

Collaborative on Health and the Environment - Northwest (CHE-NW)
Meeting Notes
December 6, 2004
Antioch University

Participants

- *Chetana Acharya*, University of Washington, Community Outreach and Education Program
- *Morgan Barry*, Department of Public Health, Seattle and King County
- *Madeline Beery*, Washington State Department of Health
- *James John Bell*, smartMeme
- *Nanda Blazej*, Cascadia Consulting Group
- *Barbara Bennett*, educational therapist
- *Marnie Boardman*, Washington State Department of Health (Environmental Health Tracking)
- *Tara Brouillet*, graduate student, Antioch University and lab technician at Children's Hospital
- *Phil Butterfield*, University of Washington, Department of Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences
- *Ann Clifton*, Mercury Awareness Team
- *Kate Davies*, Antioch University
- *Ticiang Diangson*, Seattle Public Utilities
- *Nancy Dickeman*, Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility
- *Sibyl Diver*, Toxic-Free Legacy Coalition
- *Pam Emerson*, EPA - Region 10
- *Robin Evans-Agnew*, American Lung Association of Washington
- *Steve Gilbert*, Institute for Neurotoxicology and Neurological Disorders
- *Linn Gould*, Erda Environmental Consulting
- *Bruce Herbert*, Newground Social Investment
- *Suellen Mele*, Washington Citizens for Resource Conservation
- *Elise Miller*, Institute for Children's Environmental Health
- *John Moore*, Mercury Awareness Team
- *Maria Victoria Peeler*, Washington State Department of Ecology
- *John Roberts*, League of Women Voters
- *John Rodgers*, Mercury Awareness Team
- *Janna Rolland*, consultant and Institute for Children's Environmental Health board member
- *Roger Rosenblatt*, University of Washington, Department of Family Medicine
- *Gail Savina*, King County Health Department
- *Rini Sulaiman*
- *Marcella Wilson*, Seattle Public Utilities

Notes

1) Introductions

Those present introduced themselves and briefly highlighted a major initiative or event they are currently working on.

2) Science Update – Phil Butterfield, PhD, PE

Dr. Phil Butterfield graciously filled in for Pat Butterfield, PhD, RN, Director of University of Washington's Occupational and Environmental Health Nursing Program, who had an unexpected meeting conflict. Phil, whose primary research is in environmental microbiology, highlighted concerns about pathogens in drinking water and the impact on human health, particularly people with compromised immune systems and the elderly. He noted that home treatment units can remove lead, other heavy metals and pathogens, but many of the filters themselves are becoming colonized with microorganisms. Many of these microorganisms are resistant even to chlorine. He also mentioned concerns about lead in drinking water. Studies suggest that nitrates in the water can actually accelerate the dissolution of lead in the water. For example, chlorine combined with ammonia (residual disinfectants) create chloramines, which can accelerate lead dissolution – in fact, Vancouver, British Columbia, has decided not to use chloramines because they can impact fish. He ended by saying that tests suggest that bottled water, which is regulated by the FDA, does not appear to be any safer than drinking water that is properly regulated by the EPA.

3) Working Group updates

a) Precautionary Principle (PP) – Steve Gilbert

Steve noted that efforts to include wording on the PP in the City of Seattle Comp Plan has been mildly successful. The current recommendation from city staff is to include a reference to the PP in the introduction to the Environment Element, in this way it will be mentioned but have no legal force. Disappointments include the following:

- The name of the Environment Element was not changed to Environment and Human Health Element.
- Health indicators were not included (although people have taken note of the information we provided).
- References to human health in the Environment Element were not expanded (very disappointing).

Steve mentioned that it would still be useful for some people concerned about the PP to attend the Council's Urban Planning and Development Committee, which will meet on the Comp Plan 10-year Update on Wednesday, December 8, 2004, at 2 p.m. in Council Chambers. In addition, the City Council will meet on the Comp Plan 10-year on December 13, 2004, at 2 pm. in Council Chambers, on the 2nd floor.

Steve ended by saying that the PP Working Group will plan to reconvene in January to strategize about next steps for working on the PP on city, county and state levels in Washington. Elise will circulate possible dates for that meeting on the listserv.

b) Health and Environment Links Research – Kate Davies

Kate briefly presented her 30+ page document summarizing the preliminary findings of a study on the nature, types and comprehensiveness of information on health and environmental contaminants in Washington State. She noted that as well as outlining the available scientific information on the levels of contaminants in the environment, human exposures and the associated health effects, the paper contains estimated rates of several

environmentally-related diseases and disabilities in Washington State based on national rates, a report card on the comprehensiveness of the information base in Washington State and an estimate of the economic costs of childhood cancer that can be attributed to environmental exposures. Participants applauded Kate's excellent research and discussed the possibility of doing a media event regarding these preliminary findings. Elise will follow up with Kate and others regarding how to present this research publicly. In the meanwhile, the document can be found on ICEH's web site at: www.iceh.org/CHE-NWgroups.html. Kate welcomes comments and feedback.

c) Environmental Justice (EJ) – Morgan Barry

Morgan mentioned that some of the core members of the EJ Working Group met December 1st to discuss next steps. They decided:

- Not to do a second meeting as originally planned and described in the invitation earlier this fall of the larger CHE-NW EJ Working Group. The idea had been to develop a consensus statement and definition of EJ that we would all work with, but Yalonda thought that the community groups wouldn't be interested in doing this.
- Instead, take two approaches: 1) prioritize integrating community-based groups into the CHE-NW group, which for practical reasons would mean holding the CHE-NW meetings later in the day, say 5:00-7:00 p.m.; 2) establish a smaller CHE-NW EJ Working Group "think tank" or "reflection pool" (as we later called it) to discuss EJ issues over time and then offer ideas back to the CHE-NW group as appropriate. This group would focus on the many good ideas that emerged in the first couple meetings (such as the "peacekeepers"/allies initiative) and others that might emerge later – and would include us and perhaps a couple other people to be determined.
- Try an "open space" structure for one of the CHE-NW meetings. This would allow for the majority of our time to be spent in small groups talking more in-depth about specific topics of interest. This might also appeal more to some of the community-based groups and allow everyone to have greater participation. Often the CHE-NW meetings are so packed that there is little time for actual discussion, and this might help.
- Put available funding for the EJ Working Group towards a workshop(s) on EJ – ideas for which might emerge from the "reflection pool" group.
- Morgan also mentioned that Yalonda had volunteered to represent the EJ Working Group on the new steering committee for CHE-NW that Elise is beginning to organize.

4) smartMeme Project – presentation by James John Bell

James, who recently moved to Olympia, is with a nonprofit group that works for the environment, peace and justice community to do better messaging – see www.smartmeme.com. Steve met James at a precautionary principle meeting in Chicago in November and was impressed with his crafting of outstanding media messages for a wide variety of nonprofits. James had intended to make a longer presentation on social change narratives, but because of time constraints, he was only able to make a few brief comments. Those, however, were enticing enough that a number of participants requested

that we invite James back for a longer presentation and possible workshop for interested groups. Elise said she would follow up with James about that.

5) Policy subcommittee report – Maria Victoria Peeler

Maria said a group of CHE-NW members particularly interested in environmental health policy initiatives in Washington State in 2005 discussed the following ideas:

- Propose the creation of a Toxics Exposure Report and Tracking Committee (TERT) to attain the following: a) State Board of Health (SBOH) and Department of Health (DOH) more engaged in environmental data and chemicals' effects on human health, particularly children; b) create a sustainable long-term biomonitoring program; and c) get them more money/staff to focus on chemicals and their impact on human health.
- Improve health of infants with a simple and low-cost educational program.
- Develop strategies to increase support for reducing exposures to environmental pollutants.

Their recommendations for initiatives that CHE-NW members might want to engage in during 2005 included:

- Focus on a 2005 policy that would target one big project, for example, to create a TERT, because currently attaining sustainable data collection and analysis at the state-wide level is essential and should be a top priority.
- Focus on a low-cost/high-result project, specifically, a pilot statewide education and outreach initiative to reduce household exposure to infants of dust, mold and dampness (this will require some legislative funding to DOH).
- Increase pressure to ban use of persistent, bioaccumulative toxins (PBTs) and increase funding to properly collect, eliminate or safely isolate PBTs.

Elise reminded participants that CHE-NW cannot speak for the group as a whole on any issue, including policy initiatives. However, because a number of the organizations and individuals in CHE-NW are interested in translating the science into policies that protect human and environmental health from toxic exposures, it was important to continue to share this information with the group.

In regards to the suggestion regarding a pilot study on infants, Marnie Boardman also mentioned CHILD Profile (Children's Health, Immunizations, Linkages and Development) – a www.childprofile.org/ – which is a resource for preventive health care for young (ages 0-6) children. CHILD Profile helps in two ways:

- Parents receive free information on child immunization, development, nutrition and safety.
- Health-Care Providers obtain training and assistance with a statewide, immunization registry: www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/mch/cahcp/school_health.htm

Another suggestion was to have a policy update at each CHE-NW meeting, which participants seemed to think was a good idea. Elise also said that she is happy to forward policy opportunities on the listserv so that people know how to engage on specific initiatives and who to contact.

6) CHE-NW Steering Committee plans

Elise mentioned that given the growth of CHE-NW and the many emerging ideas for meetings, she was in the process of forming a new steering committee. The committee would:

- Meet on quarterly conference calls to strategize about the future direction for CHE-NW and to shape the agenda for each quarterly meeting of CHE-NW
- Respond to e-mails between calls as necessary
- Oversee development of working groups as needed
- Help provide guidance on screening emails for the listserv when there are questions about the relevancy or legitimacy of a study, etc. that one member wants circulated.
- Help identify potential funding for CHE-NW

Elise will initially invite 8-12 CHE-NW members representing different working groups and sectors and have the first conference call in January to plan for the next CHE-NW meeting.

7) Next Meeting:

The next meeting will likely be in February or March 2005 and she will get back to everyone with the specific date as soon as possible. Elise then thanked everyone and wished them safe, healthy, peaceful holidays.