

# **Sarah Wolfe**

**Professor in the School of Environment, Resources and Sustainability at University of Waterloo**

Waterloo, ON, CA

Assistant Professor

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## **Biography**

I am an Assistant Professor in the School of Environment, Resources and Sustainability at the University of Waterloo.

Research: Effectively addressing water problems requires contributions from technical, ecological and social perspectives. The objective of my transdisciplinary research program is to generate scholarly and policy discussions within the context of climate change uncertainty and extreme water events (drought/flood). My research approach is to gather, translate and combine the insights from geography (space/place attachment), environmental psychology (behaviour choices, belief-value systems and social milieu), cognitive science (emotion regulation), and knowledge management (information transfer) with findings on water decision-making processes. I am specifically interested in understanding the ways that individuals make water decisions outside of formal institutional rules, processes and policies. In particular, my goal is to integrate non-rational drivers into discussions of water governance and decision-making. I broadly define 'non-rational' drivers as individuals' values, beliefs or emotions that are socio-culturally derived, often implicit and not readily quantifiable by standard metrics. I use mixed qualitative methods to explore these ideas, because I want to better understand how individuals and institutions make their water decisions, particularly under conditions of constraint or scarcity.

My SSHRC-funded research is an interdisciplinary examination of the social dimensions in water decision-making and governance. I question how and why water research and water decisions evolve using ideas from environmental and social psychology, cognitive science, geography and sociology. My research group examines 1) how individuals' cognitive processing effects their perceptions, definitions and prioritisation of water issues, and 2) how this individual-level cognitive processing then scales up to group or societal decisions about water management.

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## **Industry Expertise**

Education/Learning, Environmental Services, Research, Program Development, Writing and Editing

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## **Areas of Expertise**

Geography, Water Decision Making and Governance, Water Research, Environmental and Social Psychology, Sociology, Emotion, Social Network, Water Efficiency, Water, Higher Education, bottled water

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## **Event Appearances**

**The cognitive-affective sciences and water governance**

Invited Lecture to the International Development Research Centre

## **Chasing the Dream: the myth of work-life balance in the water sector**

Young Professionals Summit, Water Environment Federation and the American Water Works Association

## **Building towards Water Efficiency - Research Findings**

The 3rd National Conference on Water Efficiency and Conservation

## **Building towards Water Efficiency: Policy Innovation and Education in New and Existing Homes**

WaterSmart Innovations Conference

## **Social Capital in Community-Level Water Efficiency Programs: Reports from South Africa and Canada**

2nd National Conference and Policy Forum on Water Efficiency and Conservation

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## **Education**

### **University of Guelph**

Ph.D. Geography

### **University of Toronto**

M.A. Political Science and Environmental Studies

### **University of Guelph**

B.A. International Development and Biophysical Environment

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## **Accomplishments**

### **Awards and Research Grants information**

Please see cv or sarahwolfe.ca for list of awards and grants

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