



Office of Environmental Justice and Tribal Affairs Newsletter

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Message from the Director

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**Oil seeps from a well into
an adjacent pond in
South Texas**

The little boy walked past us on the gravel road, grinning from ear-to-ear because of the large-mouthed bass he'd caught in the pond behind him. It

looked like many water tanks in south Texas, surrounded by mesquite and live oaks.

This one, however, also had an oil well about 20 feet up from the sandy bank. The pipeline and tank were leaking, and you could follow the black and brown drainage down a run-off ditch to the water's edge. This land had been set aside for a community sustainability project, and the leaks were causing environmental damage.

We walked to several other wells, all of which were, or recently had been, leaking. Fortunately, within a day after reporting the problem to the state, an inspector notified the op-

erator of violations and cleanup began immediately.

While I am excited about our projects such as the Gulf Coast Emergency Response Initiative, the Lead Reduction Protocol Project, the Environmental Justice in America Conference, the Ponca Cumulative Risk Project, and agreements with Haskell Indian Nations University and the University of North Texas, none of these matter unless they make a difference in the ground, air and water.

That is why each of you is so critically important; you are the heart, eyes, hands and feet that bring about the changes that improve all of our lives. Thank you!

Second International Indigenous Youth Video Conference Held at UNT

The second International Indigenous Youth Conference on the Environment and Culture included participants from the U.S., Baskiria, Russia; Kuching, Malaysia; and Kampala, Uganda. Twenty-two Native American students from Oklahoma participated at the University of North Texas, the U.S. site for this year's videoconference.

The conference focused on

global climate change and efforts within the students' communities to address the issue. The students also explored ways indigenous cultures affect and shape environmental protection in their communities.

Conference participants are working on community projects related to global climate change, the results of which will be shared during their next conference this fall.



**Oklahoma students share
aspects of their culture at
the conference.**

Environmental Justice Team Update

Shirley Augurson, Associate Director

The Environmental Justice Team has had a productive spring! Our office hosted the semiannual EJ State Coordinators meeting in April. The meeting allowed EPA and our state partners to come together and discuss our best practices and visions and goals for our EJ programs.

States play a key role in addressing EJ concerns, and we will continue to work with our state agencies to strengthen our ex-

isting partnerships and to work collaboratively on activities.

Our team also helped coordinate several discussion panels for the EJ in America Conference held in May. Region 6 led panels on Tribal perspectives on EJ, Addressing Climate Change in Indigenous Communities, and State, Community and EPA Relations.

We are excited to announce that eligible

groups working on solutions to local environmental and public health issues can now apply for grants from EPA's EJ Small Grants program. Recipients can receive up to \$20,000 to help with their projects. Applications are due on June 30, 2008, so please visit our Web site for more information, or contact Shirley Quinones at 214-665-2713 or at quinones.shirley@epa.gov.



Participants dialogue at the EJ State Coordinators Meeting

Tribal Team Update

Randy Gee, Associate Director

Our office is committed to working in partnership with pueblos and tribes in the region. Recently we have been working on forming a Strategic Planning Subcommittee, at the request of the Tribal Caucus, to increase input into EPA's strategic planning process and to promote regional tribal priorities.

The Strategic Planning Subcommittee has been working diligently to accomplish the Caucus'

goals. The Subcommittee has held monthly conference calls and met face-to-face after the last Regional Tribal Operations Committee meeting in Dallas.

Recent and upcoming activities include:

- Review and comment on the draft National Program Managers Guidance.
- Review the current Strategic Plan and recommend proposed changes

to the National Tribal Caucus Representatives.

- Develop briefing materials outlining regional tribal priorities and objectives for EPA Senior Staff.

The Subcommittee welcomes new tribal members to join in this work! Conference calls are held on the first Tuesday of the month. For more information please contact Ginny Vietti at 214-665-7431 or at vietti.virginia@epa.gov.

Addressing Tribal Solid Waste

Solid Waste Program Update

The Ponca Tribe, located in north-central Oklahoma, is nearing completion of its Solid Waste and Recycling Collection Center. This project was the top-scoring grant in 2007 in the Tribal Solid Waste Management Assistance category. The Center will provide a permanent means for tribal members

to properly dispose of their trash, eliminating the use of burn pits or illegal dumping.

The Center includes a workshop, covered area for trash and recycling collection, equipment yard, and solar-powered heating and snow melting system for customer safety and comfort. The Center should serve the

Tribe's solid waste needs for decades to come.

The large building and work area also provide room for future projects, including waste oil collection, appliance refurbishing, and a joint project with neighboring Ponca City to collect and recycle plastic, a service that is not currently provided by the city.



Solar panels will heat and cool the Recycling Center

Discarded Tires Removed in Border Area

Border Program Update

EPA's Border 2012 Program worked with Mexico's environmental agency to remove about 5,700 scrap tires along the border. The agencies provided funding to the New Mexico-Chihuahua Rural Task Force to locate, collect and transport discarded tires for safe disposal from the small villages in the Palomas and Ascensión area in Chihuahua, Mexico.

Teams of teachers and students collected more than twice the number of tires expected. Students also

handed out brochures explaining why scrap tires are a public health problem and discussed the cleanup project with residents.

Discarded tires have become a growing threat to the environment and public health in the border area. They are eyesores and breeding grounds for mosquitoes. Additionally, local dumps usually burn tires to retrieve scrap metal, releasing toxic fumes into the air residents on both sides of the border breathe.

This cleanup was the final event of a project to reduce the number of discarded tires in the border area.

For more information about environmental activities in the border area, visit the Region 6 Border Web site at www.epa.gov/region6/6xa/border.htm.



Almost 6,000 discarded tires were cleaned up.

Tribal Lab Makes Region 6 History

Water Program Update

The Pueblo of Sandia is the first tribal laboratory in Region 6 to be certified for the analysis of drinking water compliance samples. In January, the Pueblo laboratory's Microbiological Drinking Water Section received certification through the State of New Mexico Department of Health.

Based on an on-site evaluation, State evaluators deter-

mined that the Pueblo's lab is qualified to analyze and report the results of public water supply microbiological compliance samples using an EPA-approved method.

This achievement was made possible through the dedicated efforts of the Lab Analyst, Veronica Montoya. Her experience and knowledge of lab procedures and analyses brings an invaluable skill set

that underscores the Pueblo of Sandia's commitment to protecting water quality and the environment.

For additional information concerning this story, contact the EPA Region 6 Drinking Water Program at 214-665-7158.



Pueblo of Sandia Drinking Water Staff

Region 6 Tribes Awarded Brownfields Grants

Superfund Program Update

Through their job training program, the Absentee Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma has provided environmental training, graduated and placed more than 60 students in the workforce. In March, EPA announced that the Tribe would be awarded a \$200,000 Brownfields job training grant to continue their existing program.

In April, EPA announced that the Cherokee Nation of Okla-

lahoma and the Absentee Shawnee Tribe would both receive Brownfields clean-up grants.

The Absentee Shawnee will receive \$156,466 to clean up a seven-acre site contaminated with metals and drums of unidentified substances. Cherokee Nation will receive \$104,000 to clean up the Saline Courthouse site, contaminated with harmful metals.



Grant recipients are presented their checks.



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Ongoing Environmental Justice Activities

Update from Louisiana

EPA awarded the Louisiana Environmental Justice Community Organizations Coalition (LEJCOC) \$100,000 to address their environmental justice issues and to achieve community health and sustainability. The project focuses on building a regional approach to addressing these issues by encouraging local residents and facilities to engage in non-confrontational dialogue that leads to pollution mitigation efforts and facility improvements.

LEJCOC identified the need to increase community understanding of issues and communication with local facilities. As a result, LEJCOC, in partnership with the Tulane Environmental Law Clinic Outreach Center, the Louisiana Depart-

ment of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) and EPA, hosted a "Gathering of Issues Forum" in New Orleans for their 14 member organizations.

The forum allowed communities an opportunity to engage in meaningful dialogue with state, federal, academia, agencies and industry on topics such as Understanding the Clean Air Act, Understanding Emergency Response and Alternative Dispute Resolution.

Environmental Training for Communities

LDEQ began an EnviroSchool for Communities training program in May. The goal is for communities to become informed participants who are skilled in how to access and utilize information and resources for more effective communication and dialogue with stakeholders.

For additional information about this training, contact Tomeka Prioleau at 225-219-0877.



Forum participants prepare for the next speaker.