

# CALIFORNIA TRACKING

The Newsletter of the California  
Environmental Health Tracking Program

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CALIFORNIA  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
HEALTH TRACKING  
PROGRAM

## IN THIS ISSUE

CEHTP is committed to making an intensive, long-term commitment to community outreach and education; providing timely and relevant information to communities; and providing technical assistance and training in accessing and understanding environmental health surveillance data so that communities can participate meaningfully in environmental and public health policymaking.

In this issue, we describe program activities aimed at understanding and addressing community and stakeholder capacities related to environmental health. We also highlight several resources that may be useful in addressing environmental health issues.

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## Mini-Grant Awards :: *Building Environmental Health Capacity*

CEHTP recently solicited mini-grant proposals for building community and/or organizational capacities in accessing, understanding, analyzing, interpreting, or utilizing (for public health action) environmental health data. CEHTP is pleased to announce that four organizations have been awarded the mini-grants – each at \$10,000. Below are the project summaries for each of the grantees. Congratulations to them all!

### Communities for a Better Environment (CBE): *Environmental Justice DATA Program*

CBE will develop and implement an Environmental Justice DATA Program to train community leaders and members in Southeast Los Angeles to become research/data activists. The Environmental Justice DATA training, conducted by the CBE staff and consultants, will build capacity among local community members to access information on the sources and types of pollution and their health impacts. Participants will also develop skills to advocate for pollution reduction/prevention and disease prevention, to identify community participation strategies for clean-up, and to use the information they gather and their new skills to support policy campaigns. After the training, participants will receive support and assistance from CBE in applying knowledge toward action.

The training will consist of five workshops:

1. Research 101 Workshop: will focus on how to determine research needs and the basics of internet research. Members will learn how to navigate through the internet and access relevant websites and databases (such as AQMD, EPA, and Census data).
2. Getting the Info Workshop: will show participants how to write a Freedom of Information Act request to governmental agencies to get the information necessary to create a polluter profile.
3. What's the 411? Workshop: will demystify databases and technical information to aid in understanding and analyzing research on such topics as the emissions produced by a specific facility

and how this facility may impact the community.

4. Who's got the Power? Workshop: will focus on the governmental agencies that regulate these polluters. The participants will also explore what can be done to fix the problems they are identifying and build a powerful voice for their community.
5. Polluter Profile Workshop: will show the participants how to present the problem to others in an easy to understand format. The community members will create a Polluter Profile fact sheet to highlight local polluting facilities. These profiles will be used to raise awareness in the community about environmental health and justice and make persuasive presentations to public and private policy decision makers.

### Contra Costa Asthma Coalition (CCAC): *A Blueprint for Asthma Action*

CCAC will develop and disseminate a "Blueprint for Asthma Action" on environmental and other factors that may contribute to, or affect, the prevalence and severity of asthma in Contra Costa County. CCAC will identify and collect useful, existing data from websites, studies, and reports, convert them into more user-friendly information for the general public, and publish the information in electronic (PDF) and written formats in both English and Spanish. The purpose of the **Blueprint for Asthma Action** is to:

1. Provide key information in one document in an easy to use format;
2. Serve as an advocacy tool for community members; and

*continued on page 2*

3. Stimulate ideas on how public and other policies can be changed or developed to reduce factors that can affect asthma prevalence and severity.

The **Blueprint** will facilitate CCAC's goal of developing a profile of Contra Costa's asthma problems and providing information on the environmental factors that may contribute to or exacerbate this expensive chronic condition. Specifically, the Coalition is focusing on environmental hazards to which Contra Costa County residents are exposed and examining how they compare to other populations and communities in the San Francisco Bay Area and California.

**Graduate School of Public Health at San Diego State University (SDSU): *Binational workshop on tracking environmental exposures and birth defects in the San Diego- Tijuana region***

SDSU will develop and conduct a workshop with attendance from stakeholders involved in environmental exposures and/or birth defects and maternal and child health. These participants will be drawn from state and local governments on both sides of the border, other involved agencies such as the California Teratogen Information Service, and local researchers at the San Diego State University Graduate School of Public Health and other San Diego area universities. The goals of this workshop are to:

1. Discuss harmonization and unification of existing data collection sources, and barriers to harmonization/unification,
2. Discuss feasibility of establishing a cross-border teratogen registry in conjunction with the existing California Teratogen Information Service in San Diego, and
3. Establish a communication network in order to provide opportunities for collaboration between agencies on both sides of the border.

A workshop report will be compiled and sent to all participants and made available through the SDSU Graduate School of Public Health and CEHTP websites. This report will contain a list of participants, and a report from the meeting detailing existing environmental health tracking data such as current GIS projects, discussions to barriers for harmonization of environmental tracking data and suggestions for future environmental health tracking partnerships.

Outcomes of the project include:

1. Comparable evaluation of frequencies in teratogen exposure, birth defects, and possible nutrition-gene-environmental interactions which contribute to congenital malformations.
2. Better understanding of the environmental factors

which impact infant survival and health at the U.S. – Mexico border.

3. Identification and linkage of partners interested in environmental health and the maternal fetal environment.
4. Establishment of common goals as well as harmonization and unification of existing data collection sources.
5. Development of recommendations for efficient uses of resources on environmental health tracking for birth outcomes in the San Diego/Tijuana region – for example: a pilot project on developing a compatible “Border Health Teratogen Registry”, using ethically and culturally appropriate consent forms and questionnaires.

**Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice: *Tracking Environmental and Community Health (TEACH) Program***

Greenaction will develop and implement the Tracking Environmental And Community Health (TEACH) program, which will offer a series of workshops to present local environmental health data to residents and community leaders from Bayview Hunters Point. The workshops will also teach skills in using the information for community organizing, obtaining media coverage, advocating for public health actions, and setting community environmental and health priorities. The program will also help build partnerships between local health officials and the community, and work toward facilitating effective public health responses to the high rates of environmental illness in Bayview Hunters Point. Greenaction will also ensure the success of the TEACH program by involving community residents and staff from the San Francisco Department of Health in program preparedness activities. Program goals include:

1. Educating residents of Bayview Hunters Point about environmental health, and building capacity within the community for grassroots advocacy for public health actions.
2. Increasing participation of low-income people of color in environmental health issues.
3. Facilitating a positive exchange between public health agency staff, residents, and advocates for the local community to promote action on environmental illnesses, hazards, and exposures in the community.
4. Communicating project findings in a culturally-sensitive way so that the wider community can benefit from the TEACH program.
5. Utilizing existing resources and data to add value to the TEACH program.
6. Assisting residents in prioritizing environmental health issues and creating a foundation for future programs.

## Environmental Health Workshop for Environmental Justice Organizations

Building the capacity of users of environmental health data/information is a key component of both the California Environmental Health Tracking Program (CEHTP) and the [University of California Center for Environmental Public Health Tracking](#) (UC Berkeley). To that end, CEHTP and UC Berkeley collaborated on an environmental health workshop for environmental justice organizations in California.

An advisory group composed of environmental justice organizations, UC Berkeley, and CEHTP, collaborated to develop the workshop curriculum. Thanks to the efforts of Jose Bravo of Just Transition Alliance, over 30 environmental justice advocates and leaders participated in the two-day workshop in October 2004.

The workshop was facilitated by UC Berkeley and various sessions were led by other advisory group members and CEHTP staff. One of the sessions was delivered by Peggy Toy, Director of the [Health DATA program at the](#)

[UCLA, Center for Health Policy Research.](#)



Participants commented that the workshop was both educational and interactive. They also found the data and other resources valuable for their work. Activities coupling data with strategies for action were especially helpful to participants. One of the most valuable aspects of the workshop was the opportunity to network and share ideas with others working to advance environmental justice.

The workshop was also a great learning experience for the organizers and facilitators. For CEHTP, it was an invaluable opportunity to learn about the needs of environmental justice organizations, identify future partners and identify new strategies for building community capacity.

To see the complete agenda, workshop materials, summary documents, and presentations related to the workshop, please visit [www.catracking.com/ucb](http://www.catracking.com/ucb).

### Goals of the workshop were to:

- \* Introduce participants to the concepts of environmental public health tracking.
- \* Build participants' capacity to find, understand, interpret, and use data on environmental hazards/exposures and diseases.
- \* Seek environmental justice perspectives and recommendations for environmental health tracking.

## Body of Evidence :: The Link Between Health and the Environment

Scientists are continuing to build an impressive body of evidence documenting the associations between environmental pollution and human health. Because environmental health research is advancing so rapidly and continually revealing more health effects of pollution, it is difficult to keep up with the latest findings and cumulative body of knowledge. Stakeholders – researchers, community groups, public health officials, and policy makers – need to be able to quickly find information about the various associations between pollution and health. The following resources provide information, in varying detail, about such associations.

Synopsis of relationships between broad categories of pollutants and diseases	▪ <a href="http://www.catracking.com/resources/nl/table3_1.htm">http://www.catracking.com/resources/nl/table3_1.htm</a> Table 3.1 from <i>Strategies for Establishing an Environmental Health Surveillance System in California: A Report of the SB702 Expert Working Group</i> . This summary table displays the evidence of association between categories of pollutants and diseases.
	▪ <a href="http://www.protectingourhealth.org/corethemes/links/2004-0203spreadsheet.htm">http://www.protectingourhealth.org/corethemes/links/2004-0203spreadsheet.htm</a> Chemical Contaminants and Human Disease: A Summary of Evidence. This is a detailed matrix, designed to reflect the current state of knowledge, of links between environmental hazards and about 200 human diseases, disorders, or conditions. The spreadsheet was compiled by the Collaborative on Health and the Environment scientists: Sarah Janssen, Gina Solomon, and Ted Schettler.
	▪ <a href="http://www.policylink.org/CHB/EnvironmentalHazards">http://www.policylink.org/CHB/EnvironmentalHazards</a> <i>The Influence of Community Factors on Health: An Annotated Bibliography</i> , by PolicyLink includes summaries and links to articles documenting associations between environmental hazards and health.
	▪ <a href="http://ehp.niehs.nih.gov">http://ehp.niehs.nih.gov</a> Environmental Health Perspectives: an open access source for current, credible, peer-reviewed research and news on environmental factors that affect human health.
Specific news and research findings	▪ <a href="http://toxnet.nlm.nih.gov">http://toxnet.nlm.nih.gov</a> TOXNET: a cluster of databases on toxicology, hazardous chemicals, and related areas. It can be used to locate toxicology data, literature references, and toxic release information on particular chemicals as well as to search for chemicals that cause specific effects.
Detailed toxicological information – including human health effects – for specific chemicals	

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## Potpourri :: News and Updates

Evaluation Report of the Senate Bill 702 Expert Working Group Process and Initial Outcomes: This evaluation assessed the SB 702 report development process and the initial impact on efforts to establish an environmental health surveillance system in California. The evaluation consisted of a series of key informant interviews including legislative staff and SB702 Expert Working Group members. [www.catracking.com/sub/sb702.htm](http://www.catracking.com/sub/sb702.htm)

United States Government Accountability Office (GAO): Environmental Indicators. Better Coordination is Needed to Develop Environmental Indicator Sets that Inform Decisions. Environmental indicators track changes to the quality and condition of the air, water, land, and ecosystems on various geographic scales, and related human health and economic conditions. The widespread development and use of

environmental indicators has prompted agencies to consider the benefits of such indicators when measuring performance and improving oversight of environmental programs. In this context, GAO produced this report which identifies: 1) the purposes for which federal and nonfederal organizations are developing and using environmental indicators, and how they are being used; and 2) the major challenges facing the development and use of environmental indicators.

<http://www.gao.gov/docsearch/abstract.php?rptno=GAO-05-52>

Environmental Health Perspectives: Mini-monograph on Environmental Public Health Tracking. This monograph includes a collection of articles around the National Environmental Public Health Tracking Program.

<http://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/docs/admin/minimono.html>

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*Disclaimer: Links to non-CEHTP resources are provided solely as a service. These links do not constitute an endorsement of these resources and none should be inferred. CEHTP is not responsible for the content of the individual organization web pages or documents found at these links.*

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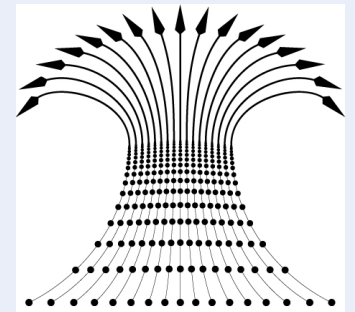
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The California Environmental Health Tracking Program (CEHTP) is a collaborative initiative of the Division of Environmental and Occupational Disease Control of the California Department of Health Services (CDHS-DEODC), the Office of Environmental Health Hazards Assessment of the California Environmental Protection Agency (Cal/EPA-OEHHA), and the University of California and is funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

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