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Dr. Hakala is a geochemist and leader of multidisciplinary geoscience and engineering research teams executing R&D focused on ensuring prudent development of natural resources for energy extraction, water management, and climate change mitigation. She has fifteen years of experience in applied geoscience and engineering research at the National Energy Technology Laboratory (2008 – present), earned her Ph.D. in Earth Sciences (Geochemistry focus) from The Ohio State University (2008) where she was a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Science to Achieve Results Graduate Fellow, and earned her Bachelor of Arts Cum Laude in Geosciences with a Certificate (minor) in Environmental Studies from Princeton University (2003).

She actively engages in strategic planning and initiative development across the National Energy Technology Laboratory and Fossil Energy Carbon Management Headquarters, and with external industrial, academic, and Federal lab stakeholders on multidisciplinary and multi-organizational geologic and environmental R&D. Dr. Hakala is NETL's representative on the Network of National Laboratories for Environmental Management and Stewardship (via DOE-Environmental Management and DOE-Legacy Management) and is active in geothermal R&D via DOE-Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy's Geothermal Technologies Office. She is the author of 60+ technical publications focused on multiple energy geoscience topics, including geologic CO2 storage, unconventional oil and gas development, geothermal resources, produced water management, and environmental geochemistry, and has mentored 30+ students and/or postdocs. Dr. Hakala is a recipient of the Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers (2017) and is an Oppenheimer Science and Energy Leadership Program Fellow (2023).