

*As Seen In...Forbes June 30, 2019*

# Pushing to the Top of the Environmental Consulting Industry

*Cherie Koester / Earthworks Environmental*

Cherie Koester was a young regulator for Maricopa (Ariz.) County when she noticed something strange: She kept writing the same costly violations to large developers time and time again.

“I kept thinking, ‘Why is the industry continually “in violation”?’ How can that be avoided?” Koester recalls. “It’s costing them tens of thousands of dollars every time I go to a job site.”

Today, as CEO of Earthworks Environmental, Koester ensures that her clients stay in compliance and avoid costly fines related to dust management, stormwater pollution prevention and safety management. Since founding the company in 2014, Koester has expanded Earthworks into 12 states, saving money and time for clients working on commercial construction projects, master-planned communities and large residential developments.

Koester and her team pride themselves on having created a stringent program that can be adapted to meet the specific needs of each individual client.

“Each client in each state on each project has a little different tweak, so we create a program around what they need,” Koester says. “That’s what sets us apart from our competitors.”

Innovation is another advantage. Earthworks has created its own software program, ERX, for records retention and digital inspections. ERX is available to all clients and can be accessed both by clients and compliance managers.



Cherie Koester

“Being on the top end of technology is how we’ll continue our rapid growth,” Koester says.

Earthworks soon will open an office in Des Moines, Iowa, and the company is targeting Denver for future growth. Regardless of location, the Earthworks team builds strong relationships, not only with its clients but with local regulators as well. Its approach to those relationships, Koester explains, is a difference-maker for Earthworks clients.

“Regulators can go to job sites and write up extremely expensive violations,” she says. “My lead compliance managers will go to the job site and work with the local regulator. They discuss the project, work through the issues, show all the records and let the regulator know we’re not against

them. We assure them we’re on their team; we’re there to take their guidance and make it happen on the job site.

“In Arizona, regulators have shared that when they see our name on a project sign at a job site, they feel relieved, because they immediately know the site is going to be managed well. They recognize our work and appreciate the structure we bring to the industry. That automatically sets the expectation that they’re going to have a lot less work to do.”

Impeccable communication skills are a key factor when Koester adds team members at Earthworks. She does not expect perfection, but she commands excellence. She also looks for grit — something she possesses in abundance. A native of Green Bay, Wis., Koester became a mother at age 16 but never gave up on her dreams of moving to the sunshine of Arizona and making something marvelous out of her life. Now a mother and stepmother to five, Koester says her children have always inspired and motivated her.

“I had no plans to slow down then; I have no plans to slow down now,” she says. “I’m ready for whatever is next.”

And Cherie Koester has pushed herself right to the peak of the environmental consulting world.

“The client feedback I enjoy most is when they tell me I run a tight ship and they like that,” Koester says. “They want to trust that we’re organized and structured, and they can trust us, because we’re on top of our game.”

