

Nomination for Sunil Beeharry, CPHI(C)*Environmental Health Foundation of Canada (EHFC)**Canadian Water & Wastewater Association Safe Water Award*

Dear EHFC Members,

Sunil Beeharry, Water Coordinator for Alberta Health Services (AHS) Calgary Zone, has made tremendous contributions to recreational water programs, both locally and provincially. He is a respected, go-to expert, in recreational water throughout Alberta. I would like to highlight two examples of his contributions.

Blue Green Algae (BGA):

Sunil led the student practicum BGA Surveillance Project from 2013 to 2017, including training, supporting, and monitoring the student work, along with coordination of processes with the Provincial Laboratory of Public Health. Sunil continues to guide public health inspectors (PHIs) in investigation and sampling techniques for lakes with suspected blooms. He is also a key proponent in ensuring continued BGA competence amongst PHIs in Alberta, by arranging and promoting staff education.

As a key member of the provincial Recreational Water Committee, Sunil developed technical expertise to lead the evolving EPH response to BGA in Alberta lakes. With his additional drinking water expertise, has been able to draw attention to the hazards of BGA not only in recreational settings, but also in drinking water. In the summer of 2018 he brought BGA experts together with government agencies (AHS, Alberta Environment and Parks), beach operators, and water treatment plant operators, by organizing a combined educational session. This has resulted in improved knowledge and collaboration by all groups, which should continue to strengthen over time.

Elbow River- Risk Identification and Public Messaging:

In the summer of 2015, AHS was notified by the City of Calgary about abnormally high levels of fecal bacteria in watershed monitoring samples. Due to the levels, and significant urban use of the Elbow for recreational purposes, Sunil determined it was important to take action to protect the public. A Recreational Water Quality Advisory was issued to the public, warning against swimming.

Over the past 4 summers, Sunil has worked with multiple colleagues and stakeholders to accurately characterize the water quality of the Elbow River, in order to identify and support appropriate public health risk communication. Sunil's collaboration with the City's Microbiology and Watershed Assessment team and the University of Alberta, School of Public Health, has identified a consistent trend of poor water quality in the urban portion of the river, along with various sources of contamination delineated using new lab techniques. As a result of Sunil's work, AHS has maintained the Advisory, protecting vulnerable residents, such as young children, from exposure to potentially disease-causing contamination.

Throughout this process, Sunil has faced difficult questions from the public, municipal officials and political leaders, with patience and tact, supporting the AHS position with scientific evidence and sound public health rationale.

In conclusion, Sunil is on the leading edge of emerging recreational water knowledge and practice. His contributions are evidence-based and practically driven. His technical expertise, thoughtful and pragmatic approach, and the important partnerships he has formed, work to a collective impact that improves recreational water quality for Albertans. For these reasons, I encourage you to select Sunil Beeharry as the recipient for the 2018 Canadian Water & Wastewater Association Safe Water Award.

Yours truly,
Karen Clarke, MPH CPHI(C)
Manager, Environmental Public Health
Alberta Health Services, Calgary Zone