

D. Harshanee Jayasekera

Post-doctoral Research Associate

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[LinkedIn](#)

Education

- Ph.D. Agricultural, Environmental and Regional Economics, and Demography Pennsylvania State University, 2022
- MS. Agricultural Economics, Oklahoma State University, 2016
- BA. Economics (Hons.), University of Colombo (Sri Lanka), 2013

Professional Experience

- 2022-Present – Post-doctoral Research Associate, Daugherty Water for Food Global Institute at the University of Nebraska

Selected Outputs:

Publications and Multimedia

Journal articles, book chapters, reports

2025

- **Jayasekera, D.**, Munde, S., Snow, D., and Rimšaitė, R., July 2025. “Trends in nitrate contamination: implications for communities reliant on groundwater for drinking.” *Environmental Research Communications*, <https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/2515-7620/adf60e>.
- Thiede, B. C., Brown, D. L., **Jayasekera, D. H.**, Jensen, L., and Butler, J. L., January 2025. “Decomposing changes in subnational income inequality in the United States, 1980–2019.” *Social Forces*, 103(4), 1257–1281, <https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/soae187>.

2024

- **Jayasekera, D.**, Melstrom, R., and Pope, K., December 2024. "Economic losses to inland recreational fisheries from harmful algal blooms." *Journal of Environmental Management*, 372 (2024): 123238, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvman.2024.123238>.
- **Jayasekera, D. H.**, Powers, C., Aiken, J. D., Schoengold, K., and Rimšaitė, R., September 2024. “Nitrate contamination in Nebraska’s drinking water.” *The Water Report*, 247, 1–11.

2023

- **Jayasekera, D.H.**, Rimšaitė, R., and Bell, J.E., August 2023. “Nitrate contamination in drinking water.” *The Actuary*, <https://www.theactuarmagazine.org/nitrate-contamination-in-drinking-water/>.

Briefs, infographics, blogs, newsletters

2025

- **D. Harshanee Jayasekera**, October 2025. “Do Wellhead Protection Areas Improve Groundwater Quality? Evidence from Nebraska.” Daugherty Water for Food Global Institute,

<https://waterforfood.nebraska.edu/news-and-events/news/2025/10/do-wellhead-protection-areas-improve-groundwater-quality>

- **D. Harshanee Jayasekera**, August 2025. “Conference bridges DWFI research and farmer perspectives on agricultural resilience.” Daugherty Water for Food Global Institute, <https://waterforfood.nebraska.edu/news-and-events/news/2025/08/conference-bridges-dwfi-research-and-farmer-perspectives-on-agricultural-resilience>

2024

- **D. Harshanee Jayasekera**, February 2024. “Nitrate trends in domestic wells in Nebraska.” Daugherty Water for Food Global Institute, <https://waterforfood.nebraska.edu/news-and-events/news/2024/02/nitrate-trends-in-domestic-wells-in-nebraska>

2023

- Barry A., Keza, O., Williss, R., Rimšaitė, R., **Jayasekera, H.**, and Brozović, N., November 2023. “Private well water in Nebraska.” Daugherty Water for Food Global Institute, https://waterforfood.nebraska.edu/-/media/projects/dwfi/news/2023/reducing-nitrate-intake/2023-11-07_privatewellmanagersgraphic.pdf.
- **D. Harshanee Jayasekera**, September 2023. “Nitrate management in Nebraska community water systems is a complex issue.” Daugherty Water for Food Global Institute, <https://waterforfood.nebraska.edu/news-and-events/news/2023/08/nitrate-management-in-nebraska-community-water-systems-is-a-complex-issue>

Presentations and Engagements

2025

- “Nitrate-related groundwater quality improvements from wellhead protection area implementation in Nebraska.” Presenter at the Great Plains Water Conference, September 2025, Omaha, NE.
- “Nitrate contamination in groundwater and the implications for rural water systems in Nebraska.” Presenter at Agricultural & Applied Economics Association Annual Meeting, July 2025, Denver, CO.
- “Agricultural practices and their impact on groundwater nitrate contamination” (Co-author: T. Mieno). Poster presenter at Agricultural & Applied Economics Association Annual Meeting, July 2025, Denver, CO.
- “Agricultural practices and their impact on groundwater nitrate contamination” (Co-author: T. Mieno). Poster presenter at Association of Environmental and Resource Economists Annual Meeting, May 2025, Albuquerque, NM.

2024

- “Harmful algal blooms and the recreational demand for inland lakes: evidence from Nebraska.” Presenter at American Geophysical Union Annual Meeting, December 2024, Washington DC.
- “The Impact of USDA Disaster Designations on Farmland Values in the United States” (Co-authors: A. Melkani and T. Mieno). Poster presentation at Agricultural & Applied Economics Association Annual Meeting, July 2024, New Orleans, LA.
- Environmental justice implications of nitrate contamination in drinking water in Nebraska. Invited presentation for the 3rd International Conference on Sustainable Groundwater in Agriculture, June, 2024, San Francisco, CA.
- “Health-based water quality advisories and implications for recreational fishing in Nebraska.” Selected paper presentation at the Midwest Economics Association Annual Meeting, March 2024, Chicago, IL.
- “Health and economic cost of groundwater nitrate contamination in Nebraska.” Invited presentation for ENV 970 Weekly Student Seminar, College of Public Health, University of Nebraska Medical Center, February 2024, Omaha, NE.

2023

- “Environmental justice implications from drinking water nitrate contamination in Nebraska.” Poster presenter at American Geophysical Union Annual Meeting, December 2023, San Francisco, CA.
- “The Economic Impact of Nitrate Contamination in Drinking Water.” Speaker at The UNMC Water, Climate and Health Program Research Seminar Series, December 2023, Omaha, NE.
- “The economic cost of groundwater nitrate contamination in Nebraska.” Nebraska Water Center Spring Seminar, March 2023, Lincoln, NE.

Selected External Support:

- Evaluating the relationships of environmental exposures to pediatric cancer in the central United States, **Jayasekera, D.H.** (PI), *College of Public Health, University of Nebraska Medical Center*, \$54,510; 2025-2026.
- Evaluating the relationships of environmental exposures to pediatric cancer in the central United States, **Jayasekera, D.H.** (PI), *College of Public Health, University of Nebraska Medical Center*, \$30,445; 2025.
- Evaluating the relationships of environmental exposures to pediatric cancer in the central United States, **Rimšaitė, R.** (PI) and Jayasekera, D.H. (co-PI), *College of Public Health, University of Nebraska Medical Center*, \$23,509; 2024.
- Health and economic impact analysis of nitrate contamination of groundwater in Nebraska, Rimšaitė, R. (PI) and **Jayasekera, D.H.** (co-PI), *College of Public Health, University of Nebraska Medical Center*, \$100,000; 2022-2025.

Selected Professional Development, Awards, Media Coverage:

Professional Development, Mentoring, Board Engagement

- Society for Benefit-Cost Analysis, Online Workshop Valuing Nonmarket Benefits, 2023.
- Transferring Your Research into Teaching, Certificate by University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 2023.

Media Coverage

- “Water experts encourage partnerships to address climate change.” Courthouse News Service; June 18 2024, available at: <https://www.courthousenews.com/water-experts-encourage-partnerships-to-address-climate-change/>.