring and reporting, data management, regulatory documentation, and analysis of landfill gas data for multiple landfill sites.

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4:00 PM – 5:30 PM Technical Session (Master Hall 1-4, 3rd Floor):

“Geophysical Testing to Assess the Limits of Closed, Undocumented, or Unregulated Landfills”



Cole Angelo, Terracon Consultants

Cole Angelo is the lead for Terracon`s Georgia geophysical operations, he lives in Valdosta and works for the Macon office.



Nick Ratcliff, Terracon Consultants

Nick Ratcliff is a professional geologist who oversees a team of 15 geophysicists in Terracon`s Gulf Coast Division.

Both Cole and Nick are geologists who have performed and overseen numerous geophysical investigations into environmental, geotechnical, and forensic applications

“Smart Landfilling”



Charlie Nowak, TANA North America

Charlie Nowak is a North American TANA Sales Representative at Humdinger Equipment. Humdinger Equipment is the North American distributor for TANA. Charlie has extensive experience in all phases of solid waste. He began working in the waste industry as a teenager and has worn many hats, including operating equipment, surveying landfills, water sampling, engineering landfill design, managing landfill operations and transfer stations, and consulting for hauling and landfills. He can be reached at (806) 473-7371 or e-mail cnowak@humdingerequipment.com.

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8:00 AM – 9:30 AM Technical Session (Master Hall 1-4, 3rd Floor):

“Landfill Intermediate Covers: A Technical Overview and Real-World Performance Evaluation”



Dr. Ming Zhu, P.E., Watershed Geo

Dr. Ming Zhu, Director of Engineering Services with Watershed Geo, brings more than 19 years of professional experience in geotechnical and geoenvironmental engineering, geosynthetic applications, and landfill design. He is the author and co-author of more than 40 technical published papers. He is a registered Professional Engineer in Georgia.



Christopher Timpson, Watershed Geo

For nearly 20 years, **Chris Timpson** has worked in many facets of the geosynthetics industry related to civil and environmental infrastructure involving projects within solid and hazardous waste containment, heavy infrastructure space, hydraulic and stormwater structures, erosion control, and slope stabilization. As Southeast Director for Watershed Geo, Chris is responsible for overseeing sales and project execution in his region and working with clients at all levels, including owners, municipalities, engineers, contractors and government agencies in the commercial, industrial, federal and environmental sectors.

“Demystifying Soil Liners”



Raphael Debaty, Bunnell Lammons Engineering

Raphael Debaty, P.E. is the Construction Quality Assurance Service Line Leader at BLE within the Regional Quality Assurance Group. He has been in the CQA field for 7 years, from doing the field work to project management.

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8:00 AM – 9:30 AM Technical Session (Master Hall 1-4, 3rd Floor):

“Landfill F** [Fires]: Surface and Subsurface”**



Daniel Kim, EIT, SCS Engineers

Daniel Kim is a Staff Professional in SCS’s Atlanta office with three years of experience in solid waste engineering. He holds a civil engineering background with emphasis in structural design, stormwater routing, and geotechnical foundations, which supports his work across a range of landfill and gas system projects. At SCS, Daniel contributes to gas collection and control system (GCCS) designs, landfill cell design efforts, construction quality assurance activities, and regulatory compliance tasks.



Vinuta Sheshappanavar, P.E., SCS Engineers

Vinuta Sheshappanavar is a Project Professional in SCS’s Atlanta office with seven years of experience in environmental and solid waste engineering throughout the Southeast. Her background in chemical engineering, along with focused study in water/wastewater quality and energy systems, supports her technical work. She is a licensed Professional Engineer in Georgia and Alabama. At SCS, Vinuta contributes to landfill design and permitting projects, construction management and CQA efforts, and regulatory reporting. She also assists with gas collection and control system (GCCS) design, construction, and compliance activities. Her project experience includes providing regulatory compliance and engineering support for sites subject to the New Source Performance Standards (NSPS) in Georgia and Alabama.

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10:00 AM – 12:00 PM Technical Session (Master Hall 1-4, 3rd Floor):

“300 Million and Counting: What We Can Learn From Keeping Pace With Tire Waste”



Stratton Kirton, Liberty Tire Recycling

Stratton Kirton is the vice president of government affairs at Liberty Tire Recycling, the largest tire recycling company in North America. Previously, he was a partner at Penta Group, where he advised clients on strategy and public policy with a focus on sustainability in industry. He also worked for U.S. Representative Mike McIntyre, a senior member of the House Agriculture Committee, and for U.S. Senator Bill Nelson, a senior member of the Senate Commerce Committee. He serves on the boards of the non-profit Rural Investment to Protect Our Environment, the Synthetic Turf Council, and far too many community organizations. He is a native of Florida but now lives in Maryland with his wife and two children.

“Tire Trouble- Cleanup and regulation”



Gordon Kenna, DeKalb Public Works

Gordon Kenna is Special Projects Coordinator for DeKalb County Public Works Department. Kenna has served in a variety of public and private roles in the Environmental service industry including USEPA, Waste Management, NASA, Tilbury Cement, Cemtech LLC and others.



Ricky Crockett, DeKalb Beautification Unit

Ricky Crockett is a Superintendent with the DeKalb County Sanitation - Beautification Unit.



Kathy Reed, DeKalb Sustainability

Kathy Reed is a Sustainability Coordinator for DeKalb County, bringing expertise in environmental stewardship and community development.

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10:00 AM – 12:00 PM Technical Session (Master Hall 1-4, 3rd Floor):

“Status Update on the Georgia Statewide Waste Characterization Study & Post-Consumer Materials Management Plan”



Lena Sassone, GA EPD

Lena Sassone has worked for the Georgia Environmental Protection Division since 2018 and manages the Recovered Materials & Abatement Program. The program houses the Recovered Materials and Tire Management Units which handle the regulatory oversight of scrap tire operations, material recovery facilities, composting operations, and other beneficial waste processing operations. The program also administers Georgia’s Solid Waste Trust Fund Grant Program for recycling and waste diversion grants. Lena is a graduate of the University of Georgia’s Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources and is an active member of the Georgia Composting Council, GASWANA, and the Georgia Recycling Coalition.



Sarah Knapp, GA EPD

Sarah Knapp is the manager of the Recovered Materials Unit for the Georgia Environmental Protection Division. She administers the multimillion-dollar Solid Waste Trust Fund Grant Program, manages contracts for state-wide scrap tire abatement and abandoned landfill closure, and regulates material recovery and composting facilities. She graduated from the University of Central Florida with a bachelor’s degree in environmental science and minor in Public Administration, and is a LEED Accredited Professional (LEED AP BD+C) and an Envision Sustainability Professional (ENV SP).



Anna Schnittker, P.G., Geosyntec Consultants

Anna Schnittker, P.G., is a Professional Geologist and SWANA YP based in Kennesaw, GA, with six years of experience in environmental consulting. She holds a B.S. in Geology from Western Kentucky University and a certificate in GIS. Ms. Schnittker specializes in financial modeling, solid waste management planning, groundwater sampling and remediation, regulatory compliance, environmental health and safety, and the use of GIS for data management and visualization. Ms. Schnittker has supported several solid waste master planning projects, providing technical support for rate evaluations, feasibility analyses, benchmarking, review of existing conditions, and public stakeholder engagement. Ms. Schnittker excels in using GIS to visualize data trends, such as environmental justice (EJ) data, geographic locations, and socio-economic data, to implement solutions that enhance the accuracy and efficiency of solid waste management planning efforts.

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8:00 AM–9:30 AM Technical Session (Master Hall 1-4, 3rd Floor):

“Heavy Lifting: Managing Bulky Waste in Athens-Clarke County”



Nancy Flowers, Athens-Clarke County Solid Waste Department

Nancy Flowers serves as a Route Supervisor for the Athens-Clarke County Solid Waste Department, where she oversees critical operations within the Collection Division. In this role, she manages the General Fund drivers—including roll-off, litter technician, bulky waste, and leaf and limb crews—and provides direct supervision for the division’s Administrative Assistant II. A graduate of the University of Georgia with a Bachelor’s degree in Business Marketing, Flowers brings a unique blend of strategic communication and operational expertise to the department. Over a seven-year tenure with ACC, she transitioned from an Administrative Assistant II into her current leadership position, giving her a comprehensive “ground-up” understanding of municipal waste logistics. Today, she is dedicated to optimizing route efficiency and enhancing service delivery for the Athens community.

“Lessons Learned from Residential Compost Collection Pilot in Athens, GA”



Dr. Taylor Maddalene Myers, University of Georgia

Dr. Taylor Maddalene Myers is a Research Faculty member in the College of Engineering at the University of Georgia and Director of the Circularity Assessment Protocol at the Jambeck Circularity Informatics Lab. Her background is in marine conservation, pollution prevention, and science communication, working on projects around the globe with organizations such as National Geographic, NOAA, and Rare. Her current research focuses on the impacts of plastic pollution and tying human behavior and waste management infrastructure on land with that we find in the ocean.



Dr. Evan White, University of Georgia

Evan White is Director of the UGA New Materials Institute’s Bioseniatic Laboratory, where he researches the end-of-life degradation performance of polymers, composites, and coatings. He graduated with a PhD in chemistry in 2014 from the University of Georgia and joined the New Materials Institute when it was founded in 2017 as a member in the division of Technology Development and Implementation with a focus on translating innovative technologies from the laboratory to commercial viability and application. He works closely with industry partners to aid and advance specialized product development with a focus around compostable polymer architectures.

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8:00 AM–9:30 AM Technical Session (Master Hall 1-4, 3rd Floor):

“Circular UGA” - Less is More on a College Campus”



Mason Towe, UGA Waste Reduction Services

Mason Towe is the Waste Reduction Manager at the University of Georgia, within the Office of Sustainability. He supervises the Waste Reduction Services team, which provides waste, recycling, and compost collection services on campus, as well as strategic planning for campus-wide Waste Reduction goals, policies, infrastructure, and education. Prior to UGA, Mason worked for the Athens-Clarke County Recycling Division as an expert in recycling, compost, and other waste reduction education and outreach. UGA Office of Sustainability is currently diving into the concept of “Campus As A Living Laboratory”, starting with waste reduction as an operational function that can serve as a learning model for students, faculty, and staff, as well as a research and education opportunity to enhance on-campus facilities and services. Mason currently serves on the board of the Georgia Recycling Coalition. Mason graduated from the University of Georgia in 2016 with degrees in Economics and Sociology, minor in Environmental Law, and certificates in sustainability and environmental ethics.

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10:00 AM – 11:30 AM Technical Session (Master Hall 1-4, 3rd Floor):

“Owning the Map: How Local Facilities Can Beat National Brokers in the AI Era”



Samie Worthington, EMILY Revolutionary Marketing Group

Samie Worthington isn't here to give you a marketing lesson from 2015. As the co-founder of EMILY Revolutionary Marketing Group, she knows that the era of “traditional digital presence”; is over. We are now living in the age of AI Discovery, and Samie is the expert you need to navigate it. With a strict “No-BS” approach, Samie sits at the bleeding edge where creativity meets data. In this session, she won't just talk theory; she's going to show you exactly how the search landscape is shifting beneath your feet. Samie is here to equip you with a robust AI Search Strategy, teaching you how to blend human creativity with machine learning to ensure your brand doesn't just survive the AI revolution—but dominates it.

“What is RCRA?”



Ray Hoffman, P.E., Quad R Materials

Mr. Ray Hoffman has been actively involved with solid waste management for 25 years, as a consultant, owner's representative and a contractor. He currently provides consulting services with a focus on landfills and improving their operational performance.

“Solid Waste Management Program Updates”



William Cook, Georgia DNR-EPD

William is the Program Manager for the Solid Waste Management Program in the Land Protection Branch of the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD). He became the Solid Waste Program Manager on March 1, 2015. His management responsibilities include the implementation of EPD's Solid Waste Permitting, Environmental Monitoring, and Surface Mining Programs. He has extensive experience in rule and program development. William has a Mechanical Engineering degree from the Georgia Institute of Technology and has a total of 32 years of experience with EPD.