

KAREN A. MERRITT PhD, MPH

EDUCATION

- MPH Global & Community Health, University of Massachusetts, Amherst (2021)  
 Capstone | Thesis: Redesigning the Curriculum: Environmental Engineering × Public Health; Infrastructure History and Disparities in Service Provision in the United States
- PhD Environmental Engineering, University of Maine (2007)  
 Dissertation: Mercury Dynamics in Sulfide-Rich Sediments: Geochemical Influence on Contaminant Mobilization and Methylation within the Penobscot River Estuary, Maine

WORK | SKILLS | EXPERIENCE

- Current - 2020 **Engineering Lecturer - Environmental Engineering**  
 College of Engineering - University of Maine (Orono, ME)
- Current - 2017 **Environmental Engineer - Wood.** ([www.woodplc.com](http://www.woodplc.com))  
 Identification, spatial and temporal delineation, ecological assessment and remediation of chemicals in sediment, soil and surface water.
- Current - 2017 **Collaborative [A<sup>4</sup>]** (self - employ)  
 Community health collaborative
- 2016 - 2012 **Engineering | Environmental Services Consulting - (self- employ)**  
**Community Health | Public Health Educator | EMT-B** (Portland, ME)  
 Community health | Public health outreach and education
- 2011-2007 **Environmental Engineer - ENVIRON International** (Portland, ME)  
 Identification, spatial and temporal delineation, ecological assessment and remediation of chemicals in sediment, soil and surface water.
- 2007-2000 **Graduate Student | Research Assistant - University of Maine** (Orono, ME)  
 Department of Plant, Soil and Environmental Sciences (2000-2002);  
 Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering (2003-2007)
- Coordinator | researcher for multi-year field and laboratory project focused on mercury contamination in the Penobscot River estuary. Developed analytical and field methods and coordinated the field sampling program. Doctoral research was fully funded through a US EPA STAR Graduate Student Research grant.
- pre-2000 **Sail Training | Marine Science Education:** Sea Education Association (Woods Hole, MA); Maine Maritime Academy (Castine, ME); ketch Anna Kristina (Tenerife, Canary Islands); schooner Roseway (Gloucester, MA); schooner Ernestina (New Bedford, MA);
- Field Science | Community Health:** University of Florida Center for Wetlands; University of Florida Dept. of Urban & Regional Planning; Gainesville Tree Farm (Gainesville, FL).

## SELECTED SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING CONSULTING EXPERIENCE

- **Industrial Production Facility, New England** - Evaluation of MNR (Monitored Natural Recovery) potential for freshwater tidal marshes impacted by discharge from an adjacent industrial production facility. Chemicals of concern include a suite of divalent metals. Evaluation has included review of existing preliminary site characterization data, including basis for development of site sediment Media Protection Standards (MPS), sampling and analysis in support of evaluating metals biomagnification potential in site marshes and development of an adaptive management plan for implementation of an iterative 30-year MNR remedy.
- **Kalamazoo River, MI** - Evaluation of system recovery potential and recovery rate for river system historically impacted by PCB discharge via copy paper recycling. Analysis has included sediment characterization; evaluation of sediment accumulation rates through radionuclide and contaminant distribution; and assessment | integration of optical and acoustical data with surface water sample collection for evaluation of temporal and spatial trends in sediment and contaminant transport.
- **English-Wabigoon Rivers, ON** - Characterization of mercury fate and transport from an industrial facility across ~ 100 miles of riverine and wetland landscape. Development of field sampling plans for sediment, surface water, biota including multiple trophic levels of fish, and porewater; data evaluation and reporting; integration of historical and contemporary site data for development of a conceptual site model; and non-technical data presentation for local impacted communities.
- **Penobscot River, ME** - Assessed fate and transport of mercury from an industrial facility across ~ 30 miles of estuary as a component of a remedial design study. Data evaluation for conceptual and numerical modeling included spatial and depth distribution of total mercury and methyl mercury in sediment; geochronology based on radionuclide distribution in sediment; transport (rate and extent) of sediment throughout the estuary including marshes; characterization of system baseline natural recovery; and evaluation of the potential for implementation of MNR as remedial strategy.
- **Legacy Site - Cold War Production Facility** - Participated in invited scoping exercise to evaluate remedial strategies for Cold War Site with legacy mercury contamination. Scoping exercise included evaluation of remedial strategies for mercury-impacted soil and groundwater; evaluation of mercury capture technologies for sediment; and surface water treatment to achieve regulatory compliance during future on-site building demolition and disposal activities.
- **Eastport, ME** - Developed the field sampling plan and managed the field sampling program for a Baseline Ecological Risk Assessment (BERA) focused on the potential for chemical exposure to aquatic receptors in the vicinity of a former manufacturing facility. Chemicals of concern include PCBs and lead. Field sampling included surface water, sediment, and aquatic biota, including benthic invertebrates and multiple trophic levels of fish. For benthic invertebrates, the BERA employs a sediment quality triad approach to risk assessment, with lines of evidence including sediment chemistry, benthic toxicity, and benthic community structure.
- **Fox River, WI** - Conducted fate and transport analysis of PCBs historically discharged through copy paper production and recycling along the Fox River. Field data, hydrodynamic modeling, GIS-based visualization techniques, and facility production and discharge records were used to develop a conceptual fate and transport model that highlighted spatial patterns in discharge and deposition in the river and downstream embayment (Green Bay). Modeling outputs were used to evaluate the potential for source apportioning for remedial litigation.
- **Bridgeport, CT** - Developed the field sampling plan, coordinated field sampling and conducted sediment quality triad in support of a BERA. Project focused on the potential for chemical exposure to terrestrial and aquatic receptors at a former manufacturing facility. Chemicals of concern included PCBs, PAHs, lead and mercury. Field sampling included surface water, porewater, sediment, floodplain soil, and aquatic and terrestrial biota. Employed sediment quality triad as a weight-of-evidence approach to risk assessment for benthic invertebrates.
- **Gulf of Mexico** - Evaluated ecological risks associated with the closure and abandonment of natural gas pipelines. Ecological risk assessment focused on the potential effects of mercury release and mercury methylation under distinct closure scenarios, and evaluated current and future risks to

benthic invertebrates and multiple trophic levels of fish. Field data, speciation modeling and GIS-based extrapolation techniques were used to predict the oxidation and methylation rate of mercury in various forms (i.e., pipeline scale, elemental mercury, mineral inclusions in drilling muds), the rate and concentration of mercury release from various sources, and the dispersal rate of mercury in overlying water.

- co-Principal Investigator (co-PI) - Department of Defense funded research project entitled: Assessing Mercury and Methyl Mercury Bioavailability in Sediment Porewater using Mercury-Specific Hydrogels (2010 - 2013). Project funded through Strategic Environmental Research and Development Program (SERDP).
- Gulf of Mexico - Compiled and evaluated published literature on the distribution of chemosynthetic organisms and salt dome structures on the continental shelf and slope of the Gulf of Mexico. Evaluation was a component of a larger team effort to characterize baseline ecological conditions across the shelf and slope of the northern Gulf of Mexico.
- Lago Maggiore, Italy - Assessed fate and transport of DDT and mercury from a production facility to a lake. Field sampling included recovery and processing of sediment cores (from water depths reaching 200 meters), and sampling of surface water, benthic invertebrates and fish. Data, including radionuclide distribution, sediment physical and chemical characteristics, the spatial/depth distribution of identified tracers, sediment transport and flow hydrodynamics, were used to reconstruct the input history of DDT and mercury to the lake. Data were used to develop a conceptual fate and transport model that highlighted the pulsed nature of inputs to the bay, as well as identifying differences between suspension and bedload modes of chemical re-distribution.
- St. Clair River, Ontario - Contributed to ecological assessment consistent with the Canada-Ontario Decision-Making Framework for Assessment of Great Lakes Contaminated Sediment (COA Framework). Applied an ecosystem approach to the evaluation of mercury exposure and potential for mercury biomagnification in the food chain. Lines of evidence included evaluation of biomagnification, sediment chemistry, benthic community structure and sediment toxicity to develop a basis for sediment management decisions regarding mercury contamination.
- Sediment Remediation Workshop organized by Environment Canada - Led workshop on implementation and effectiveness of monitored natural recovery and thin layer capping as remedial strategies for contaminated sediment sites, including assessment of sediment geochemistry, impacts of ancillary geochemistry on chemical cycling in sediment, risk reduction-based monitoring objectives, timelines, and targets for defining remedial success.
- Co-authored chapters for guidance document on sediment and porewater sampling techniques for the Canadian government. Chapter text included sampling methods, site checklists and standard operating procedures for each method. Document as published: CCME. 2016. Guidance Manual for Environmental Site Characterization in Support of Environmental and Human Health Risk Assessment. Volume 3: Suggested Operating Procedures. PN 1555; ISBN 978-1-77202-030-4.
- Developed techniques for assessing the fate and transport of industrial mercury pollution in coastal estuarine ecosystems. Research examined the potential for diagenetic transformation and methylation of mercury discharge and included geochemical speciation modeling of mercury and chemical variables (sulfate, sulfide, organic carbon, iron, alkalinity) in sediment and porewater.
- Conducted water column and sediment quality monitoring under post-Chernobyl Baltic Sea Monitoring Program. Research included aiding in the development of equipment deployment strategies, sample collection and laboratory analyses
- Implemented monitoring strategies to assess efficacy of wetlands reclamation following phosphate mining. Research experience including determination of baseline site quality, identification of key assessment endpoints, and data collection and analyses.

## RESEARCH PUBLICATIONS

- Merritt, K. et al. Spatial characterization of mercury in sediments of a marsh complex in a macrotidal estuary. (in preparation - 2021)
- Merritt, K. et al. Site characterization and estimation of recovery rate for a macrotidal estuary impacted by chlor-alkali discharge. (in preparation - 2021)
- Merritt, K. et al. Geophysical assessment of a macrotidal estuary enriched in legacy wood waste. (in preparation - 2021)
- Merritt, K. et al. Geospatial delineation constraints in a macrotidal estuary. (in preparation - 2021)
- Merritt, K. et al. Analytical methods comparison for mercury speciation in organically-enriched estuary sediments. (in preparation - 2021)
- Reash, R., L. Brown, and K. Merritt. 2015. Mercury, Selenium, and Arsenic Concentrations in Fish Collected near Coal-Fired Power Plants along the Ohio River: Spatial Relationships and Fish Consumption Risk Considerations. *Integrated Environmental Assessment and Management*. 11(3): 474-480.
- Fuchsman P., K.S. Bell, K. Merritt, V. Magar. 2014. Monitored Natural Recovery. In: D. Reible (ed). *Processes, Assessment and Remediation of Contaminated Sediment*. Springer.
- Merritt, K.A., J. Conder, V. Magar, V. Kirtay, B. Chadwick. 2011. A Review of Thin-Layer Placement Applications to Enhance Natural Recovery of Contaminated Sediment. *Integrated Environmental Assessment and Management*. 6(4): 749-760.
- Merritt, K.A., Fimmen, R., Sass, B., Foote, E., Mills, M.A., Leather, J. and Magar, V. 2010. Characterization of contaminant migration potential in the vicinity of an in-place sand cap. *Journal of Soils and Sediments*. 10: 440-450.
- Merritt, K.A., J. Conder, V. Magar, V. Kirtay, B. Chadwick. 2009. Enhanced Monitored Natural Recovery (EMNR) Case Studies Review. SSC Pacific Technical Report 1983.
- Merritt, K.A. and Amirbahman, A. 2009. Mercury methylation dynamics in estuarine and coastal marine environments: a critical review. *Earth Science Reviews*. 96: 54-66.
- Magar, V.S., K. Merritt, M. Henning, M. Sorensen, and R.J. Wenning. 2009. Approaches Used for Remedy Selection at Contaminated Sediment Sites: Analysis of Two Case Studies. In: Linkov, I, E Ferguson, and VS Magar (Eds), *Real-Time and Deliberative Decision Making*. Springer, Netherlands.
- Magar, V.S., K. Merritt, R. Santiago and J. Anderson. 2008. Monitored Natural Recovery at Contaminated Sediment Sites in Canada and the U.S. In: *Proceedings of the Federal Contaminated Sites National Workshop*. Vancouver, B.C.
- Merritt, K.A. and Amirbahman, A. 2008. Diagenetic modeling of methylmercury dynamics in estuarine sediment porewaters. *Limnology and Oceanography*. 53: 1064-1075.
- Merritt, K.A. 2007. Penobscot River Advisory Committee. Methylmercury cycling in the Penobscot River Estuary, Maine USA.
- Amirbahman, A. and K.A. Merritt. 2007. Role of sediments in mercury sequestration, release, and transformation in the lower Penobscot River, Maine, USA. *Maine Sea Grant Publication*.
- Merritt, K.A. and Amirbahman, A. 2007. Mercury Mobilization in Estuarine Sediment Porewaters: A Diffusive Gel Time Series Study. *Environmental Science and Technology*. 41: 717-722.
- Merritt, K.A. and Amirbahman, A. 2007. Mercury Dynamics in Sulfide-rich Sediments: Geochemical Influence on Contaminant Mobilization within the Penobscot River Estuary, Maine, USA *Geochimica et Cosmochimica Acta*. 71:929-941.
- Merritt, K.A. and Erich, M.S. 2003. Influence of organic matter decomposition on soluble carbon and its copper-binding capacity. *Journal of Environmental Quality*. 32(6): 2122-31.

## RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS

- Venne, L., Merritt, K., Johnston, M., Draper, C., Pauquette, P., Chang, G. and Spada, F. 2020. Real-time Fluxes in a Riverine System Demonstrated via In-Situ Optical Monitoring. (Accepted - Conference Re-scheduled due to COVID-19) Battelle Conference on Remediation of Contaminated Sediments. Nashville, TN.
- Venne, L., Merritt, K., Johnston, M., Draper, C., Pauquette, P., Chang, G. and Spada, F. 2020. Water Quality Data Patterns as a Baseline to Evaluate a Novel Approach for Controlling Sediment Resuspension. (Accepted - Conference Re-scheduled due to COVID-19) Battelle Conference on Remediation of Contaminated Sediments. Nashville, TN.
- Merritt, K. and T. Delano. 2018. Treatability Studies to Support Engineering Evaluation for Remediation of Organically-Enriched Estuary Sediments. (Accepted - Litigation precluded conference presentation) Battelle Conference on Remediation of Contaminated Sediments. New Orleans, LA.
- Merritt, K. 2018. Analytical Methods Comparison for Analysis of Total Mercury and Methylmercury in Organically-Enriched Estuary Sediments (Accepted - Litigation precluded conference presentation). Battelle Conference on Remediation of Contaminated Sediments. New Orleans, LA.
- Merritt, K. 2018. Geochemical Controls on Risk Reduction. Energy, Technology and Environmental Business Association (ETEBA) Conference. Knoxville, TN.
- Merritt, K.A., E. Bizzotto, S. Ceccon, and C. Jones. 2011. Sedimentation Dynamics and Recovery Potential for a Mercury-Impacted Site in Pallanza Bay (Lago Maggiore), Italy. 10th International Conference on Mercury as a Global Pollutant. Halifax, NS.
- Merritt, K.A., A. Glessner, M. Henning, V. Magar. 2011. Site Remediation through Thin-Layer Placement of a Sand Cap in the Peninsula Harbour, Ontario Area of Concern. 10th International Conference on Mercury as a Global Pollutant. Halifax, NS.
- Reash, R., K. Merritt, L. Brown, and J. Goodrich-Mahoney. 2011. Mercury, Selenium, and Arsenic Concentrations in Fish Collected near Coal-Fired Power Plants along the Ohio River: Spatial Relationships and Consumption Risk Considerations. Conference on Mercury as a Global Pollutant. Halifax, NS.
- Ceccon, S., E. Bizzotto, F. Colombo, K. Merritt, L. Zaninetta and R. Mozzi. 2011. Evaluation of DDx degradation in sediment of Lake Maggiore (Pallanza Bay): a case study of historical contamination. SETAC Europe 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Meeting. Milan, Italy.
- Nicolette, J., M. Henning, G. Reub, J. Haasbeek, K. Merritt, M. Bock, M. Meaders, A. Clodfelter, D. Pelletier, and L. Martello. 2011. Physical, Chemical and Biological Stressors Influencing Baseline Environmental Conditions in the Gulf of Mexico Prior to the Deepwater Horizon Spill. Gulf Oil Spill SETAC Focused Topic Meeting. Pensacola Beach, FL.
- Merritt, K.A., E. Bizzotto, and S. Ceccon. 2011. Geochronological Dating of Sediments from Pallanza Bay (Lago Maggiore), Italy. 7th International SedNet Conference. Venice, Italy.
- Merritt, K.A., Amirbahman, A., Magar, V., Lotufo, G., Brown, L., and Massey, D. 2010. Assessing Mercury and Methylmercury Bioavailability in Sediment Porewater using Mercury-Specific Hydrogels. Partners in Environmental Technology Technical Symposium, Washington, DC.
- Chadwick, B., V. Kirtay, V. Magar, J. Conder, K. Merritt. 2010. Demonstration and Validation of Enhanced Monitored Natural Recovery of Contaminated Sediments: Baseline Monitoring Events. Partners in Environmental Technology Technical Symposium, Washington, DC.
- Merritt, K.A. and V. Magar. 2009. Thin-Layer Capping of Mercury-Contaminated Sediment: Geochemical Influence on Risk Reduction. Proceedings of Battelle Conference on Remediation of Contaminated Sediments. Jacksonville, FL.
- Merritt, K.A., V. Magar, L. Levine, S. Kwon, and U. Ghosh. 2009. Evaluation of Sorbent Amendments for in Situ Remediation of Mixed Metal- and Organic-Contaminated Sediment. Battelle Conference on Remediation of Contaminated Sediments. Jacksonville, FL.

- Kirtay, V., B. Chadwick, J. Conder, M. Moreau, K. Merritt and V. Magar. 2009. Monitoring Plan Design for Validation of Enhanced Monitored Natural Recovery of Contaminated Sediments. Battelle Conference on Remediation of Contaminated Sediments. Jacksonville, FL.
- Merritt, K.A., B. Chadwick, V. Kirtay, V. Magar, J. Conder, M. Greenberg, and G. Lotufo. 2008. Review of Enhanced Monitored Natural Recovery at Contaminated Sediment Sites. Partners in Environmental Technology Technical Symposium and Workshop. Washington, D.C.
- Fogg, A., J. Lyndall, K. Merritt, G. Reub, and R. Szuch, R. 2008. Use Of Ecological Credit Valuation Associated With Natural Resource Damages To Establish Restoration Banking Credits At Estuarine Sites. Conference on Estuarine Habitat Restoration. Providence, RI.
- Leigh, K., K. McKay, M. Henning, and K. Merritt. 2008. Evaluation of Mink and River Otter Habitat Suitability within the Peninsula Harbour Shoreline in Lake Superior, Canada. 15th Annual Conference of The Wildlife Society. Miami, FL.
- Henning, M., K. Leigh, K. Merritt, V. Magar, and R. Santiago. 2008. Assessment and Mitigation of Ecological Risks Posed by Mercury and PCBs in Peninsula Harbour Sediment Lake Superior. Federal Contaminated Sites National Workshop. Vancouver, BC.
- Merritt, K.A. and Amirbahman, A. 2006. Microbial Methylation Potential in Contaminated Estuarine Sediments. American Geophysical Union. San Francisco, CA.

#### COMMUNITY HEALTH - VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

The COVID Tracking Project (on-line) - Race and Ethnicity Data Aggregation Team (2020)

Work Opportunities Unlimited (Portland, ME) - Job placement and performance support for individuals with physical, mental, behavioral, legal and/or linguistic barriers to employment. (2017)

Engineers Without Borders - Mentor and interpreter - University of Maine student chapter project in El Descanso, Ecuador. Focus: improving community access to safe drinking water. (2015 - 2017)

Water for People (Denver, CO) - Water and wastewater sanitation survey team - Cochabamba, Bolivia - audit and review of existing NGO water and sanitation projects. (2013)

India Street Public Health (Portland, ME) - Language support and assistance for community clinic. (2012)

Konbit Sante (Yarmouth, ME) - Infrastructure Committee - Cap Haitien, Haiti. Community outreach and messaging focused on improving sanitation; field survey of community hospital. (2011)

Engineers Without Borders - Mentor and interpreter - University of Maine student chapter project in Dulce Vivir, Honduras. Focus: installation of a village-wide wastewater system. (2010-2011)

#### LANGUAGES | INTERESTS & PROJECTS

Spanish - high proficiency

Photography, creative writing, graphic arts. Website: [www.thinkpunkgirl.com](http://www.thinkpunkgirl.com)

#### REGISTRATIONS & CERTIFICATIONS

Wilderness First Responder | Emergency Medical Technician - Basic (State of ME) [license inactive]