



Environmental Public Health Tracking in Oregon

The E-newsletter of the Oregon
Environmental Public Health Tracking Program (EPHT)

Fall 2006

Issue 2

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For more information about Oregon EPHT, visit us on the Web at www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/epht.



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Oregon Environmental Public Health Tracking (EPHT) Network Implementation

The Oregon Department of Human Services Public Health Division was awarded a 5-year federal cooperative agreement with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to implement EPHT in Oregon.

For the last four years, the EPHT program in the Public Health Division has been planning for a tracking network in Oregon that would be part of a national EPHT Network. EPHT partnered with many health and environmental agencies, universities and community groups. The goals of these collaborations were to identify environmental health priorities and to promote resource and information sharing for an environmental health network.

Early this year, the EPHT program responded to a competitive Request for Application (RFA) from the CDC for implementation of the EPHT Network. In July, the program was awarded \$865,584 in the first year, with a projected total of \$4.9 million over the next five years. [Sixteen other state and local health departments](#) were funded as well.

The next five years of funding will allow the Oregon EPHT program to translate their experiences and knowledge gained from the planning stage into implementation of State and National EPHT Networks. We will create a technical data network in collaboration with the CDC, National Workgroups and the [Oregon Technical Advisory Group](#) (OTAG). The National Workgroups are a forum for grantees to discuss issues around network architecture, content, and outreach. OTAG, which will convene its first meeting this fall, will be responsible for providing recommendations on implementing a network that is interoperable and compatible with the National Network.

Under the cooperative agreement, the Oregon EPHT program will collect specific environmental hazard, exposure and health information for the data network. This information will include environmentally related health related data such as asthma and myocardial infarction hospitalizations, cancer, birth defects, childhood blood lead levels, and vital statistics. It will also include environmental data such as ozone and particulate matter levels and key water contaminants.

Along with the National Network, we look forward to realizing the vision of a tracking network that will support public health actions to prevent or reduce illnesses, injuries and deaths related to environmental risk factors and increase the understanding of the relationship between environmental exposures and health effects.

For more information on each of the grantees, descriptions of their projects and contact information, please visit [CDC's EPHT Program, Programs and Grants Web page](#).

First Northwest Environmental Health Forum

Author: Curtis Cude, DEQ, with assistance from Emily Lande, ECOS, and the NW Environmental Health Forum Planning Team.

The first Northwest Environmental Health Forum was held in conjunction with the August 2006, Environmental Council of the States (ECOS) Annual Meeting. ECOS is the national non-profit, non-partisan association of state and territorial environmental agency leaders. The purpose of ECOS is to improve the capability of state environmental agencies and their leaders to protect and improve human health and the environment of the United States of America (<http://www.ecos.org/>).

The Forum was conceived of and planned by a dedicated interagency planning team and was attended by dozens of representatives of state environmental and health agencies (Alaska, Idaho, Washington, and Oregon), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Oregon Environmental Council, and other interested stakeholders. The goal of the Forum was to deepen collaboration between health and environmental agencies to achieve efficiencies and enhanced health and environmental results. The ECOS Annual Meeting was viewed as an opportunity to convene and foster high-level policy discussions on this topic among environmental and health professionals across the Northwest.

Presentations were made by the Oregon Environment Council on the economic costs of environmentally related diseases and disabilities and by the Oregon Environmental Public Health Tracking Program on examples of collaboration between health and environmental agencies in the Northwest including Alaska, Idaho, Washington and Oregon.

Three focus areas were brought before the Forum for discussion, consideration, and action planning: (1) fish contaminants and developmental disorders, cancer, (2) air quality and asthma/respiratory disease, and (3) groundwater contaminants and associated health concerns.

After discussing the challenges and opportunities available in each focus area, the Forum recognized the need for coherent communications strategies in all areas of concern. The Forum proposed three collaborative projects. Following the Forum, a steering committee was formed, comprised of representatives from each of the eight relevant health and environmental agencies

The action items of the Forum include:

- Develop and/or deliver a consistent consumer message on the risk of fish contaminants and fish consumption following the lead of Washington Department of Health's pilot effort for communicating with consumers at retail points of sale, primarily supermarkets.
- Collaborate to improve "refuge/shelter-in-place" options for residents in active burn-affected (field burning, wild fires, etc.) areas.
- Provide substantive input to EPA Region 10 on how best to work with states on indoor air quality.

The steering committee will meet quarterly to ensure momentum is sustained towards successful collaborative outcomes, which should be presented at the next NW Environment Health Forum in 2007. This will take place at the 2007 ECOS Annual Meeting in Sun Valley, Idaho.

Oregon EPHT Update

Since our last e-newsletter, the Oregon EPHT program transitioned from the planning phase for building the network to implementation of the network. Please see above article on Oregon EPHT Network Implementation for more information. Other activities are described below.

Planning Consortium's final meeting

The final EPHT Planning Consortium meeting was held in July 2006. Lori Barck, Program Manager, presented a review of the EPHT program accomplishments for the past 3 years. Highlights of those accomplishments include capacity building, establishing the Planning Consortium, and setting local public health priorities. Examples of specific activities include surveying local health departments, funding mini-grants, and providing GIS, Healthy People 2010, and risk communication training. Dr. Amy Kyle from the [Berkeley Center for Environmental Public Health Tracking](#) presented information about the Center and stimulated the group into thinking broadly about tracking. She complimented the Oregon EPHT program, indicating that it is a model for moving beyond the abstract and actually *doing* environmental public health tracking. During the second half of the meeting several EPHT partners, the Oregon Asthma Program, Oregon Environmental Council, Harmony Fleming with OSU, and the Environmental Justice Action Group, shared some of their successes in projects where EPHT had been a partner. Lori Barck ended the meeting with a presentation and discussion of the future of EPHT.



Back row (Left to Right): Stephen Ladd-Wilson, Rick Leiker, Kevin Masterson, Michael Heumann, Harmony Fleming, Jeff Lang, John Dougherty. Middle Row (left to right): Rene-Marc Mangin, Jeri Sundvall Williams, Gail Shibley, Jim Roys, Kathryn Brodrick, Laura Weiss, Amy Kyle, Janet Gillaspie. Bottom Row (left to right): Margo Barnett, Michael Fernandez, Lori Barck, Anna Halpin, Elizabeth Everman

Oregon Technical Advisory Group

Plans are being made to convene the first meeting of the Oregon Technical Advisory Group (OTAG). As mentioned above, this group will consist of epidemiologists, informatics/information technology specialists, environmental professionals, communications specialists, laboratorians, and public health program officials. OTAG will provide recommendations on implementing the Oregon EPHT Network and will replace the Planning Consortium and Advisory Committee.



Environmental Public Health Tracking Outreach Meetings/Forums

The EPHT program is interested in hosting quarterly meetings/forums about various environmental health topics of local and national concern. We feel this would be an excellent way to continue the professional relationships and “people network” that have been developed over the period of the planning grant. Feel free to contribute ideas for these forums and stay tuned for announcements.

Josiah Hill III Clinic Grant

Josiah Hill III Clinic recently received a grant from the EPHT program to provide lead testing and outreach to support EPHT biomonitoring efforts in Oregon. Josiah Hill III Clinic is a mobile clinic that provides free blood lead testing and lead poisoning prevention counseling to families and communities at risk for environmental health hazards.

The clinic started in 1998 under the direction of Josiah Hill III, a local physician assistant. In 2002, the clinic became a 501c3 non-profit organization. The clinic, which is operated mostly by volunteers, has served/tested for blood lead levels in over 2000 people, mostly from underserved areas of Portland, focusing on children.

Regular clinics are the first Thursday of every month at the Baltazar-Ortiz Center and the second Thursday at the Matt Dishman Community Center. For more information about Josiah Hill III Clinic or scheduled clinics, please visit their Web site at www.Jhillclinic.org.



Partner Accomplishments

Jeri Williams, Executive Director of Oregon's Environmental Justice Action Group (EJAG), is the 2006 recipient of the Alston/Bannerman Fellowship. [Alston/Bannerman Fellowship program](#) provides resources to people from diverse populations who devote their lives to helping communities organize for racial, social, economic, and environmental justice. These resources help sustain activists to continue to work for social change. Each year, ten organizers receive the award of \$15,000 to take sabbaticals of three months or more for reflection and renewal.

Jeri Williams has been the Executive Director of EJAG since April 2000; however she has been educating and organizing people on environmental justice issues for over twelve years. She became an organizer for low-income people and workers of diverse populations to address on the job exposures and worker rights.

Jeri received news of the fellowship on route to an EPHT conference in Denver in March 2006 where she presented to states that have not received EPHT funds. Her presentation was about the involvement of community-based organizations in EPHT. We are proud of Jeri for the award and for the work she and her organization have done for the Oregon EPHT program and the entire community. **Congratulations Jeri!!**

For information about EJAG, please visit their website <http://home.teleport.com/~ejag/>

Upcoming Events and Activities

October 23-24, 2006 – *Oregon Public Health Association (OPHA) Annual Conference and Membership Meeting*, LaSells Stewart Center, Oregon State University, Campus, Corvallis

The conference will feature education networking and sessions regarding shaping the future of public health in Oregon. For more information about the conference, visit <http://www.oregonpublichealth.org/>

We hope you've enjoyed the EPHT in Oregon E-newsletter. We'd like to hear what you think! Send your comments or suggestions to Anna.Halpin@state.or.us. If you do not wish to receive this e-newsletter, please email Anna.Halpin@state.or.us