

Short Biographies of Instructors

Philip Brown, Ph.D.

Philip Brown is the Extension Specialist in Soil Science and Septic System Education at Virginia Tech. He obtained a PhD from Clemson University in South Carolina in Plant and Environmental Science (PES), with a focus in Soil Physics. His PhD dissertation investigated the dynamics of water movement in porous media. He worked on his post doctorate also at Clemson University, evaluating heavy metal build up in soils, amongst several other projects. He has also worked as a lecturer at an agricultural college in the UK, where he was employed to teach soils and agronomy but also lectured in a wide variety of subjects to an array of students.

Pamela Pruett, MAOSE, MAOSSO,

Pam is a VA TECH graduate. After graduation, she worked as a biologist/chemist/laboratory manager, and operator wastewater treatment plants for a private environmental firm. Pam then went on to work as a regulator for the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) in an urban county. She managed the Alternative Sewage Systems program. During her stint at the Health Department, Pam completed the Management Academy for Public Health program through the Kenan-Flagler Business School at UNC-Chapel Hill. Pam moved on to an engineering firm that specialized in commercial and alternative wastewater systems design where she was the Sewage Systems Design Manager. In 2014, Pam founded Environmental Systems Consulting, LLC, a wastewater systems consulting firm, where she works today. Pam is both a Virginia Master Level Licensed Site Evaluator and Master Level Licensed Alternative Sewage Systems Operator. Pam is a former member of the VDH Sewage Handling & Disposal Advisory Board and the VDH Authorized Onsite Site Evaluator Advisory Board. She is the current Chairperson of the both VDH Sewage Handling and Disposal Appeals Review Board and the Virginia Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation Board for Waterworks and Wastewater Works Operators and Onsite Sewage System Professionals. Pam periodically teaches wastewater systems courses to engineers through the Engineers & Surveyors Institute. Last but not least, Pam is a Past President of the Virginia Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association (VOWRA).

Eric Severson, Ph.D.

Erik is the current director for the onsite wastewater management training program at NC State University in Raleigh, NC. Annually he trains over several hundred participants in wastewater certification schools and continuing education programs. Program clientele includes operators of biosolid application systems, surface irrigation of wastewater systems, subsurface drainfield system operators, septic installers, point of sale drainfield inspectors, soil scientists, engineers, designers, and environmental health personnel. Prior to this, Erik was a Virginia Tech regional soil scientist in VDH's onsite wastewater program. There he assisted local health departments with technical assessments of difficult sites, provided soil training to EHS personnel, conducted research, and co-authored extension

publications. Erik got his undergraduate B.S. degree in Environmental Science from Virginia Tech, M.S. degree from NC State in Soil Science, and his Ph.D. from Virginia Tech in Crop and Soil Environmental Sciences.

Ryan Stewart, Ph.D.

Ryan Stewart is an Associate Professor in the School of Plant and Environmental Sciences at Virginia Tech. Prior to arriving at Virginia Tech in 2013, he obtained his B.S. degree (2002) in Mechanical Engineering from Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, and his M.S. (2010) and Ph.D. (2013) degrees in Water Resources Engineering from Oregon State University. He currently leads the Critical Zone Lab at Virginia Tech, which focuses on understanding the movement of water, nutrients and contaminants in various landscapes, with a primary focus on agroecosystems. His teaching program covers topics related to pollution science, hydrology, and soil properties and functioning. In his spare time, he enjoys family outings, photography, gardening, and the occasional biking adventure.

Steve Thomas, LPSS, MAOSE

Steve is the Technical Services Soil Scientist with the VA Department of Health – Office of Environmental Health Services. Steve provides evaluation and interpretation of sites and soils for the Technical Services engineers as well as local health departments; is involved in training of new environmental health specialists, and developing small research projects related to soil and site suitability for septic systems. Prior to joining the VDH Technical Services Division, Steve was an Environmental Health Supervisor in the Rappahannock Area Health District, specifically in Spotsylvania and Caroline Counties. Steve was a Virginia Tech Interpretive Soil Scientist for Northern/Central Virginia from 2011 to 2016. He earned his B.S. in Agronomy from Virginia Tech in 1976. He has more than 44 years of experience in soil mapping, classification, interpretation, and drainfield investigation and design. Prior to joining Virginia Tech as an Interpretive Soil Scientist, Steve was owner of Thomas EnviroSoil, Inc., a private soil-consulting firm. He also mapped soils from 1976 until 1999 for Virginia Tech and was party leader for 20 years. Steve was appointed by Governor Allen in 1994 to the Sewage Handling and Disposal Regulations Appeals and Review Board. He served for 16 years and was chairman for 6 of those years. Steve is a Virginia Licensed Professional Soil Scientist (LPSS) and Master Alternative Onsite Soil Evaluator (MAOSE).