

Collaborative on Health and the Environment – Northwest (CHE-NW) Environmental Justice (EJ) Working Group

Meeting Notes

**American Lung Association of Washington offices, Seattle
July 28, 2004**

*** Action Item for Everyone: Please send your list of invitees (and their contact info!) for the September 30th meeting to Chetana (cacharya@u.washington.edu) NO LATER THAN AUGUST 20th. She will compile a comprehensive invitation list by the 20th and the planning committee will then send out invitations.****

In attendance

Alyssa Sampson, Cross Cultural Health Care Program
Anjuli (Ani) Gupta, Center for Environmental Health in Oakland, CA (via phone)
Carol Dansereau, Farm Worker Pesticide Project
Chetana Acharya, UW Center for Ecogenetics and Environmental Health
Douglas Pakenshus, WA Department of Ecology
Elise Miller, Institute for Children's Environmental Health (ICEH)
Janna Rolland, ICEH Board Member
Linn Gould, Erda Environmental consulting
Maria Batayola, Seattle Environmental Justice Needs Assessment program
Morgan Barry, Seattle & King County Public Health Department
Nanda Blazej, Cascadia Consulting Group
Suellen Mele, Washington Citizens for Resource Conservation
Ticiang Diangson, Seattle Public Utilities
Yalonda Sinde, Community Coalition for Environmental Justice

Notes

After quick introductions, the conversation focused on the direction of the CHE-NW EJ work group, based on the draft goals listed at the first CHE-NW EJ meeting (5/20/04). There was general agreement that we need to create an overall CHE-NW EJ work plan and include some tangible steps to attain these goals.

The group decided that the first area of consideration is making sure that all players were at the table and involved in the development of the CHE-NW EJ work plan. Bringing all people to the table would then lead to a larger "values" discussion that could inform the guidance principles and CHE-NW EJ working group goals. The two top steps towards creating a work plan were to:

1. Invite more players to the table so that EJ partners can join with more mainstream environmental and environmental health groups.
2. Create a list of EJ guidance principles to incorporate EJ institutionally, which government, advocacy and/or education institutions could use as a quality-control framework.

CHE-EJ Work Plan (draft based on goals listed at the 5/20/04 meeting):

1. Make sure an all-encompassing, diverse set of players is invited to the table. After some discussion, the group agreed that we need to make sure to include:
 - People beyond Western Washington and make this possible by offering some travel funding to encourage participation.
 - Farm workers in eastern Washington, Skagit Valley, etc. whenever possible (or at least for now have Carol Dansereau serve as a liaison to these farmworkers to help ensure their perspectives are heard)
 - Urban workers exposed to toxins (grounds and building maintenance folks)
 - Other EJ groups suggested by Yalonda.
 - More mainstream groups, i.e. university departments, businesses, government agencies, in addition to the advocacy groups, to ensure that CHE-NW overall remains as balanced as possible in terms of different sectors being represented.
2. Create list of EJ guiding principles for institutions, agencies and advocacy groups.
 - Use principles to conduct progress checks within organizations.
 - Work with Title 6 compliance.
 - CHE-NW EJ members could partner with governments to provide guidance or consultation on EJ principles.

There was also some dialogue around working on specific projects (such as farm worker safety or pesticide use in immigrant communities) vs. focusing on the larger theme of EJ and how it can be institutionalized via guiding documents and policies. Elise emphasized that CHE-NW is not about promoting specific policy initiatives (such as shutting down a waste incinerator, etc.) since individual organizations are already doing that, but instead, CHE-NW works to create frameworks and gather data that can enhance the efforts being undertaken by all sectors within CHE-NW. In this context, the EJ Working Group would augment our collective work by helping to institutionalize EJ principles across the board and build allies between sectors that have not traditionally worked together well.

3. Educating about EJ/EH topics, i.e. pesticide uses and issues and influencing change within organizations.
 - US Department of Agriculture has a workgroup which CHE-NW EJ may want to participate in.
 - Members of CHE-NW EJ can ask agencies the ‘hard questions’ and help to bring about changes—leverage and support agencies to do so.
4. Develop a reciprocal, equal-information exchange between all kinds of groups. As part of this, CHE-NW should consider including a partnership mechanism for CHE-that ensures equitable leadership among different players.

5. Create deliberate partnerships across different kinds of groups (cultural, etc.) so that organizations can more effectively advocate for programs, policies and science that meet the needs of all communities.
 - “Peacekeepers Team”: support and facilitate environmental justice and traditional environmental groups in communicating cross-culturally to successfully partner on initiatives.
 - Build allies in order to strengthen overall impact and attain environmental justice.
 - Understand each other’s cultures and values.
 - Pay attention to EJ/EH needs and see where partnerships can develop.

Additionally, Elise mentioned that an anonymous donor had offered funding to help with CHE-NW working groups, and the EJ working groups would be a great candidate for this funding. The group thought that providing scholarship travel funding so that EJ groups might be able to attend meetings more easily would be very helpful. Elise said that she would need a basic budget, but that seemed like a very reasonable expense and important to the development of the EJ work. Other activities this might support would become clearer once CHE-NW EJ has a more formulated work plan.

Next CHE-NW EJ Meeting – September 30:

After some discussion, the group decided that it would be good to have both the CHE-NW and CHE-NW EJ meetings on the same day in an effort to get the most people to attend both meetings as the issues are so interrelated. Both meetings are now scheduled for Thursday, September 30, with time for socializing and refreshments.

Draft agenda:

3- 5pm CHE-NW meeting

5- 6pm Social time

6- 8pm CHE-NW EJ meeting

The September 30 CHE-NW EJ meeting will be an all-inclusive “Planning & Implementing” Meeting. Invitations will be extended to all people and organizations we think should be there. Expanding the list does make logistics and planning process more challenging, simply because of having so many voices at the table, but the team decided it is absolutely doable and necessary with the right process. Maria can help with tips for facilitating the process.

Yalonda mentioned that CCEJ organizes a quarterly meeting with regional EJ partners, some of who may be interested in participating in CHE-NW. Additionally, Yalonda and DouGlas suggested some local partners to invite to the September 30 meetings.

Action Item for Everyone: Please send your list of invitees (and their contact info!) to Chetana who will compile a comprehensive invitation list by August 20. Planning committee will then send out invitations.

For the September 30 meeting, Maria suggested sending around these three questions for all attendees to think about beforehand and be prepared to discuss:

- What is EJ?
- What does it look like when agencies/organizations practice it?
- How do we get there?

September 30 CHE-EJ meeting Planning Committee: Yalonda, Maria, and Morgan

Action item: A facility that could host both meetings (and the reception) and that has speaker phone access as well as decent parking needs to be reserved ASAP. Yalonda said she would check on this and get back to the group.

Some participants requested having the CHE consensus statement circulated:

Everyone participating in CHE-NW should be familiar with the national consensus statement, which is located online at www.cheforhealth.org:

“The Collaborative on Health and the Environment (CHE) is a new network of concerned people and organizations working together toward the shared goal of improving public and individual health. CHE Partners include representatives of patient organizations, health professional and scientific societies, community organizations, environmental health advocates, funders and indeed all those interested in working together to improve public and individual health. To that end, we begin with a basic consensus statement that identifies the facts and principles upon which CHE Partners agree...” To read in entirety, visit www.cheforhealth.org.

Notes respectfully submitted by Nanda Blazej and Chetana Acharya (edited by Elise Miller).