



# Environmental Public Health Tracking in Oregon

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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).



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## Implementation on Track with the Formation of the Oregon Technical Advisory Group

On November 16, 2006, eighteen environmental and health professionals convened in Portland, Oregon to participate in the first meeting of the Oregon Technical Advisory Group (OTAG), an advisory group of the Oregon Environmental Public Health Tracking (EPHT) program in collaboration with Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ).

Oregon has been participating in the [National EPHT program](#) as a state grantee since 2003, when the Oregon Public Health Division was funded to plan for a local tracking network that would be compatible with the national EPHT network. In August of 2006, the Oregon program, along with other grantees across the country, began the next phase of the project, implementing an EPHT network in Oregon.

“Building the network is the primary task of this part of the EPHT project,” said Lori Barck, Program Manager, at the OTAG meeting. “The formation of this advisory group and their expertise, will assist in this task.”

OTAG will be a forum in which technical issues related to the development and implementation of the Oregon EPHT Network can be reviewed, discussed, and resolved by health, environmental, and technical experts.

The initial meeting, held at the Portland State Office Building, was an opportunity for members to meet and work out logistical issues such as formalizing functions and the organization of the group.

Rene-Marc Mangin from DEQ and Gail Shibley from the Department of Human Services (DHS), communicated in their opening remarks the strong collaborative experience between DEQ and DHS during the planning phase of the project and the anticipation of continued collaboration in implementation.

As stated in the [charter](#), which was formalized during the meeting, OTAG will provide guidance and recommendations on the development of network standards, data content, architecture, and coordination of activities that contribute to the construction and implementation of the Oregon EPHT Network.

During the meeting, two working groups (subgroups of OTAG) were formed to facilitate higher-level discussions on network standards, data content, and architecture. OTAG members self-selected into these groups creatively named [SLAM](#) for Systems, Logistics, and Applications Management; and [DUNC](#) for Data

Implementation on Track continued

Use and Network Content. SLAM and DUNC had their initial monthly meetings in December.

With the formation of OTAG, the Oregon EPHT program in collaboration with DEQ, has taken a necessary step toward developing a statewide health and environmental data network that will be used to improve the health of communities.

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## GIS Analysis May Direct Lead Hazard Reduction Outreach and Education Efforts

This summer the [Multnomah County Health Department](#) conducted an analysis of Department of Human Services (DHS) blood lead data at the request of the [City of Portland Water Bureau](#). The analysis described the geographic distribution of children who had blood lead testing and who had elevated blood lead levels in the Water Bureau's service area. The goal of the analysis was to provide information that the Water Bureau could use to help target their lead hazard reduction outreach and education efforts.



The Portland Water Bureau's [Lead Hazard Reduction Program](#), which received national recognition in April of 2005, is designed to reduce exposure of children and adults to lead-based paint (the most common cause of exposure), reduce low levels of lead contributed by pipes in dwellings, and provide free blood lead testing.

The study included the use of United States Census data and a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) analysis, which involved mapping blood lead levels for children 0-6 years of age using the ArcGIS™ software. The blood lead level testing dataset provided by the Oregon Public Health Division's [Lead Poisoning Prevention Program](#) contained addresses and zip codes, making the GIS analysis relatively straightforward. Confidentiality of data was dealt with through deidentification, aggregation or other methods. The Oregon Environmental Public Health Tracking program contributed GIS mapping expertise to the project.

Oregon Environmental Public Health Tracking program provided assistance to this project as an example of how state [biomonitoring](#) data can be used to help direct local public health actions. The GIS and census-based analyses of blood lead data can be used by the water bureau to direct their outreach and education to areas of their service district that have relatively higher Elevated Blood Lead (EBL) rates and numbers of children likely to have an EBL. The full report is available by contacting [john.a.dougherty@state.or.us](mailto:john.a.dougherty@state.or.us).

To do similar analyses in your area, you will need the following:

Tools: GIS Software, data analysis software (MS Excel, SAS, SPSS, etc.)

Data Sources: US Census (download), DHS Lead Poisoning Prevention Program data for your area (request from DHS – confidentiality rules apply)

Data Analysis Procedures: Data management and summary statistical analyses are described in the full report.

Data Interpretation: Assumptions and biases in the data are described in the full report.

For more information on lead testing and exposure, please visit the Oregon Lead Poisoning Prevention Program's website at <http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/lead/index.shtml>

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## Oregon EPHT Update

Happy New Year! The Oregon EPHT program had a productive year in 2006 with the completion of the Oregon Implementation Plan in early spring and notification for five more years of CDC funding. We also initiated the EPHT e-newsletter in June and in the fall, we received support from agency data partners to provide data and help us build our network. There is a lot to look forward to as well. Below are some highlights of the past and present and plans for the future.



### The First Meeting of the Technical Advisory Group

The first meeting of the Oregon Technical Advisory Group took place on November 16, 2006. This meeting marks a huge accomplishment for the program, as it is a major requirement of our funder, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. More importantly though, is the critical role this group has in moving Oregon forward with building the network. See page one for the complete story. Thank you to all who agreed to participate in the advisory group.

### Online Metadata Training

In December 2006, the Oregon Environmental Public Health Tracking Program provided an online training on the use of a software tool called TKME, developed by the US Geological Service, to create metadata. OR-EPHT is a member of the National Environmental Public Health Tracking Metadata Subgroup working to develop consistent ways to describe data which will make up the national and state networks. Discussions on the use of metadata also took place.

The training was requested by national partners and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to help create, test, and develop metadata standards for the EPHT network. Participants included the EPA and their contractors, members of the Content Workgroup, and some members of the Metadata Subgroup. The Content Workgroup was formed in 2006 by the CDC for EPHT program partners to define appropriate core measures to track, develop, and adopt standards for nationally consistent data, and identify procedures for accessing tracking network information. For more information on the training, please contact Rodney Garland at [rodney.garland@state.or.us](mailto:rodney.garland@state.or.us).

### Plans for 2007



In addition to working hard and staying focused on the big picture of building the tracking network, the Oregon EPHT program has planned informational activities for 2007. We mentioned in the last newsletter that we planned to host forums about various environmental health topics of local and national interest. We are pleased to announce that we will convene the first Environment Public Health Tracking Forum in early spring (March or April). The tentative topic is 'fish contamination'.

In early 2007, the Office of Information Systems (OIS) will provide EPHT with a fulltime Information Systems Specialist. EPHT will pay for this position to fulfill its grant requirements. This position will help the EPHT program define specific hardware and software needs. The person in this position also will write software interfaces and design the data system. By working together, EPHT and OIS plan to build the needed technical network infrastructure to make the EPHT Network a reality.

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## Partner Accomplishments



In 2006, Harmony Fleming, a graduate student at Oregon State University, Department of Public Health, began work on a study entitled *Groundwater Arsenic Concentrations and Cancer Rates: A Regional Comparison of the Willamette Valley Basin and Southeastern Oregon*. The objectives of the study were to: 1) determine the spatial relationship between arsenic concentrations and incidence rates of certain cancers; 2) contribute to the Environmental Public Health Tracking (EPHT) program by using secondary data to investigate possible linkages of arsenic in groundwater and associated health effects; and 3) provide information for health promotion and education efforts.

The datasets that were used included: Cancer data from the [Oregon State Cancer Registry \(OSCaR\)](#), Arsenic Concentration Data from USGS Groundwater Database and the Oregon Department of Human Services Drinking Water Program, and Census 2000. The EPHT program provided support for Harmony by assisting OSCaR with geocoding bladder, kidney, liver and lung cancer data.

The challenges that Harmony has encountered thus far have included securing access to data sets at desired geographic levels of analysis, transforming data to a usable form to answer research questions, and finding data to address all proposed research questions.

Final results and conclusions are not available yet. For more general information about the study, please contact either Dr. Anna Harding at [anna.harding@oregonstate.edu](mailto:anna.harding@oregonstate.edu) (541-737-3830) or Harmony Fleming at [flemingh@onid.orst.edu](mailto:flemingh@onid.orst.edu).

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## Upcoming Events and Activities

**Beginning January 1, 2007** – *Northwest Health Foundation, Helping Hands Small Grants Program*

Applications for funding for 2007 will be accepted beginning January 1, 2007. Awards of up to \$7,500 are available for small projects.

**February 6 – 8<sup>th</sup>, 2007** – *Annual Oregon Public Health Conference*, Northwest Center for Public Health Practice and Oregon Department of Human Services, Holiday Inn Portland-Downtown/Convention Center, Portland

**February 16, 2007** - *Evening with John Kretzmann*, Kaiser Town Hall Ballroom at 3710 N. Interstate Avenue, 7pm

This event is sponsored by [Our United Villages](#). John Kretzmann is Co-Director of the Asset-Based Community Development Institute at Northwestern University (Chicago, IL) and author of *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets*. He has international recognition as an inspiring, straightforward, and wise advocate of strength-based approaches to building healthy local communities.

**March 12-15, 2007** – *Oregon Governor's Occupational Safety and Health Conference*, Oregon Convention Center, Portland

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](mailto:Anna.Halpin@state.or.us). If you do not wish to receive this e-newsletter, please email [Anna.Halpin@state.or.us](mailto:Anna.Halpin@state.or.us)