

Coordination of Environmental Public Health Services in Four Southeastern Oklahoma Counties

**Presented by
Team Oklahoma
Environmental Public Health Leadership
Institute**

**February 27-28, 2006
Atlanta, Georgia**

Team Oklahoma

- **Montressa Elder MS, RPS**
 - Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality
 - monty.elder@deq.state.ok.us
- **Rocky McElvany MS, RPS**
 - Oklahoma State Department of Health
 - rockym@health.ok.gov
- **Michael Echelle BS, RPS**
 - Oklahoma State Department of Health
 - michaele@health.ok.gov
- **Ted Evans BS, RPS**
 - Oklahoma State Department of Health
 - tede@health.ok.gov
- **CDR Chris Buchanan MPH, REHS**
 - Indian Health Service
 - chris.buchanan@mail.ihs.gov

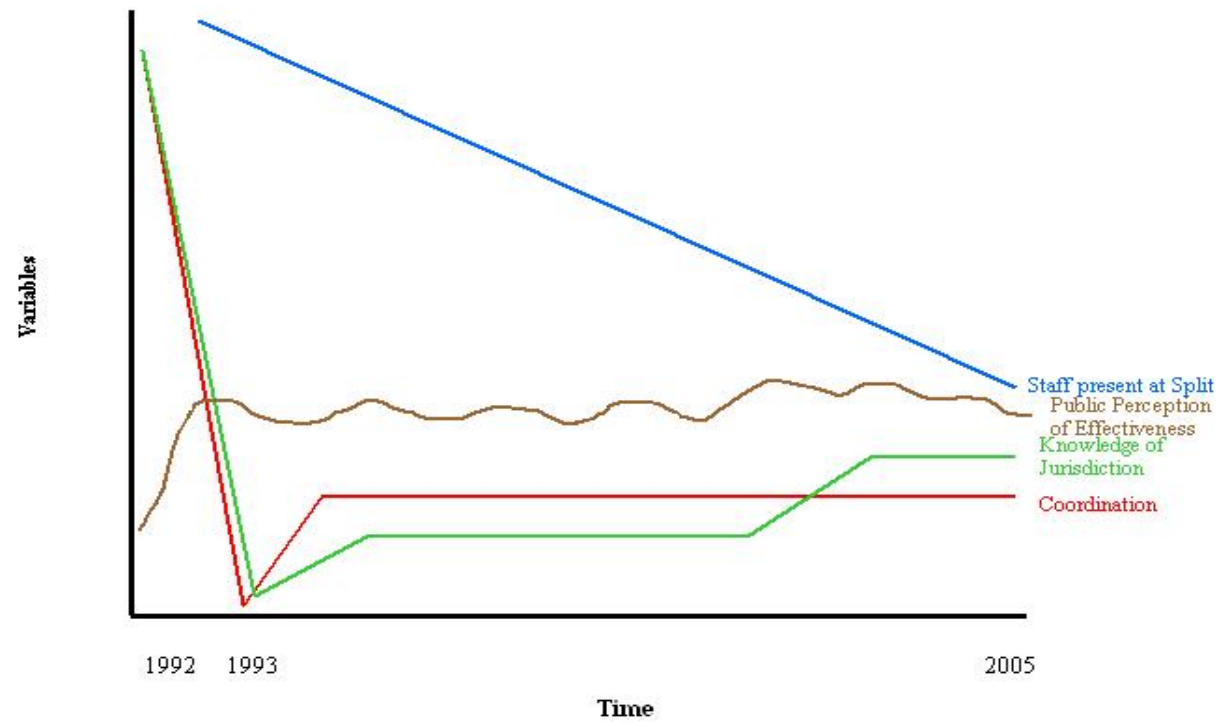
Problem Statement

- Environmental services are delivered by 3 different agencies in SE Oklahoma, Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH), Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), and Indian Health Service (IHS) as well as tribal governments. Lack of coordination and communication among these agencies and governments resulted in delays and unresponsiveness in addressing some environmental problems where jurisdiction was unclear. These slow and uncoordinated responses created confusion and frustration for the public.

Background

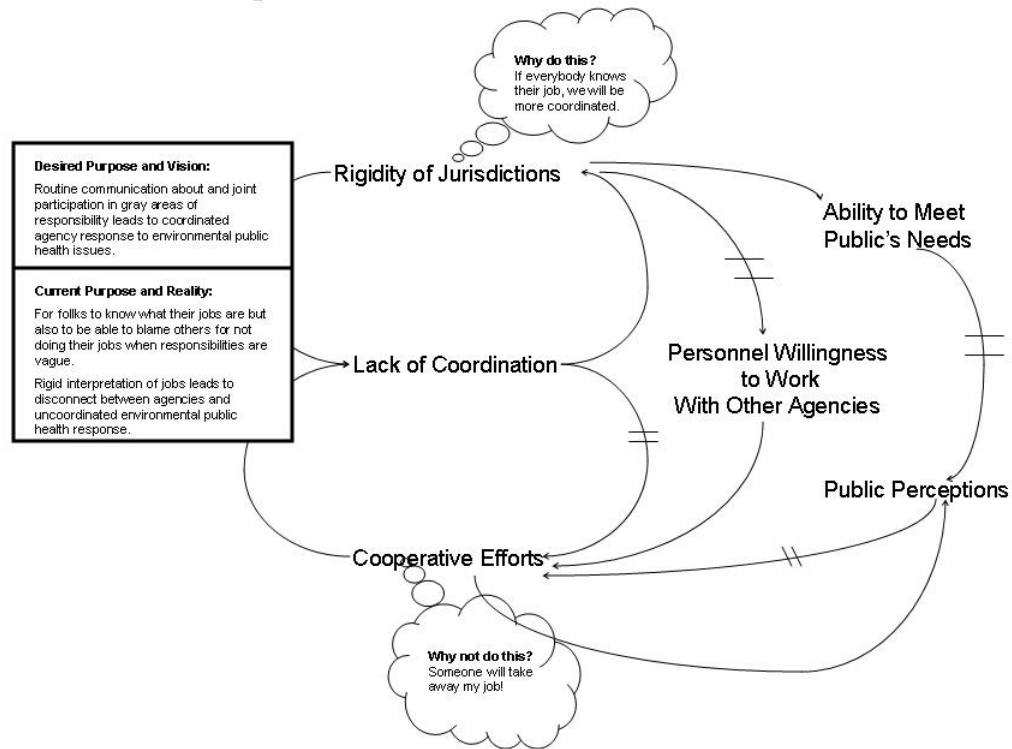
- Environmental public health services delivered by different agencies and governments in Oklahoma
- DEQ split from OSDH in 1993
- IHS and tribes have independent environmental health programs
- Lack of coordination and communication
- Efforts to improve coordination
- Public perception

Behavior Over Time Graph



Causal Loop Diagram and Applicable Archetype

Shifting the Burden to the Quick Fix



Project Outline

- ***Outcome Objective:*** By December 30, 2005, the three agencies and two tribal governments that deliver environmental health services in Southeast Oklahoma will have met together to discuss coordination issues. In addition, they will have conducted a minimum of three joint on-site inspections and /or participated in the coordination of specific environmental issues in the area. As necessary, conference calls between all parties will be conducted to resolve issue of unclear jurisdiction.
- ***Process Objectives***
 1. Produce an accurate interagency referral list for program responsibilities.
 2. Facilitate a joint meeting between OSDH, DEQ and IHS managers and field staff for the four counties in Southeast Oklahoma.
 3. Follow up with agency managers and field staff to review progress in coordination.

Methodology

- ***Events and Activities***

1. ***Event:*** Agency referral list updated and distributed in August 2005.

- ***Activities:***

- a. Team members from each agency evaluated program responsibilities.
- b. Team members from each agency made corrections to existing list based on current staff.
- c. Agency referral list formatted and distributed

2. ***Event:*** Interagency meeting

- ***Activities:***

- a. Team members planning
- b. Meeting held on September 16, 2005.

3. ***Event:*** Team members contacted area managers

- ***Activities:***

- a. Team members held debriefing.
- b. Team members gathered evaluations
- c. Team members contacted the area managers on a regular basis
- d. Based on the regular contact, as necessary conference calls or meetings will be scheduled.

Next Steps

- Development of Outbreak Response Plan for the four Southeast Oklahoma counties.
- Observe and refine coordination of environmental public health services in the four Southeast Oklahoma counties.
- Solicit executive level support from all three agencies for the expansion of the pilot coordination project statewide including delegation of accountability for decisions to promote the project.
- Begin the process of coordination between all three agencies statewide, using a regionalized approach.

Expected Outcomes

- Maintaining a current referral list within OSDH and DEQ will ensure all field staff, regardless of their agency, are provided technical experts in which to call for assistance. This direct connection between agencies will enable them to conduct joint inspections and coordinate responses to environmental public health issues. The state of Oklahoma will have a statewide Outbreak Response Plan which includes activities of the three agencies. Field staff from different agencies will have the capability to respond to an environmental public health issue in a collaborative fashion which will result in seamless provision of services to the public.

National Goals Supported

- **Essential Environmental Health Services**
 - 3,4,5,6,7,8
- **CDC Health Protection Goal**
 - People Prepared for Emerging Threats
- **Health People 2010 Objectives**
 - 8, 10
- **National Strategy to Revitalize Environmental Public Health Services**
 - Goals I, III, IV, V

Relevance to Environmental Public Health Practice

- In many states, environmental public health programs are split between an environmental agency and a health agency. IHS has environmental public health programs in many states as well. This project can serve as a model for joint agency coordination in areas of unclear jurisdiction. It demonstrates that gray areas of jurisdiction can be the impetus for improved communication between agencies.

Acknowledgements

- **CAPT Patrick O. Bohan, USPHS (RET), RS, MS, MSEH**
 - *Assistant Professor, Department of Environmental Health Science; East Central University*
- **David Peter Stroh; MA**
 - *Partner; Bridgeway Partners*
- **CAPT John Sarisky; RS, MPH**
 - *Technical Assistance Team Leader, Environmental Health Services Branch, Centers for Disease Control; U.S. Public Health Service*
- **EPHLI Faculty and Staff**