

**Collaborative on Health and the Environment – Washington (CHE-WA)**  
**Quarterly Meeting**  
**Antioch University Seattle, Room 100**  
**May 10, 2006**  
**2:30-4:30 p.m.**  
**NOTES**

**Participants:**

Gail Alexander, Antioch University Seattle graduate student  
Morgan Barry, Public Health – Seattle & King County  
Amy Bates, Solutions for Humanity, Community and the Environment  
Nanda Blazej, Antioch University Seattle graduate student/Cascadia Consulting  
Melissa Campbell, Antioch University Seattle graduate student  
Kate Davies, Antioch University Seattle  
Steven Gilbert, Institute for Neurotoxicology and Neurological Disorders  
Jeff Ketchel, Public Health – Seattle & King County  
Erin McDougall, Public Health – Seattle & King County  
Suellen Mele, Washington Citizens for Resource Conservation  
Elise Miller, Institute for Children's Environmental Health (and chair of CHE-WA)  
Ngozi Oleru, Public Health – Seattle & King County  
Rick Porso, Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department  
Janna Rolland, consultant  
Rini Sulaiman, Global Mercury Project  
Margaret Shield, Toxic-Free Legacy Coalition  
Danielle Spirandeu, University of Washington  
Leslie Stanton, Puget Sound Clean Air Agency  
Pam Tazioli, Breast Cancer Fund  
Heather Trim, People for Puget Sound

**Next Meeting: Monday, July 17 2:00-4:00 p.m. [location to be announced]**

**NOTES**

**1) Welcome:**

Elise Miller welcomed the group and thanked Kate for hosting and Kevin Inouye for his technical expertise. Participants offered brief introductions – names and affiliations.

**2) Ngozi Oleru, PhD, Division Director, Environmental Health Services Division, Public Health – Seattle & King County (PHSKC)**

- Presentation on PHSKC's Strategic Initiative on Land Use, Built Environment and Health

Ngozi first described the comprehensive approach of the Initiative. The focus is on issues of the growing numbers of those overweight and obese, but the Initiative tries to be very comprehensive and included physical inactivity, obesity and chronic disease, indoor and ambient air quality, water quality, toxic exposure and body burdens, noise, soil

contamination, habitat loss, safety/injury, mental health, social capital and environmental injustice.

The Initiative started in February 2004 when division directors and program staff began with a strategic plan on land use and built environment and the effects of these things on health. The overall philosophy is that environmental health is the basis of public health. The Environmental Health Community Assessment Team (EHCAT), formed in 2001, helped to shape the Initiative's agenda by providing recommendations on environmental health issues and how they relate to other public health issues. The Initiative emphasizes inculcating priorities that cut across different sectors; building capacity among partners to understand how planning for land use and the built environment works and to educate partners on environmental health; working strategically with the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC), which makes a lot of decisions for city locally; providing opportunities for community members to offer suggestions regarding planning and policies. Overall, what is working now include stronger collaborations between the agency and communities and coordinated work teams that have more tools to promote healthy built environments.

Ngozi mentioned a few accomplishments so far:

- issued paper to PSRC and convinced PSRC that environmental health should be incorporated into the decision-making process
- improved the manual regarding zoning and codes
- convened environmental health directors

She also described some current activities which are three-pronged to 1) inform and influence decision makers; 2) help address health disparities; and 3) promote partnership:

- developing a list for planners and getting their buy-in, so that they have health considerations when planning
- designing an Active Communities Workgroup, which includes an overweight and obesity forum, a checklist for health considerations and tools to get this out into the community
- undertaking a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) – asking what people want in their community and promoting their ability to inform and influence decision makers

Finally, Ngozi underscored the work ahead:

- engage the community to a greater degree
- create messaging and develop literature for use both by communities and policymakers
- engage elected officials
- talk with the State Board of Health
- invite local and state leaders to learn more about the national initiative “Place Matters” which has as its goal to eliminate health disparities. The initial cohort includes 20 jurisdictions from across the country. From this, we can learn strategies for how to deal with this in our jurisdiction.

For more information: PSRC Vision 2020 Plan, [www.psrc.org](http://www.psrc.org).

### Questions and Answers:

a) A conference call earlier in the day with CHE-AK focused on various contributors to obesity and diabetes, emphasizing in particular toxic exposures (e.g. PCBs, dioxin) that might impact endocrine and effect diabetes and weight. How much are environmental factors discussed in the Initiative?

- Ngozi noted that toxic exposures and body burden are a key part of their discussions and plan.

b): Did you have any pushback from planning agencies on this?

- Ngozi responded she was surprised at how easy it was for agencies to get on board with this. They got it that this work is “value added” and fundamental to their other programs.

c) Some of us have been in Duwamish, where there is concern with tire burning to kiln concrete. Currently we do not look at the cumulative impacts this behavior may have on air quality. Will your initiative address this state issue?

- Ngozi responded that we need a groundswell from communities and environmental health advocacy groups to change the Growth Management Act to look at public health. We are partnering with a variety of stakeholders and raising awareness about these issues with state policymakers.

d) Asthma and cancer data in the Duwamish is by zip code – this area includes the cleanest and worst in one zipcode. Can we move to more refined data set? What about GIS technology – is this available at King County?

- Ngozi responded that we do need more refined data that take into account cumulative impacts, which show why it is important to do what Amy did by overlaying census data with the zip code as well. We would also love to be able to do the GIS technology, but we are currently limited by resources.

e) The EPA produced a risk assessment that includes multiple contaminants. This is a new idea, so how do we help people grasp this way of thinking?

- Ngozi agreed that people are not used to talking this way. It’s a learning process. Seattle planning department has been a close partner and is involved in learning workshops.

### **3) Amy Bates, MA, AAS, Solutions for Community, Humanity and the Environment**

- Presentation on her research on environmental injustice and health disparities in Tacoma, Washington

Amy first described her methodology, noting that point and non-point sources of pollution are indicators of environmental injustice. She used information provided by US census data and Pierce County to look for historical sources of pollution in Central Tacoma, which has a concentration of minorities, and low-income populations overlap minority populations.

She then delineated her findings:

- historic sources being aggressively addressed in waterfront areas where wealthier white communities are congregating; not as aggressive in impacted areas
- sources of pollution most prevalent in the central area
- impacted individuals are users of transit – therefore, traffic and pollution coming from outside the community as they pass through Central Tacoma on I-5 and transportation through impacted area I-5 and Route 16.
- impacted area has a number of waste disposal sites
- since people in the impacted area often do not own homes, they don't have the leverage to ensure clean-up

Her conclusion is that unsustainable systems of transportation and the built environment contribute to ongoing environmental injustice in Tacoma, Washington

She then offered some solutions:

- do more research and collect data on environmental injustice and health disparities for the EPA to help leverage change
- dismantle the “Not in my backyard (NIMBY)” attitude and include all human populations
- involve public participation in policy making and enforcement

#### Questions and Answers:

- a) David Hawkins has done some interesting sub-zip-code analysis, showing sub communities of risks, with some interesting parallels. Do you see PBDEs on the horizon as an issue?
- Amy responded that she has not focused on specific contaminants in her research. She is currently looking for systemic inequities.
- b) Were you able to find out the historical dates of industry move-in and empirically associate initial placement of industries and communities coming in.
- Amy noted that a big part of her research was history, and she has found similarities to other cities. Population distribution in terms of communities followed the lines of income – those with income didn't have to live near the industries.
- c) Affordable housing issues are prominent in Duwamish. Now in some places higher income people are willing to move onto toxic land, and others are making choices according to affordability.
- Amy mentioned one study in which people choosing between poverty and poison. Should we make people make this choice? Ngozi added this is not a choice. In order to understand environmental justice, we need to understand the concept of racism. When you deconstruct that concept and do an analysis of power and privilege, people who bear the impact do not choose.

d) You had mentioned those with disabilities and immune-compromised systems as proportionately higher in Central Tacoma. Do you have statistics on that in terms of a possible correlation to higher exposure rates?

- Amy responded that there is no study on that yet, and we are only able to say that different contaminants may be linked to different health problems. She added that her research centered on race and income and there needs to be a more decision data analysis for contaminants.

Elise thanked both Ngozi and Amy for their excellent presentations, and said Amy's will be made accessible on CHE-WA website as well as on the People for Puget Sound website.

#### **4) Research and Information (R&I) Working Group**

- Kate Davies, chair

Kate said that the new R&I web site was launched on April 5<sup>th</sup> and can be found at <http://washington.chenw.org/RIgroup/>. Kate gave a brief tour of the site and noted that there are 500 different links to scientific studies, epidemiological databases and bibliographies and that they plan to update the site about once a year. She also said that the R&I working group is developing 22 fact sheets, one for each page regarding specific health outcomes linked to environmental exposures, which they hope to publish by July. She invited everyone to let her know if there are links that are not working and to send information about environmental health in Washington State to her.

#### **5) Precautionary Principle Working Group**

- Steve Gilbert, chair

Steve first mentioned the National Conference on Precaution to be held in Baltimore, June 9-11th. Steve is presenting in a session on ethics and Kate is presenting her research on economic costs. Pam and Elise and possibly Yalonda will also be attending. He then pointed out the flyers regarding the June 23rd debrief about the national meeting to be held at Antioch, and then the Precaution Academy, which already has a waiting list and will be held June 23-25th at Antioch. In addition, Steve displayed his poster on the Precautionary Principle, with the "three Rs": Reasonable, Rational and Responsible. He is also working with Ngozi and Sarah Jones, an intern for the Working Group, on specifically applying the principle in relation to asthma. Plus, the Working Group would very much like to get a resolution on the Principle passed at this year's Washington State Public Health Association meeting. All are welcome to the Working Group's regular monthly conference calls.

#### **6) Environmental Justice Working Group**

- Elise Miller

Elise noted that the Working Group had been very organic in its evolution, with shifting priorities and membership. The group is now putting on the back burner the idea of organizing a major conference in a year that would look at nexus of justice and health disparities. CHE-WA doesn't have the staff or funding resources to do this and the Health Justice Network is continuing to figure out its own priorities. However, two ideas have

emerged that have some real energy: 1) offering “Science Salons,” an idea originally conceived by Kate Davies, using information that is available and offering it to community groups for leveraging change in their communities. Resources exist, but communities can’t access them or don’t know where to find them. The most important question before launching this is where there are communities that would like this information and would they want CHE-WA to offer a workshop on this. (Ngozi said she would highly endorse this idea and providing these resources to communities. We should quickly define how we might do that); and 2) organizing a listening session for agencies and community groups to share “Emerging Approaches to Addressing Environmental Justice and Health Disparities” so that we understand better what is already being done and what we can do to complement each other’s efforts.

*Suggestion:* Rick suggested that this meeting be integrated into to the Washington Public Health Association (WSPHA) meeting, and said that WSPHA has recently merged with the Washington State Environmental Health Association. Margaret noted that that would be a great way to reach public health officials, but the listening session would also be to reach other folks, including the communities. Rick then recommended that those interested submit abstracts on environmental justice for the 2006 WSPHA meeting, and he would like to work with CHE-WA to develop a strong environmental justice component for the 2007 meeting.

#### **7) Health-affected Groups Outreach**

- Pam Tazioli

Pam said that the primary work of this group is to engage more health-affected groups in environmental health work. She said they have created a list of health-affected organizations they want to reach and have prioritized a half dozen organizations so far. In meeting with each group, they will first simply educate them about what is known in regards to environmental contributors to their respective disease or disability. Then, those groups that are ready and interested can get involved in advocacy. Elise added that CHE National started by emphasizing engagement with health-affected groups, but regional CHEs have not been as successful at maintaining relations with these groups.

#### **8) Climate Change and Health – Emerging Working Group**

- Leslie Stanton

Leslie presented a brief overview of climate change and what impacts it may have on our health. She emphasized that changes are coming more rapidly than originally thought (Al Gore’s documentary on this is very descriptive of what is happening). She also said that health-related concerns and the economic impacts are part of public health – we can’t say climate change is unrelated to public health. By implementing priority energy-saving strategies in the Pacific Northwest, we could save over 2 billion dollars by 2020. All of us can actually help by doing everything we can personally to save energy – each of us can make a difference.

Elise mentioned that Roger Rosenblatt had expressed interest in this group, and given the strong show of interest among participants at this meeting, Elise and Leslie will discuss specifics about how to get this group launched and be in touch with the group.

## **9) Food Systems and Health Initiatives**

- Erin McDougall

Erin let the group know that she is the Program Manager of Healthy Eating and Active Living at Public Health – Seattle & King County and that Tim Crosby asked her to present on his behalf regarding two initiatives on food systems and health: 1) Healthy Eating and Active Living promotes healthy eating and activity in King County, and the King County Board of Health is committed to a ten-point plan linking to health and access to healthy food. They have created a farm-to-school connection team, but the main challenge they currently face is that there is no local system to support the distribution and processing of the food; and 2) the Puget Sound Community Food Connections, a new initiative that Tim Crosby is leading, focuses on healthy food access such as farm-to-school/cafeteria/neighborhoods, nutrition and health education/policy, and culturally appropriate food for the most health-impacted populations. This initiative, involving diverse stakeholders, is identifying key strategies to decrease toxic food components, looking at levels of trans-fats and pesticides as well as working to build a local network to address environmental justice concerns in relation to food systems. The Carolyn Foundation is interested in granting \$400,000 in the Puget Sound area to create a prototype that would address these issues and be replicable elsewhere.

## **10) Other:**

Elise noted that Maria Victoria Peeler was unable to attend today's meeting and was to speak at a recent global mercury meeting. However, Maria asked her to circulate the handout on how the World Health Organization is applying the precautionary principle as well as their work on mercury. Elise also mentioned that a significant portion of the next CHE-WA meeting will be focused on follow-up to the Toxics in the Puget Sound conference, with Heather and Kathy Fletcher facilitating. In addition, Elise will ask Jamie Donatuto to present her work with the Swinomish tribe at the next CHE-WA meeting.

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