

Speaker Bios

Educational Sessions Facilitated by the Verde Sustaining Flows Council

May 7, 2025

Matthew Olson

Matthew Olson began his professional career at the Arizona Department of Agriculture after he received his B.S. in Plant Biology from ASU. He found his calling in the world of phycology and biotechnology after joining Heliae Development, LLC back in 2009. Matthew spent 10+ years on microalgae specific development and scale-up experience from various industries such as biofuels, nutraceuticals, and agriculture. Matthew has since joined ADEQ back in November of 2022 to help manage the PFAS statewide sampling program and our state funded mitigation projects.

Lauren Baader

Lauren Baader is a hydrogeologist with the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality in the Groundwater Protection Water Reclamation and Reuse Unit. She obtained her B.S. in Environmental Science: Hydrology from the University of New Hampshire in 2016. During her college years, she interned with the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services, where she spent four months sampling private wells for PFAS in the early stages of its emergence as an environmental concern. Lauren is the sampling coordinator for the Groundwater Quality Monitoring Program, which evaluates water quality across all 51 basins within the State of Arizona.

Sophia Peralta

Sophia Peralta is an environmental science specialist working with standards and the assessment of surface waters in Arizona, primarily focusing on emerging contaminants like PFAS. She graduated from NAU with a B.S. in biology with a concentration in mathematics. During her education, she investigated the impact of micro and macro plastics on plants and researched the influence of nutrients on invertebrates.

Meghan Smart

Meghan Smart is a principal scientist with the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ). She obtained her B.S. degree from U of A in Natural Resources in 2006. A biologist by training, she has declared her position as community science and education coordinator at ADEQ as “the best job ever!” For 19 years she studied perennial streams, wetlands, and intermittent streams throughout Arizona. Meghan has led four new programs for the state: intermittent stream research, recreational monitoring program, and created Arizona Science Alliance, an ADEQ community science and education program for Air, water, and land. She is passionate about nature, all things related to science, and photography.



Speaker Bios

Educational Sessions Facilitated by the Verde Sustaining Flows Council

May 7, 2025

Audrey Ridge

Audrey Ridge is a hydrogeologist who engages partners across Arizona to address key surface water quality challenges. Audrey holds a B.S. in Geoscience, an M.S. in Restoration Ecology, and is certified as a Project Management Professional. She brings over a decade of hydrological experience to her current role as ADEQ's Surface Water Community Science Coordinator. By co-developing collaborative projects, coordinating critical water quality data collection efforts, and leading in-depth studies, Audrey and the AZ Community Science Alliance team help bridge the gap between bureaucratic processes and community-driven solutions.

Matt Narter

Matt Narter is a senior hydrogeologist at ADEQ with experience managing complex state and federal environmental remediation projects. He currently works to coordinate PFAS efforts across all ADEQ programs. Matt is an Arizona registered geologist and holds a PhD in Environmental Science from the University of Arizona where he studied contaminant hydrogeology and water policy.

