

**EPHT ADVISORY GROUP MEETING**  
**May 19, 2005**

**Attendees**

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Jodee Dennison, IHS	Alex Gorman, WVE
Rachelle Deskins, FDA	Sibyl Govan, MSL-NRIS
Neil Squires, DPHHS/Informatics	Tim Metcalfe, MSL-NRIS
Marylynn Donnelly, DPHHS/CSHS	Chris Korhonen, DPHHS/EPHT
Becky Bacon, DPHHS/Informatics	Leah Dreyer, DPHHS/EPHT
Sib Clack, DPHHS/MCH	Marjean Magraw, DPHHS/EPHT
Jim Edgar, DPHHS/Vital Stats	Lou Olcott, DPHHS/Biomonitoring
Kristin Nei, ACS	Rick Chiotti, OPI
Darren Steiner, DPHHS/OTD	Anne Hedges, MEIC
Diana Hammer, EPA Region 8	Joanne Oreskovich, DPHHS/BRFSS
Dan Strausbaugh, ATSDR	Kammy Johnson, DPHHS/Biomonitoring
Tom Ellerhoff, DEQ	

**EPHT PROJECT UPDATES**

***Funding***

EPHT's application for the 10-month cost extension (October 2005 – July 2006) was submitted on 4/28/05 to CDC. An additional proposal to enhance birth defects monitoring was also submitted, in collaboration with UC Berkeley.

***Redirect Request***

EPHT requested existing funds be redirected for some new activities in the current year. The redirects will be used to 1) enhance DEQ's existing databases to improve data quality prior to linking; 2) utilize MSU Extension Service's database on Montana household environmental exposures; 3) use environmental information from the Bureau of Mines at MT Tech on radon, arsenic, and heavy metals; 4) contract with Larry Gostin from the Center for Law and Public Health to review public health law related to tracking and provide recommended legislation; 5) fund another internship from UC Santa Barbara.

***New Activities***

- EPHT is collaborating with DPHHS Informatics to develop a lead surveillance program; the program will be EPHT's first data integration model.
- Chris Korhonen (EPHT), Becky Bacon, and Neil Squires (both DPHHS Informatics) attended the Public Health Information Network (PHIN) Conference in May.
- An interagency geo-coding workgroup has been formed to standardize address fields used across state agencies.

***On-going Workgroups***

Fish and Contaminants Interagency workgroup  
Heavy Metals Interagency workgroup  
Agency Cancer workgroup  
Radon workgroup

## Children's Environmental Health Interagency network

### *Outreach Activities*

- Women's Voices for the Earth Conference: Marjean, Chris, and Leah attended the WVE conference in Bozeman in April. Marjean gave a presentation introducing EPHT.
- Montana Environmental Health Association (MEHA): Marjean presented on the community environmental health assessment projects, along with past and current contractors Jennifer Pinnow (Yellowstone Co.) and Ken Fitzgerald (Rocky Boys).
- Spring Public Health Meeting: Chris presented with Don Skaar (FWP), Howard Reid (DPHHS Food & Consumer Safety), and Kim Monday (WIC Program) on mercury in Montana and fish consumption guidelines.
- Public Health Institute, Bozeman, June 8-10<sup>th</sup>: Marjean and Chris Deveny will teach part of a class on the community EH assessment process.
- Physician Outreach: Dana Headapohl will be giving presentations on environmental health at hospital grand rounds sessions around Montana.
- Children's Environmental Health Summit: EPA Region 8 summit will be held in Helena at the Great Northern Hotel, on August 3 and 4. (See attached agenda)
- Spring Newsletter: will be published in June, and sent to Advisory Group members.
- We are currently editing the EPHT needs assessment document, and hope to have it published shortly.
- EPHT website: check the "what's new" button for updated items of interest.

### *Tracking Epi Update*

- Mercury: Members of the Fish and Contaminants workgroup gave a panel presentation on Mercury contamination in Montana sport caught fish to the Montana Public Health Association (MPHA) in Bozeman. Montana State University (MSU) faculty members of the Fish and Contaminants workgroup will be conducting a study on mercury levels in Native American women
- Arsenic: A student intern is coming this summer to do an arsenic in well water study through the Biomonitoring program.
- Gastroschisis: A second intern will be doing medical records reviews relating to gastroschisis.
- Radon: A radon working group will be formed to look at radon issues in Montana.
- Nuclear Fallout: We have answered several inquiries for information on Thyroid cancer in Montana related to nuclear fallout from above ground tests in Nevada in the 1950s and 1960s. A fact sheet on this topic can be found at the EPHT website.

## **REVIEW OF STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION**

In February 2005 EPHT held a two-day planning process focused on creating a logic model that:

- Built on the accomplishments of the Montana EPHT and its partners since its inception, three years ago.
- Identified a five-year vision for environmental health tracking in Montana
- Determined principles for guiding the development and effects of environmental health tracking

- Created short, medium, and long-term project outcomes
- Identified, to a lesser extent, the action steps needed to achieve the outcomes and the agencies and groups best positioned to facilitate these efforts.

Participants prioritized health effects and environmental concerns, based on the results of community EH assessments and statewide surveys. The results were:

***Priority Health Effects***

1. Cancer
2. Respiratory/Lung Disease
3. Birth Defects
4. Asthma
5. Cardiovascular Disease

***Priority Environmental Concerns***

1. Air Quality (Outdoor air pollutants, indoor air pollutants, second-hand smoke, forest fires)
2. Water (drinking water/groundwater quality, surface drinking water, quantity/drought)
3. Heavy Metals (lead, mercury, arsenic)
4. Pesticides (includes herbicides and pesticides)
5. Growth and Development issues (urbanization, sprawl, cars/air pollution, septic systems contaminating water)

The group developed the following ***Five-Year Vision Statement***

“We identify and prevent health conditions that may be caused by people’s interactions with and exposures to their environment. We bridge the gap between public health and the environment through linked data, education, and collaboration.”

The group reached a consensus that the following are ***Important Characteristics of EPHT***

- Accessible and Flexible
- Sustainable infrastructure
- Policy
- Outreach and Education
- Environmental Justice/Advocacy
- Information Technology
- Interface between users

The group developed a list of ***Guiding Principles*** for Montana EPHT.  
(See attachment G)

***Short, Medium, and Long-Term Outcomes and Action Steps*** were listed that would assist Montana EPHT in reaching their vision. These outcomes and action steps were recommended for five component areas. For a list of outcomes and action steps, visit our website.

Five component areas:

IT/Technical

Outreach and Education  
Advocacy and Environmental Justice  
Policy and Legislation  
Collaborative Activities/Pilots/Partnerships.

### ***CDC New EPHT Vision & Mission Statements***

CDC has come out with a new vision statement, “Healthy Informed Communities.” The new mission statement is “to provide information from a nationwide network of integrated health and environmental data that drives actions to improve the health of communities.”

### **PARTNER UPDATE: INTERAGENCY CHILDREN’S EH NETWORK**

Diana Hammer, Montana EPA Office, reported on the work of Montana’s Interagency Children’s Environmental Health Network (CEH). CEH is a collaborative effort that began in October 2003, and seeks to share information and leverage resources to address issues of children’s environmental health in Montana. Partners include EPA, ATSDR, DEQ, DPHHS, OPI, MSU College of Nursing and Extension Service, UM Center for Environmental Health Sciences, and HUD. The following are projects CEH has been involved in over the past year.

- West Nile Virus/Safe Pesticide Use campaign: In preparation for the 2004 West Nile Virus (WNV) season, CEH developed a fact sheet and bookmark to raise awareness about safe pesticide use, especially with regards to children. The fact sheet was added to DPHHS WNV packets that were distributed to Montana counties, and the bookmarks were distributed through schools and public libraries.
- CEH is supporting where possible the DEQ survey and clean-up of school chemistry labs.
- In cooperation with DPHHS Maternal and Child Health, CEH will hold a training for daycare operators on environmental health safety and hazards in the daycare setting.
- CEH recently received a recognition award from EPA National Office of Children’s Environmental Health, as the only Interagency CEH group in the Region.
- CEH is hosting this year’s Region 8 Children’s Environmental Health Summit, on August 3 and 4 in Helena at the Great Northern Hotel. (See attached draft agenda) The summit is titled, “A Call to Action” and is for Region 8 public health, environmental, education professionals, and interested public. The US Surgeon General has been invited to speak, and other confirmed speakers include Dr. Henry Falk (National Center for Environmental Health), Dr. Katherine Shea, and Governor Brian Schweitzer. CEU credits are being offered, and registration begins June 1. Check this site for updates: <http://10.194.19.209/SBAP/childrenHlth12.asp>

### **PARTNER UPDATE: WOMEN’S VOICES FOR THE EARTH**

Alex Gorman, Director of Science and Research for Women’s Voices for the Earth (WVE) explained the group’s background and current projects. WVE is a non-profit environmental advocacy group, formed in 1985, that works both in Montana and nationwide. The WVE mission is to empower women, who historically have had little power in affecting environmental policy, to create an ecologically sustainable and

socially just society. WVE helps women develop leadership skills, and assists women in communities that are fighting toxic threats.

WVE advocates environmental health issues through public education, policy, and litigation. WVE provides decision makers with the information they need and recommends alternatives where available. One focus is on persistent organic chemicals and their long-term, chronic effects, particularly those affecting women and children. Recently, WVE succeeded in helping 4 of 5 Montana hospitals with medical incinerators to find alternatives for waste disposal.

At the national level, WVE has collaborated on issues of chemical policy, such as the Campaign for Safe Cosmetics, which educates consumers about the ingredients in everyday cosmetic and household products, and empowers people to make informed decisions about the products they use. See the product database at [www.safecosmetics.org](http://www.safecosmetics.org) . Visit [www.womenandenvironment.org](http://www.womenandenvironment.org) for more on Women's Voices for the Earth.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND ADVOCACY**

Alex reviewed the environmental justice (EJ) and advocacy recommended action steps developed at the Strategic Planning session.

1. Conduct an EJ assessment across Montana
2. Map information to characterize EJ issues
3. Prioritize EPHT EJ issues
4. Develop specific interventions that are participatory, self-driven, and self-determined

Different EJ definitions were reviewed, noting that environmental justice is not simply about race, and requires a broad definition. For the Montana EJ assessment, all the various impacted populations need to be incorporated. One of EPHT's summer interns will be focusing on EJ issues in Montana. She will be able to do background research and gather information in the coming months to plan an EJ assessment.

## **OUTREACH AND EDUCATION**

Marjean reviewed the outreach and education group's action steps suggested at the Strategic Planning session. (See attachment)

## **EPHT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

Marjean suggested the idea of forming an EPHT Advisory Group executive committee, to be comprised of a local health department representative, a tribal representative, a health care provider, a university representative, and an advocacy group representative. This executive committee would help set Advisory Group agendas and provide input and feedback/suggestions to EPHT. The committee would also be a way to keep key partners

involved. Alex Gorman was nominated, and EPHT will email suggestions for other nominees.

**Next meeting: TBA. Possible short meeting on August 3<sup>rd</sup> after the first day of the CEH Summit, with a full meeting in September.**