

A Tribute to Peter Severtson

Sanford Peter Severtson died in early August. Peter was a dear friend and respected colleague to almost all of us in the biosolids community. We will say goodbye to him around the fire at Biofest. There is also a Celebration of Life for Peter on September 24th from 2-6 pm at the Alpental Lodge (17800 Alpental Access Road, Snoqualmie Pass, WA).



Here are a few memories.

From James Rivard- WA DOE:

Many of you might have known Peter Severtson during his 20 years with Ecology as a biosolids coordinator in CRO. What you might have not known is he had been fighting colon cancer for the last 3.5 years. He was initially given a 5% chance of making it 5 years.

He always kept a good attitude about it and educated himself on the matter.... And if you knew Peter this next part will make you smile..... He had stories about challenging some medical doctor's thinking a time or two. And according to him it taught some doctors to inquire a little more and order extra tests and scans that were helpful instead of gunslinging it and making best guesses.

He took and handled his medical condition well and kept a good attitude. Never lost a step in his work, was always ethical, work diligently, and was committed to the field of biosolids 110%. He loved what he did for work, will be missed, and is difficult if not impossible to replace.

He retired early at the end of January 2022, because he had decided not to pursue treatment anymore.... He unfortunately passed away during the evening of August 8th.

It is unknown if there will be services planned in his memory.... but knowing Peter for the last 10+ years. It is unlikely he would have wanted any service for him... Instead I think he would have said – “Nah, just have a beer for me” and laughed. And his advice would have been work hard and be good at it, but there is more to life than work.

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A couple of more details about Peter:

- 1) Served 40 years on Ski Patrol @ Snoqualmie Pass
- 2) Had a bottomless pit of crazy stories to tell

Sorry for the news, but now you know

From Jake Finlinson, King County:

Peter was such a good person. The perfect regulator: super smart but overflowing with common sense, knew the rule inside and out, held you to his standard but was always a great listener and was willing to work with you. Peter was respected by everyone that I know. I am actually over here in Chelan this week and was thinking of him just yesterday as he always told us stories of paragliding in the area. Peter you will be missed! RIP.

From Maile Lono Batura, WEF:

Imagine walking into the student office on Henry/Brown row in Bloedel Hall at the University of Washington, surrounded by primarily graduate students, random experiments (some food related accidents I'm sure), and a sh*t ton of BioFest mugs. Being one of the few undergraduates during those select years of academic grooming, it was quite the experience. Peter was researching remediation mixes that could bind metals contamination with high iron blends and mine focused on community engagement and perception of biosolids. If you were ever seeking straight talk, unfiltered opinions peppered with a healthy dose of cynicism and punctuated descriptors - you asked Peter. And so began our friendship in the late 90's. Peter moved into biosolids regulations as I stepped into my role to lead the NW Biosolids network. When you are fortunate enough to enter your career with friends, it's a game changer in how you map coordinates and course correct. Peter was never inhibited to call people out, challenge opinions, and always circle back to root decisions in research as was seen in his craftsmanship in writing the Biosolids chapter of the WA State Department of Ecology's PFAS Chemical Action Plan. We will cheers you at this upcoming BioFest, Peter, and recognize that no matter how hard we attempt, there are only a select few who could match your level of volume and obscenities around a campfire. I'll miss you buddy!

From Brian Campbell, Natural Selection Farms:

I always admired Peter's professionalism and integrity as a biosolids coordinator. He was great to work with and would take the time to sit down with you and help solve issues or find solutions that would make your biosolids program better. I learned a great deal from him and always knew that he would be standing in our corner whenever we needed him. He will be greatly missed by all who knew him!

From Andy Bary, WSU:

I worked with Peter for over 20 years. He was one of the most knowledgeable ecology employees. Found him very well balanced in interpreting biosolids rules and was always very progressive in. Protecting the environment while using materials beneficially. Since retirement I've missed the interaction I had with Peter. He will be missed.

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From Chuck Henry, former UW:

Peter and I clashed when we first met working at Pack Forest (a couple of strong personalities!) – but shortly after became long-term friends due to not-too-successful beer-making attempts! Initially Peter became my grad student (later Sally's) and led the build of the UW Sustainability Compost Center. When he worked in Entiat, he bought my 850 Suzuki motorcycle to roam through the hills. Through the years Peter and I worked, skied, hiked, drank more beer, and Sally and I welcomed him in our home a number of times.

From Sally Brown, UW:

Tough as nails, snarky, very well versed in a wide range of topics. Always worth listening to. Never made shit up. Willing to rant on about anything. Seemed to always know people – people that got him fresh salmon, people in the valley, people at Alpental, at NWAC.... And stuff- where to get chanterelles, huckleberries, cherries, the best beer and best croissant. Peter had Alice, a very loyal and loving and not skinny black lab when I first knew him. After many years without a companion, he got Clem, a golden who excelled at avalanche rescue. He too, in addition to an amazing ability to find people buried in the snow, was also a not skinny, very loyal and loving companion.

Peter was my graduate student, a colleague, a peer, and most importantly my friend. He was a loyal as they come. I can still hear his voice and see his face.

