

**Northwest Regional CHE (Collaborative on Health and the Environment)**  
**Meeting Notes**  
**July 9, 2003 - 10:00 A.M. - Noon**  
**Seattle**

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***Possible Dates for Next Meeting***

Tuesday, Sept 23rd

Monday, Sept 29th

Tuesday, Sept 30th

Please let me know your availability and preference as soon as possible.

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***Participants***

- Chetana Acharya, Center for Ecogenetics and Enviro Health, University of Washington
  - Carol Dansereau, Farmworker Pesticide Project
  - Elizabeth Davis, League of Women Voters
  - Ticiang Diangson, Seattle Public Utilities
  - Sibyl Diver, Toxic Free Legacy campaign
  - Robin Evans-Agnew, American Lung Association of Washington
  - Steve Gilbert, Institute for Neurotoxicology and Neurological Disorders
  - Sally Goodwin, Environment Committee of the Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility
  - Bruce Herbert, Newground Investments
  - Keike Kehoe, consultant for the Beldon Fund
  - Steven McDonald, Washington State Department of Health
  - Elise Miller, Institute for Children's Environmental Health (recorder)
  - Nancy McKay, Russell Family Foundation
  - Linda Park, Seattle Biotech Legacy Foundation (SBLF)
  - Janna Rolland, former director Community Toolbox for Children's Environmental Health
  - Roger Rosenblatt, Dept of Family Medicine, University of Washington
  - Gregg Small, Washington Toxics Coalition
  - Moya Vazquez, Seattle Biotech Legacy Foundation
  - Gwen Vernon, Cascadia Consulting Group
  - Clark Williams-Derry, Northwest Environment Watch
  - Marcella Wilson, Seattle Public Utilities
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***1) Introductions and Highlights of Specific Initiatives***

Elise Miller first welcomed everyone to the third face-to-face meeting of Northwest Regional CHE and thanked Linda Park for making the conference room at these foundation offices available for this meeting. Elise then mentioned the national Learning and Developmental Disabilities Initiative that she is coordinating as part of CHE, noting two upcoming conferences: an invitational Wingspread Conference to be held July 22-24th on environmental contributors to developmental disabilities that she is helping the American Association on Mental Retardation to

organize; and the “In Harm's Way: Toxic Threats to Child Development” training to be held November 8th at the University of Washington, which she is working with the Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility to organize.

Gregg Small noted Washington Toxics’ successful work reducing pesticide use at schools by helping to push through parent notification legislation as well as promoting alternative pest management methods. He also mentioned Washington Toxics’ project collecting the stories of those who have been impacted by chemical exposures – they want to put faces of “real people” to the more analytical, policy-oriented and statistical information we often read on the health affects of toxic chemicals.

Sally Goodwin mentioned her work with the Whidbey Island No Spray coalition (WINS) to get the Island County commissioners to switch from spraying herbicide on county roads to mowing – one of the first counties in Washington State to do this. Now their work is focused on getting the Washington State Department of Transportation to stop using herbicides on state highways. In addition, she's been supporting efforts to incorporate Integrated Pest Management into school policies.

Gwen Vernon noted her recent work with groundskeepers at schools to help reduce pesticide use as well.

Clark Williams-Derry mentioned Northwest Environment Watch's breastmilk project and said that they had just sent in the first seven sample of breastmilk for testing of PCBs, dioxins and PBDEs. They intend to get 33 more samples from this region, though it is challenging finding women willing to participate.

Sibyl Diver highlighted Toxic Free Legacy’s efforts to build alliance among various constituencies in the Northwest to reduce mercury, dioxin and PCBs through legislation, such as the recently passed mercury bill which focuses on reducing the use and production of mercury and implementing alternative purchasing policies. They are also working to restore money for the Department of Ecology to phase out PBTs in Washington State.

Roger Rosenblatt mentioned the recent course he led on ecosystem health and human health for health professional students at University of Washington, the first ever and highly successful. Six graduate students will likely focus their academic work in this area. He said he now hopes to establish an ongoing ecosystem health program at UW.

Moya Vazquez noted she was with Immunex and is now very pleased to be working with this group as a board member of the Seattle Biotech Legacy Foundation.

Nancy McKay said that in her work at the Russell Family Foundation they focus on sustainability, green business and reducing pollution.

Linda Park mentioned she is working on a number of volunteer activities to develop the Seattle Biotech Legacy Foundation, including working with CHE to design a seminar series on environmental health for the science community and the general public. The foundation also

recently sent out a request for proposals to support a research project on environmental health that would also emphasize connecting scientific research with policy opportunities. Finally, Linda announced that there is space available at this foundation office for people with small family foundations wanting a downtown office with access to conference rooms, etc.

Chetana Acharya said much of her community outreach work at the Center for Ecogenetics and Environmental Health at UW is currently focused on science literacy awareness, seafood safety and environmental justice needs assessment.

Ticiang Diangson said she is partnering with Chetana, Marcella Wilson and others on the environmental justice needs assessment project in various minority communities in Seattle. Currently, they are talking with Filipino, East African and Samoan communities and have been struck by the extremely diverse needs, concerns and priorities of these different groups. "Though we may start off talking about household hazardous waste, often the conversations turn to other issues that these people are more concerned about."

Marcella Wilson echoed Ticiang's description and added that many of the people with whom they've spoken are far more concerned with safety, violence and other "environmental health" issues like noise, restaurant odors, and solid waste issues, rather than exposures to toxics. She also emphasized that what is different about this project is that "we're not going into these communities to tell them what to do; instead, we're going in to hear what their needs are and what they see needs to happen."

Keiki Kehoe said that she is consulting for the Beldon Fund on their environmental health program and is here to listen.

Carol Dansereau mentioned that through her farmworker pesticide work she is trying to make the often-invisible problem about the impact of pesticides on the health of farmworkers, their families and their farmland, visible. One piece of this work will be biomonitoring workers to measure body burdens of pesticides.

Janna Rolland mentioned she recently finished her graduate work in public administration and is back in Seattle where she previously served as the director of the Community Toolbox for Children's Environmental Health (Community Toolbox gives out small grants to communities across the country for grassroots projects on environmental health and justice). She continues to be very interested in environmental health and justice issues and is here to listen.

Steve Gilbert mentioned he is director and founder of the nonprofit Institute of Neurotoxicology and Neurological Disorders (INND), and is an affiliate associate professor in the Department of Environmental Health, UW. His primary research interests are in the effects of lead and mercury on the developing nervous system. He also recently authored a book entitled *A Small Dose of Toxicology*. One of his main interests right now is the precautionary principle.

Elizabeth Davis highlighted the League of Women Voters' interest in children's social issues and children at risk. Much of her work now with the league is educating them about the chemical impacts on children's health and ways to prevent this from happening.

Robin Evans-Agnew mentioned this is the 100th anniversary year of the American Lung Association (ALA). The ALA originally started with a focus on tuberculosis and has now moved on to be concerned with all kinds of indoor and outdoor air issues and other environmental health concerns related to asthma and other health concerns. He noted, however, this is not just a disease of one organ – there are many other issues and biological systems involved. He suggested we might also reach out to other groups that address cancer and heart disease.

Steve McDonald noted his primary work at the Washington State Department of Health is focused on the health-tracking program of the links between environmental exposures and health outcomes, for which they received a grant from the Centers for Disease Control. He is also concerned with issues of mercury in fish and the impact on human health.

Elise thanked the group and mentioned that eight to ten people had contacted her saying they had wanted to attend, but were unable to make this meeting – these included some health-affected groups, government agencies, researchers and other advocacy organizations.

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## ***2) Discussion of Priorities and Potential Focus Areas for the Group:***

### **\* Website:**

- Create a website for participating groups where we can post what we are doing and better engage with other groups. (Elise mentioned that she had done this for the Partnership for Children's Health and the Environment, a North American coalition, and thinks this would be possible with additional staff help).

### **\* Choose Specific Goals**

- Pick one or two goals to work together on in the short-term. Learn how we best work together and then consider other goals.
- Get Seattle to sign on to the precautionary principle like San Francisco has.
- Make sure the Department of Ecology gets the funding it needs to phase out PBTs.

### **\*Outreach**

- Bring in more community-based groups – make sure they are aware of these opportunities and about participating in CHE. Highlight concerns that these groups might find of greatest interest--how does this issue affect my (or my family's) health TODAY?
- Bring in more of the medical community, the PTAs and other more mainstream groups.
- Emphasize “science literacy.”

### **\*Guiding Principles**

- Create a set of Guiding Principles for this group to use as a reference and focus point (after some discussion, it was decided we did not want to spend much time developing these, but that using a condensed version of CHE's Guiding Principles would serve this purpose.)

### **\*Structure For This Group**

- Keep it simple and informal for now with Elise serving as the point person. If we need to develop a steering committee, it will become apparent as our work together becomes more focused.
- Stay connected with our Oregon colleagues even though they understandably want to start their own CHE group given they can't logistically attend meetings in Seattle and are interested in focusing on specific initiatives in Oregon.

### **\*Connection between Personal Health and Ecosystem Health**

- Keep the big picture in mind that impact the health of the larger ecosystem and all the species: namely, population growth; finite resources; clean air, water and food; global warming; biodiversity; and habitat conservation. Though we may choose to focus on one issue, we have to be aware of these other issues and acknowledge their magnitude. We need to emphasize the link between personal health and ecosystem health and help people to see how everything is connected.
- Don't forget economic issues and unequal access to healthcare as we consider the wide array of issues that impact health.

### **\* Public Forums on Enviro Health**

- Use the proposed SBLF educational forums on environmental health not just as a lecture series, but as a larger effort linked to advocacy and policy initiatives. When the speakers are in town, plug them into other educational venues, have them meet with editorial boards and legislators, have them write op-eds., etc.
- Reach out to new groups to forge more powerful coalition so we can effect policy changes.
- Use CHE's unique feature of bringing scientists, advocates and agencies together to leverage our collective work.
- Emphasize the overriding themes of PREVENTION and CONNECTION

### **3) *Based on Discussion: Areas of Greatest Interest for Collaborative Work***

- Getting Seattle to adopt the Precautionary Principle
- Supporting legislative efforts to help the Dept of Ecology phase out PBTs
- Encouraging strong efforts to reduce and eliminate the use of pesticides

### **4) *Action Steps***

- Elise Miller will write of the notes from this meeting as well as draft and circulate via email a condensed version of the CHE consensus statement that might be used as the "guiding principles" for this group.
- Steve Gilbert will review San Francisco's precautionary principle statement and offer suggestions regarding how we might undertake a similar effort in Seattle, knowing some of the complexities and controversies surrounding this principle (for example, some view this principle as a "nontariff" barrier to trade).
- Gregg Small and Sibyl Diver will evaluate how we might collectively support the reinstatement of the funds for the Department of Ecology to phase out PBTs in Washington State and even work to increase the \$800,000 that is supposed to be allocated.

- Elise will follow up with the SBLF on the proposed public environmental forums.
- Elise will confirm the date for our next meeting proposed for September via email. It was noted we will likely need a bigger space (perhaps the American Lung Association office nearby?). She also emphasized that this is not in any way an exclusive group and to please encourage other colleagues or people you think might find this of interest to join us.

Meeting adjourned at noon.