

## **2007 Environmental Justice and Air Pollution Workshop**

Best Practices in Collaboration. Tools and Resources

U. S. EPA Region 9 Office

San Francisco, CA

September 6 – 7, 2007

### SUMMARY OF PLENARY SESSION AT CLOSE OF SECOND DAY

#### Marva King provided a summary of discussions that took place during the **Collaborative Track**.

Key points included:

- Communities want to learn from each other's experiences.
- Examples of successes and barriers were prominent throughout the 1-1/2 day workshop.
- A wide variety of case studies were considered with the identification of problems and work need to overcome the problems.
- Participants successfully networked with each other and shared a lot of information and experiences.
- Issues associated with environmental justice are directly relevant to EPA and State air programs.
- Multimedia and multi-agency issues are an important component of environmental justice.
- Themes of the discussion included:
  - environmental justice is all about race;
  - economics and poverty are important factors;
  - multiple stakeholders are involved and need to be included;
  - there is a need to work with those who are in opposition to the pursuit of environmental justice.

#### Alan Walts provided a summary of discussions that took place during the **Tools & Resources Track**.

Key points included:

- The T&R track emphasized educational information concerning tools that the community can use including Community Based Participatory Research, monitoring, voluntary approaches, regulatory approaches, strategic financing options and Supplemental Environmental Projects.
- Community groups that are just forming were able to connect with more experienced community groups.
- Numerous handouts on "tools" that are available should be taken home and connections should continue to be made.
- Three main points were identified, including:

- communities need assistance with finances and data; capacity building and ways to provide resources are key areas of assistance (e.g., ground-up sources available from environmental justice networks);
- experience of communities in getting the attention of regulators is very useful in a variety of ways, including
  - the use of data for supporting anecdotal information;
  - figuring out with whom to meet in order to improve communication within and across agencies;
  - figuring out who is the right person to make things happen;
- information sharing on best practices is important, including collection and dissemination (e.g., Rosa Parks Bus Project on diesel retrofits can help others).

Participants' comments on what they got from the workshop:

- The workshop provided valuable insight on strategies and struggles of other communities and how to create a collaborative team.
- Sustainable development is a key issue and there should be a world summit on this topic.
- Inspired by everyone's work and how they presented the work
- Good to be here and learn what has been done across the nation

Participants' comments on what needs to be done (focus on workshops):

- Divided tracks was a problem. How to ensure that all hear about each track?
- More cookies.
- Local EJ people need to be more involved in the planning process, overall and for both tracks.
- Workshop should include time for sessions based on local and regional groupings to compare issues.
- More learning about how to get funding to educate people to be the leaders of the future.

- More connection with Native Americans in the proceedings. This needs to be done locally in each area and include an exchange of ideas and teachings.
- Find a way to share information with all on -line, etc.
- Repeat Tools and Resources presentations at NEJAC meeting.
- Create DVD/CD with information from these meetings.
- How to do this again on a bigger scale?
- There is a need to meet more than once a year; also, meetings should be held in other EPA Regional Offices as well (e.g. Region 3 and Region 6 were mentioned), while maintaining a national scope.
- Meeting sites that are less expensive should be considered; perhaps a Supplemental Environmental Project (SEP) could be considered as a funding base, instead of having to work around federal meeting constraints.
- Please do at least 2 of these workshops on a yearly basis
- OAQPS has plans for another workshop in about 2 years and that EPA Region 9 has been a great partner, demonstrating a high level of interest; OAQPS seeks input on the need for more frequent workshops and partnering with Regional Offices will be given broader attention.
- All EPA Regional Offices should be made aware of workshop findings through communications among EJ coordinators; however, problems include
  - the need to do more (Region 6 was noted);
  - a lack of “people treatment” across the Regional Offices and a lack of outreach to smaller communities (e.g., marginalized communities that do not have resources).
- Where are the EPA attendees? They were 1/3 of the registrants, yet it doesn't look that way in the meetings.
- Need the decision makers to be present
- On a day to day basis, you/we are the decision makers
- Need more state, city, business and industry people at these meetings.

Participants views on other things (besides workshops) that need to be done:

- Dialog on exporting pollution, on not just moving it from one community to another, on doing the right thing everywhere.
- Pulling interagency collaboration up the chain.
- Develop a network to work locally, nationally and internationally.
- Need a follow-up EJ summit.
- Monthly conferences
- Participants should take note of interest in the environmental justice movement outside of the U.S., concerning minority, ethnic and other disadvantaged groups (e.g., Sweden).

Participants' comments on what they hope the agencies got from the workshop:

- Try to direct SEP \$ towards EJ collaboration and networking efforts.
- EPA should follow its own guidance on cumulative risk and on performing environmental justice assessments;
- It is not clear what standards Regions are held to on EJ. all Regional Offices should be brought to the same level of performance for environmental justice issues (e.g. Region 6); attention should be given to staff that are non-starters. Non-starters (in agencies) need to be held accountable and need to attend these conferences. Need some sort of analysis of each region's strengths and weaknesses (report card) that addresses people and funding.
- The National Environmental Justice Advisory Council (NEJAC) has been meeting less and less; "listening sessions" are needed annually in every EPA Regional Office; also, EPA environmental justice coordinators should be held to a consistent standard that involves regular meetings with the environmental justice community.
- On the other hand, the community perception of Regional Office environmental justice staff is not always accurate based on the capacity and expertise of that staff; communities should advocate for improvement and more resources (e.g., EPA Region 10 has only one full time employee for environmental justice).
- Need increased Regional staffing for EJ.

- Pilot community-scale risk assessments.
- Improve EPA's EJ website, it is not user friendly. Need more information links, e.g. so that “citizen guides to laws” is easier to find.
- The Environmental Finance Centers, as a resource, are not well known; they add value and can be linked to EPA web-sites; they could be used as a mechanism to repackage what is available and oriented to current needs, rather than addressing new issues. Get the word out about this resource and its web link.
- Look at what we have for tools and analyze for usability.
- Interagency coordination especially with and among health agencies (e.g., HHS, CDC, IHS, etc.), including State/local agencies, is needed to move forward; a multi-agency approach for relating the environment to health issues is important in addressing environmental justice problems. Cooperation should be mandated.
- Listening sessions should be held in all Regions, at least yearly, and should include not just EPA but other health and environmental agencies.
- Federal authority has been delegated to States; the State staffs should be mandated to attend meetings with the environmental justice community and should be held accountable.
- Comments made during the “Welcome and Plenary Session” addressed only some of the Bay area concerns which involve serious environmental issues..

Other participant comments:

- Philosophically, one cannot separate air from water from being; the environment must be treated as “one”.
- the most important comments were those about keeping the land and air pristine and treating the environment as “one”;
- Everything is interconnected; multi-media and cumulative risk issues need to be addressed;
- concerns about health issues tend to dominate the environmental justice discussion;
- there is a need to make a change in addressing environmental issues and to create a “better place”;

- participants are encouraged to “work within the system”.

### Next Steps

- Resolve issues with EPA which were brought up in the opening session, and do this before holding another conference.
- More information sharing on financial tools.
- Get the annual EJ listening sessions back on track.
- How should EJ Coordinators be interacting with communities ?
- EPA should follow-up on issues; for example, community scale risk assessments for small communities and multimedia issues that might be addressed by EPA’s Office or Research and Development can be identified.

### **Closing Remarks**

Richard Moore (Southwest Network for Economic and Environmental Justice (SNEEJ) and Co-host of the EJ workshop) provided the closing remarks. He indicated that:

- The workshop has been a beneficial activity over the two day period.
- Many contacts have been made and there is a good understanding of where everyone is.
- The environmental justice community must work for itself and build strong grassroots organizations.
- Recommendations for OAQPS include:
  - There is a great pool of expertise and resources from which to draw, but there is little activity from some Regional Offices;
  - EPA should learn from past errors;
- Elements to strengthen include;
  - bringing business and industry to meet in non-confrontational ways;
  - more local involvement and getting others into the discussion.
- EPA and HHS need to address “environmental racism”; an opportunity associated with a meeting coming up in November 2007 was mentioned.
- There should be a commitment to more communication in the environmental community.
- It was great for SNEEJ to co-host this workshop with EPA Region 9; thanks to Region 9 staff and all others on the planning committee who supported the workshop.

- There are plans for the community to meet with the Region 9 leadership.

Casey Camp closed the workshop with an invocation concerning the “oneness” of the environment and keeping it pristine.