



Pfaff Names Romanski Deputy, James Assistant Deputy

Release Date: January 18, 2019

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MADISON – Secretary-designee Brad Pfaff has named Randy Romanski deputy secretary and Angela James assistant deputy secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP). In addition, Pfaff has also appointed six members of his management team, including five division administrators and the communications director.

“I am grateful that Randy and Angela have accepted positions in DATCP’s leadership team,” said Pfaff. “Their combined experience in government administration, policy development and external relations will be invaluable as we work to carry out DATCP’s mission to partner with all the citizens of Wisconsin to grow the economy by promoting quality food, healthy plants and animals, sound use of land and water resources, and a fair marketplace.”

Randy Romanski, Deputy Secretary

Romanski has held leadership roles at multiple state agencies. He previously served as DATCP’s deputy secretary and secretary under Governor Jim Doyle, working on issues such as farmland preservation, local foods, farm-to-school, and renewable energy. Romanski has also served as the executive assistant for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and Wisconsin Department of Transportation.

Since 2011, Romanski has been serving as the safety program chief in DOT’s Division of State Patrol. Earlier in his career, he held staff positions in the state legislature, both in the Senate and Assembly. He has also served as a policy analyst for the Wisconsin Department of Justice.

Originally from Wisconsin Rapids, Romanski earned his bachelor’s degree from the University of Wisconsin-River Falls and his master’s degree from the Robert M. La Follette School of Public Affairs at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Angela James, Assistant Deputy Secretary

Before joining the department, James was an attorney in private practice. Her experience includes work with water quality matters including National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permitting, Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) engagement, and nutrient trading.

Prior to entering private practice, James was an attorney with a large Midwestern-based law firm, served with the Wisconsin paper industry, and was responsible for environmental compliance as the in-house counsel at an integrated gas and electric utility. Through these positions, James also gained significant hands-on experience in air, water, waste, and OSHA regulations. She currently serves as a commissioner and secretary of the Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District. James has bachelor’s, master’s, and law degrees from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

“DATCP is a department with a very broad scope and broad range of responsibilities,” added Pfaff. “Randy, Angela, and I look forward to working with our management team and the tremendous agency staff to deliver efficient and effective programs and services to Wisconsin agriculture, consumers, and businesses.”

Additional appointments include:

Steve Ingham, Division of Food and Recreational Safety Administrator

Steve Ingham was originally appointed administrator from November 2008 until July 2010. He returned as administrator in March 2011 and has served ever since. Prior to his appointments at DATCP, he was a faculty member in the UW-Madison Department of Food Science and a food safety specialist with the UW-Extension. He previously held faculty posts at Louisiana State University and the University of Saskatchewan (Canada). Ingham earned bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral degrees from Cornell

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University. His research has been published in peer-reviewed publications including the Journal of Food Protection, the International Journal of Food Microbiology, and the Journal of Dairy Science.

Krista Knigge, Division of Agricultural Development Administrator

Krista Knigge was first appointed division administrator in June 2018. Prior to her work at DATCP, Knigge held strategic communications and integrated marketing roles at Northwestern Mutual. During her career, she also held positions at Charleston|Orwig, Case IH, and John Deere. Knigge remains engaged in her family's dairy, Knigge Farms, directing social media and promotion activities, and grazes cattle with her husband on their property in rural Mukwonago. She is involved in the agricultural industry, volunteering with the Holstein Association USA Inc., Wisconsin Holstein Association, and the Association of Women in Agriculture. Knigge holds bachelors' of science degrees from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Kelly Smithback, Division of Management Services Administrator

Kelly Smithback was first appointed administrator of the Division of Management Services in May 2018. Smithback has been at DATCP for 25 years. She gained experience in internal operations working in the Division of Trade and Consumer Protection and the Office of the Secretary, beginning as a program assistant and most recently as a program and policy chief. As administrator, she leads DATCP's budget/finance, human resources, information technology, emergency response, and laboratory efforts. Smithback graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater.

Lara Sutherlin, Division of Trade and Consumer Protection Administrator

Lara Sutherlin is an attorney with extensive experience in directing complex legal initiatives for the Wisconsin Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division. In the more than 10 years she has been with Attorney General's office, she has investigated and litigated regulatory matters in all types of industries. Prior to joining the Wisconsin Department of Justice, Sutherlin practiced law in Boston, Massachusetts, where she specialized in wage and hour class actions. Sutherlin is also the co-founder of the Wisconsin Coalition on Student Loan Debt Inc., an organization designed to positively impact the student debt landscape in Wisconsin. She has a bachelor of arts degree from Indiana University and law degree from Northeastern University School of Law.

Sara Walling, Division of Agricultural Resource Management Administrator

Sara Walling returns to DATCP as the division administrator for the Agricultural Resource Management Division. Most recently, Walling served as the director of the University of Wisconsin Extension's Institute of Agriculture. Prior to her role at Extension, she served the state for 12 years where she held several positions in DATCP, including nearly six years as the agency's Nutrient Management and Water Quality Section chief. Walling has a master of science degree from Montana State University-Bozeman and a bachelor of science degree from the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities.

Grace Colás, Communications Director

Grace Colás comes to DATCP from the office of State Representative Dave Considine, where she has worked since 2015. She began her career in Wisconsin government in 2012. Colás has also previously served as a board member and committee co-chair for Wisconsin Women in Government. As communications director, she looks forward to serving rural communities and telling the story of Wisconsin's vibrant agricultural economy. Colás has a bachelor's degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Pfaff will announce additional appointments as they are made.

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