

# **Collaborative on Health and the Environment - Washington (CHE-WA)**

## **Meeting Notes**

**May 25, 2005**

### **Participants**

Chetana Acharya – University of Washington, Center for Ecogenetics and Environmental Health, Community Outreach and Education Program

Marnie Boardman – Washington State Department of Health, Environmental Public Health Tracking

Thandi Chikomo – EPA Region 10, Hubert Humphrey Fellow

Kate Davies – Antioch University

Ticiang Diangson – Seattle Public Utilities

Nancy Dickeman – Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility

Sibyl Diver – Toxic-Free Legacy Coalition

Steve Gilbert – Institute for Neurotoxicology and Neurological Disorders

Linn Gould – Erda Environmental Services

Emma Johnson – Washington State Department of Ecology

Lee Mattingly – American Lung Association of Washington, Master Home Environmentalist volunteer

Suellen Mele – Washington Citizens for Resource Conservation

Elise Miller – Institute for Children's Environmental Health

Lin Nelson – Evergreen College

Linda Park – Seattle Biotech Legacy Foundation

Janna Rolland – consultant and ICEH board member

Roger Rosenblatt – University of Washington Department of Family Medicine

Mike Smyser – Public Health Department, Seattle and King County

Rini Sulaiman – Global Mercury Project

Kathie Townsend – Verbena Health

### **Notes**

1) Guest speaker: Michael Smyser, Epidemiologist, Public Health - Seattle & King County presented on "Health Disparities in King County."

Mike reviewed the goals of the "Healthy People 2010" initiative, particularly highlighting the goal to eliminate health disparities, and suggested that there is little likelihood we will reach that goal by 2010 given some of the entrenched social problems that perpetuate health disparities. He then presented slides of a study undertaken by Public Health – Seattle & King County. Some findings from this study included a) mortality rates, income levels and race/ethnicity are interconnected; b) racism, stress and pregnancy outcomes like preterm deliveries are linked; c) discrimination in health care; and d) the

challenges of eliminating health disparities. (Note that his slides will be posted on the ICEH website shortly – [www.iceh.org/CHE-WAnotes.html](http://www.iceh.org/CHE-WAnotes.html)).

He concluded by acknowledging some gaps in the study: a) gay, bi- and transgendered individuals were not specifically part of the study parameters; and b) only those who were willing to answer the questions (primarily over the phone) determined the results – in other words, those who didn't have a phone or didn't wish to discuss these issues for whatever reasons, were not included. The group thanked Mike for his excellent work and candor.

## 2) Brief presentations by members:

a) Roger Rosenblatt, MD, MPH, MFR, Professor and Vice Chair of the Department of Family Medicine, and Director of the Rural/Underserved Opportunities Program, University of Washington (UW) – Roger first noted that four years ago, he began offering a new course on Global Environmental Change and Human Health to medical and other graduate students, which has been quite successful.

He then noted that though conservation biology in its many facets is a part of over 150 active faculty programs University-wide, UW currently has no centralized program at the graduate level.

He and his colleagues are now working to design such a graduate program that brings together conservation biology and human health – a broad and inextricably intertwined continuum. The Conservation Biology committee is made up of three faculty (Julia K Parrish, Associate Professor in the School of Aquatic and Fishery Sciences, and in the Biology Department; Clare Ryan, Associate Professor in the College of Forest Resources and Adjunct in the Evans School of Public Affairs; and Roger) convened by the Program on the Environment, the Earth Initiative, and endorsed by the Graduate School to study the options for a cutting-edge program in conservation at the UW. Throughout the next three quarters, Roger said they have been charged with meeting with all interested parties to put together a workable design. He would like input from NGOs, government agencies and others to determine questions like: what kind of graduates do we need in the future? will you provide internships? who would employ a person who graduates in this interdisciplinary field? etc. Please contact Roger directly if you have suggestions: [rosenb@famned.washington.edu](mailto:rosenb@famned.washington.edu).

b) Allison Campbell, WashPIRG, highlights of Clean Energy Campaign – she was unable to attend the meeting.

## 3) Open Space:

Four small group discussions emerged

a) Breast Cancer and the environment

Highlights included:

- Providing better information and access to health care for bi- and transgendered individuals

- Connecting with communities at the local level about how they can prevent exposures that can lead to breast cancer (for example, through the Master Home Environmentalist Program)
- Educating about safer cosmetics and personal care products
- Raising awareness about these issues by supporting the Breast Cancer Fund's annual "Climb Against the Odds" fundraising climb of Mt. Rainier. This year, CHE-WA members Sibyl Diver and Pam Tazoli are participating in the the climb and welcome your support! See: <http://tbcf.kintera.org/Rainier2005> to make a donation.

b) Pharmaceuticals as pollutants

Highlights included:

- There is not a good collection system anywhere in the US for pharmaceuticals and these get into the water system (a couple other places in the US collect controlled substances, but not pharmaceuticals or only pharmaceuticals and not over-the-counter drugs, etc.)
- Most people are completely unaware that this is a concern – either the drugs are flushed down the toilet and go into the sewage system or they're thrown in the trash and end up in landfills.
- Suellen Mele, Emma Johnson, Nancy Dickeman and others are beginning to work on a pilot study in Washington State to collect pharmaceuticals as hazardous waste.

c) Health-tracking ideas and opportunities

Highlights included:

- Involving as many stakeholders as possible in forums and focus groups this summer to develop priorities (suggestions included the Healthy Coalition for Youth and Children and the Children's Alliance)
- Prioritizing information on environmental pollutants, exposures and health outcomes.

d) Toxics Use Reduction Institute (TURI) in Massachusetts as a potential model for Washington State

- Instead of TURI, the focus of this group became next steps for the CHE-WA Precautionary Principle Work Group. At last January's meeting, Council member Richard Conlin asked the group to offer the Seattle City Council tangible information on how the PP would apply to procurement policies (such as what San Francisco has developed) and land use. Steve Gilbert will now follow up on that and potentially have one of Kate Davies' graduate students help.

4) Wrap-up

Elise asked for feedback on the meeting. There was general agreement that "open space" was a great way to solicit new ideas, but may not be something we want to include at every quarterly meeting.

Elise then thanked everyone and noted that she will convene the CHE-WA Steering Committee later in June to develop an agenda for the next quarterly meeting which will likely be held in late September/early October.