

Kara Nelson, Ph.D.

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Kara Nelson is a Professor in Civil and Environmental Engineering at the University of California, Berkeley. She received her B.A. degree in biophysics from U.C. Berkeley, her M.S.E. degree in environmental engineering from the University of Washington, and her Ph.D. in environmental engineering from U.C. Davis. Her research program addresses critical issues at the intersection of public health and the environment, with a focus on reducing the threat posed by waterborne pathogens by improving our engineering infrastructure to make it more effective, affordable, as well as maximize its environmental benefits. Specific research areas include mechanisms of pathogen inactivation, molecular techniques for pathogen detection, optimizing treatment processes, water reuse, and challenges with providing safe drinking water and sanitation in the developing world. Dr. Nelson has published over 50 articles in peer-reviewed journals, including two invited reviews, and one book chapter. She is the Director of Graduate Education at the National Science Foundation Engineering Research Center for Reinventing our Nation's Urban Water Infrastructure (ReNUWIt), the faculty leader of the Research Thrust Area on Safe Water and Sanitation at Berkeley Water Center. Dr. Nelson was awarded the Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers (PECASE) at a ceremony in the White House in 2004. This award is the nation's highest honor for scientists in the early stages of their career.