

**Collaborative on Health and the Environment – Washington (CHE-WA)
Quarterly Meeting
Antioch University Seattle
December 10, 2007
2:00—4:00 p.m.**

**Focus: Opportunities to Protect Environmental Health in the 2008 Washington
Legislative Session and the latest science on climate change and human health**

NOTES

Participants

Mary Bartholet, Washington State Nurses Association
Amy Bates, Solutions and Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department
Julia Berg, Local Hazardous Waste Management Program in King County
Anne Bikle, Public Health -- Seattle & King County
Marnie Boardman, Washington State Department of Public Health
Aimee Boulanger, Institute for Children's Environmental Health and coordinator for CHE-WA
Eva Dale, Washington Citizens for Resource Conservation
Kate Davies, Antioch University Seattle
Michelle Gaither, Pacific Northwest Pollution Prevention Resource Center
Gail Gensler, Local Hazardous Waste Management Program in King County, Young Children's Project
Steven Gilbert, Institute of Neurotoxicology and Neurological Disorders
Linn Gould, Population Health Project
Catherine Karr, University of Washington
Idil Levitas, Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility
Tracee Mayfield, Public Health – Seattle & King County
Erin MacDougall, Public Health -- Seattle and King County
Mo McBroom, Washington Environmental Council
Suellen Mele, Washington Citizens for Resource Conservation
Thai Nguyen, Public Health – Seattle & King County
Will Perry, Public Health – Seattle & King County
Millie Piazza, Washington State Department of Ecology
John Roberts, League of Women Voters
Erika Sanders, Institute for Children's Environmental Health, office administrator
Sharon Schoenfeld, Public Health – Seattle & King County
Margaret Shield, Toxic Free Legacy Coalition
Lindsey Spencer, Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department
Pam Tazioli, Breast Cancer Fund
Cathy Tuttle, Spokespeople
Margo Young, Environmental Protection Agency, Region 10

Next Meeting: Wednesday, March 5, 2008, 2-4pm, Antioch University, Room 100.

Welcome and Introductions

Aimee Boulanger, program director for Institute for Children's Environmental Health and coordinator of the Collaborative on Health and the Environment for Washington (CHE-WA), welcomed everyone to the quarterly meeting. She noted that this meeting's focus will be on the impact of local climate change on local human health, and will also look at 2008 legislative opportunities pertaining to these issues.

Aimee also noted that in an effort to make CHE-WA meetings available to more members in Washington State, today's meeting was accessible via teleconference. This is new technology for these meetings and today is mostly a trial, but if all goes well teleconferencing will be available for future meetings, and will be more widely advertised.

Aimee encouraged members to consider joining any of the working groups if during the updates they hear something that sparks their interest
Participants introduced themselves briefly.

Science Presentation

Climate Change and Human Health, Catherine Karr, PhD

Catherine Karr, academic pediatrician, environmental health researcher and director of the Northwest Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit (PEHSU) at the University of Washington (UW), discussed "Climate Change and Human Health: Rising to the Challenge in Washington". A member of the climate Change and Human Health Impact Team (CHIT), Dr. Karr is working with other leading local scientists to coordinate the efforts of the Human Health Preparation and Adaptation Work Group (a project of the Governor's Climate Challenge) and House Bill 1303. Dr. Karr's research and presentation focus on the impact of local climate change on Washingtonians.

Highlights of Dr. Karr's presentation:

Overview:

- The first step for CHIT is to review already available literature on climate change and human health, identify relevant data as well as data gaps for Washington State (WA) and conduct a qualitative assessment.
- Climate change clearly has impacts on regional weather patterns, which influence contamination pathways and the transmission impacts of those contaminants.
- The primary human health impact focus areas of CHIT are heat and thermal stress, degradation of air quality (Dr. Karr's area of expertise), infectious disease, extreme weather events and social disruption (stress and economic disparities).
- An obvious relationship between climate change and air quality exist.
- Air quality, and consequently, human health, may be the most impacted by an increase in ambient air pollutants and aeroallergens. Illnesses most affected by these increases will primarily be related to the heart and lungs. Climate change's impact on air quality is where the most work needs to be done.
- The UW Climate Impact Group predicts a steady increase in temperatures by 2020, 2040 and 2080. Additionally, the UW Climate Impact Group also predicts an increase in PM2.5, ozone and pollen.

- Ozone is not emitted into the atmosphere, but is formed secondarily there. The creation of ozone is a heat driven process.
- Particulate matter (PM2.5) is a pollutant of particular concern. Particulate matter can be created by a gas to particle conversion and can be directly emitted into the atmosphere. In WA, higher temperatures would likely increase the frequency of favorable conditions for wildfires, which are a source of PM2.5.
- Growing evidence shows that elevated temperatures would likely lead to longer pollen seasons. Evidence also shows that some pollens are more harmful when influenced by higher temperatures.
- Increased ozone and PM2.5 put people at greater health risks for asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, low birth weight/prematurity in newborns, respiratory infections, lung cancer, cardiovascular disease and higher rates of infant mortality and premature death in adults. There is also concern that there will be a rise in new onset asthma cases.
- Allergic diseases affected by pollen have also been on the rise in the last several decades and climate change is one likely explanation for this increase.
- Air pollution-related illnesses are already an important public health concern in WA. The asthma rate here is among the highest in the U.S., heart disease is leading cause of death in those over 65 in WA and low birth weight is the leading cause of infant mortality.
- In WA, the ambient air concentrations of ozone and particulate matter have been improving in the last decades due to more control of emissions. It is possible that climate change will mitigate the progress that has been made in the state if there is no coordinated response. On the other hand, action to address climate change in WA could deliver the added value of improving the air quality even further.

Dr. Karr concluded her presentation by saying that CHIT will be publishing a report of its qualitative assessment in the next six months. Following this report CHIT will begin to study quantitative assessments to help in making proposals about how to best use state resources to address climate change.

Dr. Karr can be contacted at ckarr@u.washington.edu.

Questions and Answers

Why have asthma rates gone up while WA air quality has improved?

Dr. Karr: In local areas there are still geographic areas that are worse or better in terms of air quality. Those geographic regions experiencing more exposure also have more asthma. Even though we are in compliance with EPA air quality standards in WA we still see health impacts occur in regions where standards are not being met.

What about indoor air quality?

Dr. Karr: Asthma is a complicated disease. From an environmental perspective indoor air quality is very important given that we spend most of our time indoors.

For so long co-exposures have been teased apart. Will the work of CHIT bring them back together?

Dr. Karr: Yes. Multi-factors are complicated and you can't just look at one thing.

Legislative Presentation

Legislative Priorities for a Healthy Washington, 2008, Mo McBroom, Washington Environmental Council

Mo McBroom is the policy director for the Washington State Environmental Council (WEC). She oversees WEC's policy positions and campaign strategies, as well as works to craft and shape specific issues. Mo presented and discussed the four *Legislative Priorities for a Healthy Washington*. The larger Washington state environmental community comes together each year to select these legislative priorities. Focusing on four pieces of legislation is a way for the environmental community to focus its strategic efforts and power to enact larger and more important legislation. In 2008, all of the priorities are related in some way to addressing climate change.

Mo said that right now politics in Olympia are better than they've ever been when it comes to passing policy in favor of human health issues. However, the upcoming elections will potentially cause some policy makers to be cautious about supporting any legislation that may be perceived as contentious or particularly damaging to a campaign.

Mo is pleased to be at the CHE-WA quarterly meeting to discuss the *Legislative Priorities for a Healthy Washington* because they can always use help to see that these initiatives are passed. She also noted that the governor's recommendations on climate change will be announced too late for the 2008 legislative session which begins January 14, 2008, so the environmental and climate change community has had to get out in front of her recommendations. Mo feels confident, however, that the four priorities for 2008 will be consistent with any recommendations put forth by the governor.

Legislative Priorities for a Healthy Washington - overview

1) Washington Climate Action

HB 1303 provided global warming pollution reduction goals for WA, but no real framework for meeting these goals. The Washington Climate Action bill creates a structure and timeline for implementing the state's global warming pollution reduction goals, and creates a program to prepare Washington workers for good jobs in the clean energy economy, providing pathways out of poverty for lower-income communities. The bill would make the Washington State Department of Ecology responsible for achieving the state's emissions reduction goals.

2) Local Solution to Global Warming

This bill would add a goal of reducing climate impact to the Growth Management Act (GMA) and identify reducing global warming as an important aspect of comprehensive planning.

3) Evergreen Cities

This bill addresses concerns about climate change, water quality and livability in WA communities. The Evergreen Cities Act restores, retains and establishes more trees and forests in our communities. The bill directs the Department of Natural Resources to develop a statewide inventory and assessment of our communities' forests, providing

critical technical assistance for local government ordinance and forest plan development.

4) Local Farms – Healthy Kids

This legislation will make Washington a national leader in getting locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables to those who need it most. This bill will expand children’s access to locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables by easing purchasing restrictions that currently make it difficult for schools and institutions to buy from local farms. Establishing a state “Farm To School” program that will connect schools with community farmers, and will provide necessary information and technical assistance to both school districts and farms.

Mo said this is one of the most ambitious legislative packages they’ve ever taken on. She encouraged members of CHE-WA to get involved by getting the word out to our local communities about each of the bills. She also encouraged members to connect with their legislators, perhaps even by participating in the environmental community lobby day in January. She asked CHE-WA members to sign up for and respond to action alerts relating to these bills, and to contact campaign leads to see what other ways we may be able to participate in passing these priorities.

Margaret Shield of Toxic Legacy Coalition reminded everyone that letters to the editor are effective ways to draw attention to these bills.

For further information about WEC and *Legislative Priorities for a Healthy Washington* see www.wecprotects.org.

Questions and Answers

Regarding Local Farms – Healthy Kids, does the bill address pesticide-reduced foods?

McBroom: This bill is an intermediary first step. The goal is to promote the existing efforts and to engender new efforts in new places through the legislature. It was a struggle to include all of the issues around healthy food and battles had to be chosen carefully. The bill will elevate the need to promote sustainable farming through legislative action. We are smart to limit the effort this year so it is politically viable. However, we see it as only a beginning.

Can you give the group a rundown on the opposition to the bills?

McBroom: Opposition to Washington Climate Change could come from diverse perspectives.. If passed, it would mean major changes to the way people do business, which can be threatening. WEC has done a lot of business outreach, particularly to clean technology businesses. We do expect some pushback from bigger business and potentially big emitters in WA. There is so much excitement at the grassroots level, though. Local Solutions to Global Warming could find its biggest opposition coming from politicians themselves who may be worried that it will be an unfunded mandate. Individual city officials might oppose Evergreen Cities as they may be worried about lacking the resources to implement it. WEC is addressing this concern by working to provide new funding sources through the bill. There has yet to be an opposition to Local Farms – Healthy Kids. It is critical that conventional farming interests are on board,

which is one reason why there is no strong organic language in this particular bill. Likely opposition could come from the bulk food service providers to schools.

Is the Washington Climate Action bill designed to address adaptation?

McBroom: No. It is about green jobs and as we mitigate emissions we attract new technologies and open up new sectors. More definitely needs to be done on the adaptation side. Next year, water resources and dealing with a limited water supply will definitely be a legislative issue on the table.

How are policy priorities chosen?

McBroom: It can be very challenging. We have to come to a consensus as a group. To propose a particular policy one would need to propose a campaign around a particular policy and then present it to the group.

Other Legislative Opportunities in 2008, Margaret Shield, Toxic-Free Legacy Coalition of Washington State

Margaret Shield, coordinator of the Toxic-Free Legacy Coalition of Washington State, an alliance of environmental and health organizations working together to eliminate persistent toxic chemicals, spoke of other bills in the 2008 legislative session that should be of interest to the environmental health community.

1) Product Stewardship for Unwanted Medicines, Margaret Shield introduced Suellen Mele of Washington Citizens for Resource Conservation to discuss this bill. Suellen said that one of the most challenging products to get producers take responsibility for is unused medicine. There is no good environmental means for disposing of expired or no longer needed medication. Over the last year a pilot program has coordinated with twenty-five health facilities to collect unwanted medicines. The medicines are disposed at hazardous waste facilities. The hope is to move toward household hazardous waste facilities. Manufacturers would cover the cost of these programs. The Washington State Board of Pharmacy would provide oversight. A similar bill has been running successfully in British Columbia for eleven years.

2) School Pesticide Bill – 2SHB1806, Jamie Pedersen, State Representative, 43rd District, Position 1 is the lead sponsor. Margaret Shield said this bill would recommend a state-wide integrated pesticide management policy, which would be distributed to schools as a model for them to use at their discretion. It will be a tool, not a mandate. The Washington State Board of Health would create a list of most highly hazardous list of pesticides and provide to schools and daycares, helping them to avoid the worst pesticides. Washington Toxics Coalition is collecting supporters for this bill.

Margaret also discussed TFLC's continuing involvement in protecting the health of children from exposure to harmful chemicals. TFLC was active in legislation that banned PBDE's and is now working to address other harmful chemicals to which children are regularly exposed.

She noted that more than 3 million toys were recalled this year due to harmful levels of lead. TFLC has been conducting toy testing with a XRF analyzer. Though there is some regulation regarding lead in paint, there is currently no regulation limiting the amount of lead in plastic or vinyl (used as a stabilizer), nor is there adequate federal authority to recall unsafe products.

The Safer Kid's Products Act, sponsored by Senator Mary Lou Dickerson and Senator Debbie Regala will be introduced this coming legislative session. This bill would prohibit the use of some of the most dangerous chemicals in kids' products and require labeling of what is in a product. These provisions would hopefully encourage manufacturers to use safer products.

Margaret also announced a new resource: www.healthytoys.org. 1200 toys were tested and rated for safety.

Questions and Answers

What is the actual absorption concern from toys? Are you prepared to answer this question?

Shield: It is very hard data to find. Our premise is there is no safe level to something like lead. It shouldn't be a product that could be in a child's mouth.

Why is cadmium put in toys?

Shield: It is used as a stabilizer to make the toy last longer.

Does the Safer Kid's Products Act give proper authority to agencies to address/regulate these toxin issues?

Shield: Yes. We need to provide state agencies with authority to deem a product dangerous. We will go for the strongest provisions we can get at the same time that we recognize this is a multi-year process.

Working Group Updates and Opportunities

Aimee Boulanger encouraged CHE-WA members to consider becoming active in a working group. Many of the working groups are undergoing a "re-energizing" process and would welcome new members with fresh ideas.

1) New Working Group: Children's Environmental Health Group

This is a new working group, which held its first meeting prior to this CHE-WA quarterly meeting. Julia Berg and Gail Gensler of Local Hazardous Waste Management Program in King County are chairing this group. This working group will focus on reducing the exposure to toxins for children 0-6 years old. They will work to identify gaps in research and prevention (as well as overlaps) and address those gaps. As the group is so new, Julia and Gail invited more people to become involved at this early stage as the group sets goals and priorities for the coming year.

2) Environmental Justice and Health Disparities Working Group

This working group is concerned with the disproportionate health impacts in some vulnerable communities.

Millie Piazza, working group member, had several recommendations for possible 2008 projects:

- 1) Organizing a regional environmental justice and air quality conference.
- 2) Organizing an environmental justice training with Running Grass for CHE-WA members (if there is sufficient interest).
- 3) Create a data-clearing house for health exposures and health impacts in vulnerable communities.
- 4) Write a fact sheet on health disparities in Washington state to submit to the Governor's Council on Health Disparities

Millie also introduced Amy Bates from the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department. Amy introduced a new documentary series, *Unnatural Causes*, which will, for the first time on television, sound the alarm about America's glaring socio-economic and racial inequities in health - and search for root causes. The four-hour series (for PBS broadcast and DVD release) sifts through the evidence to discover there is more to our health than bad habits, health care, or unlucky genes. The social conditions in which we are born, live, and work profoundly affect our health and longevity.

Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department will be partnering to host an *Unnatural Causes* event to raise awareness of health disparities in Pierce County. On March 28th there will be a kick-off event.

More information on the documentary can be found at www.unnaturalcauses.org.

Linn Gould with the University of Washington added that she is trained to lead screenings and discussions of *Unnatural Causes*. Linn can be contacted at gouldphp@gmail.com.

3) Climate Change and Health Working Group

Aimee Boulanger reported that Roger Rosenblatt, chair of the working group, was not able to be at the meeting. Roger has been very busy with the Governor's Task Force on Climate Change and Human Health. As his work on this task force wraps up there will be more opportunities for this working group.

4) Precautionary Principle Working Group

Steve Gilbert of the Institute of Neurotoxicology and Neurological Disorders provided an update for Tracee Mayfield of Public Health – Seattle & King County, chair of the working group. Steve announced that the working group will meet in the next couple days to discuss projects in 2008.

Closing

Aimee Boulanger thanked everyone for coming and gave particular thanks to all of the speakers for their contributions. She announced that the **next quarterly meeting is March 5, 2008**. The focus will be children's environmental health. Steve Gilbert of the Institute of Neurotoxicology and Neurological Disorders and Elaine Faustman of the Center for Child Environmental Health Risks Research at the University of Washington will speak. There will also be an update on the 2008 legislative session.

Meeting adjourned