

# Environmental Public Health Tracking in Oregon

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

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For more information about Oregon EPHT, visit us on the Web at [www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/epht](http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/epht).

E-mail or call in any questions or suggestions to:  
Lorena.Barck@state.or.us  
(503)-731-1025

## Welcome

Welcome to the first electronic newsletter of the Oregon Environmental Health Tracking Program (OREPHT). Environmental Public Health Tracking in Oregon is a quarterly newsletter aimed at providing people information about Environmental Public Health Tracking in Oregon. If you do not wish to receive this newsletter, or have comments and/or suggestions for future editions, please email Elizabeth Everman at [Elizabeth.A.Everman@state.or.us](mailto:Elizabeth.A.Everman@state.or.us). Current and future archived editions of the newsletters will be posted on our Web site at <http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/epht>

## Background: Environmental Public Health Tracking

*From EPHT's Program Marketing Outreach (PMO) Workgroup drafted document, 5-18-05*



In January 2001, the Pew Environmental Health Commission reported that tracking of disease and exposure is fragmented, uncoordinated, and inadequate and called for the creation of a coordinated public health system to prevent disease in the United States by tracking and combating environmental health threats. In response, the United States Congress appropriated funding to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Fiscal Year 2002. This funding enabled the development of CDC's National Environmental Public Health Tracking (EPHT) Program.

The mission of the National EPHT Program is to provide information from a nationwide network of integrated health and environmental data that drives actions to improve the health of communities. This national network will integrate three distinct components: hazard monitoring, exposure surveillance, and health effects surveillance. CDC is establishing the Network by drawing on a wide range of expertise from federal agencies, state and local health and environmental agencies, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), state public health and environmental laboratories, and schools of public health. For more information about the national EPHT program, please go to <http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/tracking/default.htm>

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# Why Do We Need An Environmental Public Health Tracking Network?

*From EPHT's Program Marketing Outreach (PMO) Workgroup drafted document, 5-18-05*

Public health surveillance or tracking systems are critical in preventing and controlling disease in populations. Having accurate and timely surveillance data permits public health authorities to determine disease impacts and trends, recognize clusters and outbreaks, identify populations and geographic areas most affected, and develop and assess the effectiveness of policy and environmental public health interventions. However, much of the public health surveillance currently in place in the U.S. focuses on infectious diseases.

An urgent need exists for a more comprehensive national approach to the collection and analysis of noninfectious disease data and the integration of that information with environmental hazard and biomonitoring data. The availability of these types of data in a standardized tracking network will enable researchers, public health authorities, healthcare practitioners, and the public community, to begin to understand the possible associations between the environment and adverse health effects.

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## Oregon EPHT Update

Oregon is one of several states that have been funded by the CDC to develop plans for the creation of an electronic computerized tracking network that will bring together health and environmental information. Oregon's EPHT program is in the Environmental and Occupational Epidemiology Section of Oregon Department of Human Services. The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality is a key partner. Some of activities over the last three years include:

### Building Relationships With Partners



Oregon EPHT established a successful quarterly forum for environmental and health professionals, called the EPHT Planning Consortium (PC). This group helps provide input and guidance on the development of Oregon's health tracking network and provides the stage for networking between groups that don't normally sit at the same table. The EPHT program has also made possible similar collaborative meetings in four counties around the State, bringing together local health and environmental professionals, academics and citizens, to discuss local environmental concerns and plan how to move forward together to address them.

For details of the Planning Consortium meetings, including information on upcoming meetings and/or minutes and agendas from previous meetings, visit our EPHT Web site, at <http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/epht/planning.shtml>

Oregon EPHT Update continued on page 3

## Capacity Building Mini-Grants

Oregon EPHT program awarded \$141,560 in the form of eleven “mini-grants” to local health departments and other partners in the State to help build environmental public health capacity, and to identify, understand, monitor, and respond to environmental public health issues and events. The projects focused on local environmental health issues, such as mercury in fish, tracking environmental health problems, and increasing awareness among others about environmental health issues. Most involved the creation or enhancement of environmental health surveillance databases and on building relationships among environmental and health professionals and stakeholders. Click here for information on the specific projects funded during [Round 1](#) (2004) and [Round 2](#) (2005).

## Creation of GIS Training and Quick Start Manual for Partners

The EPHT program initiated a technical outreach program to provide assistance to and facilitate a dialogue with Local Health Departments who were recipients of EPHT mini-grants. Site visits focused on: (1) technical GIS assistance such as the creation of maps and GIS database issues, (2) sustainability, (3) information sharing, and (4) communication between information technology, GIS, environmental and public health staff.

EPHT staff created a demonstration database and a GIS training manual tailored for each grantee. The outcome of this outreach program was an increase in local capacity, facilitated communication and stronger relationships between Oregon EPHT and the local health departments. Click to download [Oregon ESRI ArcGIS 9 Quick Start Manual and companion files](#).

## EPHT Implementation Grant 2006

Oregon EPHT is presently funded as a planning grant (from 2002-2006) under a cooperative agreement from the CDC. We are now applying to move from the planning to the implementation phase of tracking. The purpose of the implementation grant will be to provide Oregon State Public Health the resources to implement a statewide EPHT data tracking network that will be part of the National EPHT Network, meeting standards established by CDC.

Oregon-EPHT will know the status of future funding by mid-to-late July.

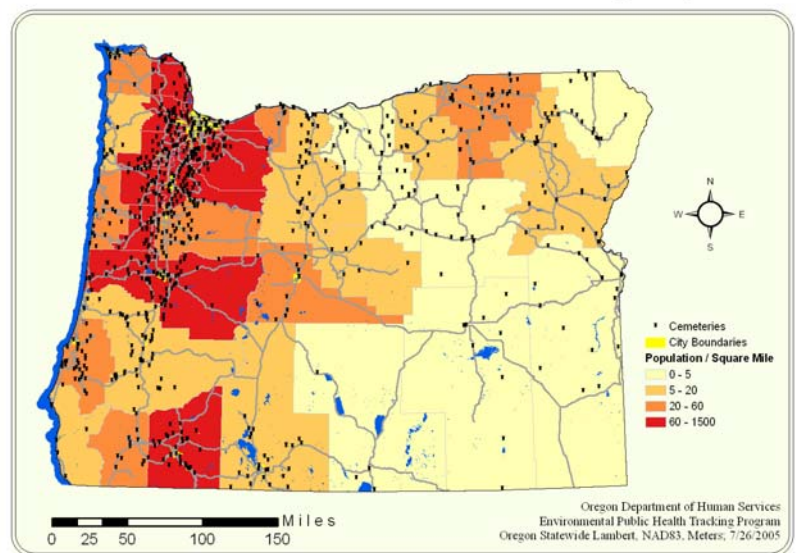
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## Partner Accomplishments

Lane County Environmental Health Program, a recipient of two mini-grants (see above article on mini grants), created a database to help employees convert from paper data collection to a shared electronic database and advance their activities to record environmental health data and to link to other agencies.

*Partner Accomplishments continued on page 4*

**Oregon Counties by Population Density with Locations of Cemeteries, Cities, and Highways**



The database is also used to record responses to a survey of local agencies and partners to identify potential sources and types of data that could be used in linking environmental factors with health outcomes. In the second year of their funding, they expanded data collection to include data on lead tests and asthma/cardiovascular health outcomes.

The Lane County Environmental Health Program has been a strong partner of the State EPHT Program and has presented their database work at numerous meetings of state and local partners. From these meetings, other Local Health Departments have expressed great interest in the database and its potential use in their programs. It is the hope of the state EPHT Program that the database will continue to spread and evolve, helping standardize data content and format as well as raise awareness of EPHT throughout the State of Oregon. As Jeffrey Lang, the Program Manager of Lane County's Environmental Health Program stated: "When we can share data at the county level we get a more clear understanding of priorities for addressing environmental health issues at the state and national levels." Lane County is using the database to record monitoring, investigation and follow-up data on West Nile Virus, food services establishments, and other environmental health concerns.

"When we can share data at the county level we get a more clear understanding of priorities for addressing environmental health issues at the state and national levels."

-Jeffery Lang

[Oregon Environmental Council](#) (OEC), a recipient of two mini grants, was one of 14 organizations (and the only organization on the West Coast) to receive the [2006 EPA Children's Excellence Award](#) for their [Eco-Healthy Childcare](#) and [Tiny Footprints](#) programs which provide parents and caregivers with tools to reduce children's toxic chemical exposure by creating healthier environments. A mini-grant from EPHT enable OEC to implement their unique Eco-Healthy Childcare program that recognizes childcare providers who take steps to provide a safe and eco-healthy environment for children. Childcare facilities that qualify receive a colorful sticker and poster that informs parents and others of their efforts, and demonstrates their commitment to being eco-healthy. Facilities around the state are participating. You can view the list at [www.oeconline.org/kidshealth/ecoqualified](http://www.oeconline.org/kidshealth/ecoqualified). Congratulations OEC!

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## Upcoming Events and Activities

### **June 2, 2006** – *Risk Communication and Public Involvement Training*

The Environmental Public Health Tracking program has invited Alvin Chun, from EPA Region IX, to present a full day of Risk Communication training in Portland. The all-day session will focus on risk communication training around environmental health issues – pertinent not only to Tracking but also to the work of other environmental and health professionals. Captain Chun is one of the most well-known and respected environmental risk communication trainers around. There will be no charge for the training. For more information, please contact Elizabeth Everman by email ([Elizabeth.a.Everman@state.or.us](mailto:Elizabeth.a.Everman@state.or.us)) or phone (503-731-4025).

### **July 21, 2006** – *Oregon EPHT Planning Consortium Meeting*, 800 NE Oregon St., Portland OR

Visit our Web site (<http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/epht/planning.shtml>.) for more details.

### **August 9-11, 2006** – *National Environmental Public Health Tracking Program Conference*, Atlanta, GA

For more information about the conference, visit <http://www.tracks2006.org>