



# Environmental Justice Quarterly

<[www.epa.gov/compliance/environmentaljustice](http://www.epa.gov/compliance/environmentaljustice)>

Summer 2006

## Collaborative Problem-Solving Projects Share Lessons Learned

In an informative and inspiring two-day session, eleven project managers from EPA's Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving (CPS) Cooperative Agreement Program shared the insights they gained from nearly two years of project implementation. Their spirited exchange took place at a workshop titled "The Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving Model at Work: Lessons from the Field" held on May 15-16, 2006 in Arlington, Virginia. EPA's Office of Environmental Justice (OEJ) sponsored this workshop to begin identifying lessons learned and best practices to share with future projects and other communities.

In June 2004, OEJ announced the 30 selected projects of its CPS program. Since then, these projects have been building partnerships to increase their communities' capacity to address local environmental and/or public health issues. The workshop provided the CPS project managers with an opportunity to share lessons about how they have achieved many successes and overcome significant challenges.

### Featured Projects:

- Coalition for a Better Acre (Lowell, Massachusetts)
- Make the Road by Walking (New York, New York)
- West End Revitalization Association (Mebane, North Carolina)
- Harambee House, Inc. (Savannah, Georgia)



- Louisiana Environmental Justice Project (New Orleans, Louisiana)
- Colonias Unidas (Las Lomas, Texas)
- Neighbors Assisting Neighbors (Hazelwood, Missouri)
- Groundworks Denver (Denver, Colorado)
- Anahola Homesteaders Council (Anahola, Hawaii)
- Pacoima Beautiful (Pacoima, California)
- Environmental Justice Action Group (Portland, Oregon)

The workshop focused on the use of the CPS Model, which consists of 7 elements to ensure successful, community-based, collaborative partnerships. The project managers discussed their lessons learned in the following areas: (1) Vision and Setting Goals; (2) Building Capacity and Developing Leaders; (3) Building Partnerships; and (4) Achieving

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# Collaborative Problem-Solving Projects

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Results and Sustainability. Many participants described how they have customized the CPS model to fit the specific circumstances of their varied projects and communities. The lessons they have learned include:

## Vision and Setting Goals

- Most projects have a larger holistic community-driven vision that go beyond any individual project;
- One project found “Backwards Planning” (starting with agreed-upon goals and identifying steps that lead to achieving those goals) to be a useful planning tool;
- Several projects urged that communities formulate concrete visions and seek “doable solutions” to complicated issues; and
- Several projects successfully obtained, generated, and/or utilized data as part of their problem-solving strategy.

## Building Capacity and Developing Leaders

- Project managers agreed that their organizations should develop operating capacity and infrastructure, and not focus only on individual issues and projects;
- Projects which involve community members in the project’s decision-making process had greater community “ownership” of the project; and

- One project manager always brings a community resident to meetings as a way of training new leaders.

## Building Partnerships

- Certain projects having adversarial relationships with other organizations have found ways to turn them into effective partners;
- Many projects discovered that more organizations are potential partners than they realized originally;
- One project conducts an annual tour of their community for university faculty as a way to educate potential partners;
- Several projects found that having prior relationships made it easier to resolve differences when disputes arose; and
- Several projects were able to use their CPS partnership to leverage more resources.

## Achieving results and sustainability

- Most projects found that having clear and organized timelines and objectives is a key to achieving results;
- Many projects found it useful to focus on achieving short-term goals that lead to long-term solutions; and
- Most projects saw mentoring of youth as an important way to sustain their work.

A subsequent workshop was held on June 14, 2006 in Atlanta, Georgia to coincide with EPA Region 4’s “Building Communities through Partnerships” conference on June 15-16. OEJ invited all 28 EJ CPS project managers and funded their travel to attend both events. The workshop included a discussion on the preliminary lessons learned from the EJ CPS projects and ways in which EPA can work on the next round of projects. Holding the CPS Project Managers Workshop concurrently with the conference proved to be an excellent way for project managers, OEJ Technical Advisors, and some Regional Technical Advisors to reconnect and network not only with each other, but with other community participants at the conference. This also gave all conference participants the opportunity to learn more about the CPS Program through the first-hand accounts from the CPS project managers.

Overall, the participating project managers expressed two main reflections as a result of the CPS Program. They expressed appreciation for the support of the EPA Technical Advisors and other “Agency Angels.” In addition, they have grown significantly as leaders capable of making a sustained difference in their communities. The project managers echoed the words of Blanca Juarez, founder of Colonias Unidas, “The future of our community will not be determined by what others do or do not do -- but by what we do for ourselves.”

Once OEJ has systematically collected the lessons from these CPS projects, it will publish them in a lessons-learned handbook to share with future projects and other communities.



## CPS Grantee Cleans Up St. Louis

In St. Louis, Missouri, one 2005 Collaborative Problem-Solving (CPS) project is already a sweeping success. In a series of neighborhood cleanups around the city, the Mid-County Clean Sweep project headed by Neighbors Assisting Neighbors had removed 250 tons of bulk waste; recycled approximately 153,000 pounds of scrap metal, 1,200 tires, and 130 phone books; and recycled or reused 63 televisions and seven computer monitors.

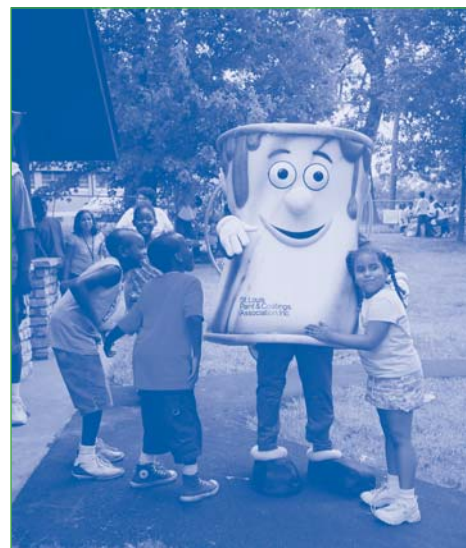
Neighbors Assisting Neighbors (NAN), a grassroots organization, was awarded \$100,000 under the CPS Program to develop the project, which aims to coordinate 10 cleanup efforts throughout the community. With the help of its partners, NAN targets solid waste removal along river beds, in vacant lots and alleys, on problem properties, and in public areas.

The inner suburbs of St. Louis have deteriorated over the past half-century, leaving a number of closed businesses, vacant lots, and public areas that have become magnets for illegally dumped garbage. The waste is not only unsightly; it also poses a health hazard to community residents. Dis-

carded appliances and car batteries can leak hazardous chemicals into land and water, and rainwater accumulated in garbage and old tires can serve as a breeding ground for mosquitoes, which can spread blood-borne diseases.

To date, the project has completed cleanups in the Uplands Park, Pagedale, Bel-Ridge, Velda Village Hills, Pine Lawn, and Northwoods communities and has held organizational meetings in preparation for upcoming cleanups in several neighboring areas. The group also collaborated with the River des Peres Watershed Coalition and several other local partners to clean up the banks of St. Louis's River des Peres.

But NAN and its partners aren't just picking up litter—they're preventing it as well. Realizing that many area residents were unaware of how or why to recycle their waste, the group organized recycling fairs in the Velda Village Hills, Pagedale, and Bel-Ridge communities that demonstrated the need for recycling through nine fun learning activities, including a "Recycled Content Fashion Show" and a skit related to recycling. The fair was



designed to target area youth, who are likely to share the information with siblings and adults in the home as well as friends and classmates. By focusing on youth education, NAN hopes to create a sustainable culture of waste prevention that will last for generations.

To further its community cleanup goals, recruit volunteers, and increase community awareness, NAN has engaged in an ambitious public

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## WERA Making Progress Happen in North Carolina

Founded in 1994, West End Revitalization Association (WERA) has long worked to improve provision of safe drinking water, sewer services, and other infrastructure needs to environmental justice communities in and around the city of Mebane, North Carolina. As a result of WERA's persistent efforts under its CPS grant, the City of Mebane completed the installation of sewer lines on three streets in the West End Community, providing 40 homes in this primarily low-income community with safe drinking water and sewer services for the first time ever. Residents paid a one-time \$75 tap-on fee, which was reduced from the original proposed fee of \$150. In addition, residents living in 25 homes in the Buckhorn community now will

be able to tap into new sewer lines being installed in this northern neighborhood.

Together with its many partners, WERA is seeking formal solutions to unsafe drinking water, sewer disposal, and surface water contamination for low-income communities and minority communities throughout North Carolina. For example, under the CPS grant, WERA was able to team up with the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill School of Public Health to study the effects of failing septic tanks and contaminated wells in low-income communities. WERA also credits the CPS collaborative problem-solving approach as the catalyst for local government officials to

hold formal meetings with low-income residents impacted by environmental hazards.

In addition to serving as an advocate for public works service, WERA has organized numerous outreach and training activities, including addressing the Alamance County Commissioners meeting and conducting community meetings in towns throughout the area. These meetings have given WERA members the opportunity to present the results from their ongoing drinking and surface water monitoring activities, which help to make the case for improved public services.

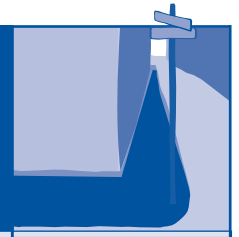
For more information about WERA, visit [www.wera-nc.org](http://www.wera-nc.org).



# Regional Corner

## Region 5

*This column explores exciting environmental initiatives under way in EPA regional offices. Each quarter, we focus on a different regional program. EPA Region 5 covers Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin, and 35 Tribes.*



### Breathing Freely in Region 5

More than 31 million Americans have been diagnosed with asthma at some point in their lives, and about one-third of cases occur in children 18 years old or younger. In fact, asthma is the most common chronic disease among children, and a leading cause of school absence. While asthma can be caused by colds, allergies, or stress, a significant number of asthma cases are caused by environmental factors, such as cigarette smoke, smog, mold, dust, or pests such as cockroaches and dust mites. In 2005, Region 5 participated in a pair of programs to combat asthma in Chicago, Illinois, and Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and achieved results in several environmental justice communities.

EPA funded the Mobile CARE Foundation project to bring physicians and asthma educators to Chicago schools to conduct home assessments, train community members, and assist in remediation of environmental asthma triggers in homes. The foundation's mobile medical van and its staff provide students with access to asthma medical exams, and its asthma educators work with school nurses and the families of students with asthma.

The south and west sides of Chicago were chosen for the effort because of their high asthma rates. The medical van, staffed with a pediatric asthma doctor, an asthma nurse educator, and a clinical assistant, visits schools to diagnose students and develop treatment plans. All of the CARE van staff are bilingual, allowing them to reach both the English- and Spanish-speaking communities, and all

services provided are confidential and free of charge to the patient.

Once students have been diagnosed as having asthma, asthma educators follow up with the schools and conduct home visits with families to help identify and reduce in-home exposures to environmental asthma triggers. Of the families visited, approximately 75 percent successfully reduced the asthma triggers in their homes. During the program, Region 5 and Mobile CARE staff also trained over 50 school personnel on asthma-related issues. To date, the Mobile Care Foundation's educators have provided asthma education to over 300 families. By project completion, over 1,000 families will have been visited.

Region 5 is also helping to reduce asthma incidence in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where the Milwaukee Health Department received grants from EPA and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to fund a home-based asthma education and intervention project for children in low-income homes. One hundred and eleven of the 151 original registrants remained in the project for the entire year. Over half of the participants received home assistance to identify and mitigate asthma triggers in their homes. Interventions included room-by-room assessment for moisture, pests, and housing deterioration as well as other environmental investigations. In response to the conditions found in homes, interventions included mitigation efforts such as minor home repair, integrated pest management, and deep dust cleaning.

## CPS Grantee Cleans Up St. Louis

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outreach campaign. The group not only reaches out to community members one-on-one, it also prints informational flyers to advertise cleanups, achieves coverage in local media and in each community newsletter, and develops recycling brochures, informational magnets, and community signage.

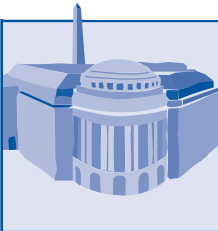
While NAN is achieving success on the ground, as a CPS grantee, it is also working to improve its collabora-

tive process. The group established co-coordinator positions to be filled by residents from the community. The co-coordinators help plan the community cleanups and serve as the "eyes and ears" of NAN within their respective communities. In creating the positions, NAN has provided an opportunity for community residents to become a vital part in the community cleanup process.

For more information about Neighbors Assisting Neighbors and the Mid-County Clean Sweep program, con-

tact Danny Gogal at (202) 564-2576 or [gogal.danny@epa.gov](mailto:gogal.danny@epa.gov). For more information on OEJ's CPS Program, contact Ayako Sato at (202) 564-5396 or [sato.ayako@epa.gov](mailto:sato.ayako@epa.gov).





## Headquarters Update Office of International Affairs

Each quarter, the Headquarters Update features a specific office at EPA Headquarters, highlighting recent activities, programs, and policies aimed at addressing a variety of environmental justice issues.

### Environmental Justice Crosses International Borders

#### OIA Strives for Better Environmental Quality on the U.S./Mexico Border

Residents along the U.S./Mexico border can look forward to breathing cleaner air, drinking cleaner water, and living in a healthier environment through the binational Border 2012 program. The Office of International Affairs (OIA) is helping to introduce new projects and grants through Border 2012 that directly benefit the environmental justice communities throughout the area.

The border region faces many environmental issues. The population of the area is currently 12 million, and is expected to reach 19.4 million by 2020. Most of the region's residents, with the exception of a few areas, are of low-income status. The region is also home to a growing number of *maquiladoras*, or manufacturing and/or export assembly plants, which can have a number of environmental impacts, such as increased transportation, air emissions, water quantity and quality issues, and new needs for wastewater and potable water treatment plants. These issues have a disproportionate affect on the health and welfare of the low-income community; therefore, the entire U.S./Mexico border is considered an environmental justice area.

OIA is helping communities in the area have a voice in these issues through the annual Border 2012 grant program. In 2005, the Environmental Law Institute and the Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice were awarded an \$80,000 grant to train border communities to effectively participate in citizen environmental enforcement, helping the communities better address priority environmental problems in their areas.

Additionally, in 2001 and 2003, the OIA staff for the U.S./Mexico Border program collaborated with the Region 6 Office of Environmental Justice and Tribal Affairs to coordinate *Border Environmental Justice Roundtables*. These meetings provided opportunities for border residents to present environmental justice issues to regional managers and created a mechanism to explore productive, collaborative solutions. Many of the issues presented at the roundtables have since been resolved, and several future collaborations have been proposed.

In Region 9, OIA border staff have also been working to provide affordable drinking water and wastewater

services to three major sister cities in Mexico and the United States, respectively: Tijuana/San Diego, Mexicali/Calexico, and Nogales/Sonora-Nogales. More than \$1.5 billion has been allocated to 54 water related projects in the region. Additionally, as part of the San Diego-Tijuana Diesel Retrofit Project, EPA provided more than \$400,000 to retrofit a dozen heavy-duty diesel shipping trucks and fund research into reducing truck emissions. To further augment the environmental benefits of this air-quality project, Mexico has pledged to phase in low-sulfur diesel fuels over the next 5 years.

Other examples of OIA's environmental justice work on the U.S./Mexico border include projects to develop wastewater and water treatment plants; clean up and prevent illegal dumping of solid waste; and collect, reuse, and recycle used tires; and address lead-based paint and pesticide issues through environmental health programs.

In all of its international efforts, OIA negotiates issues and decisions with foreign governments that have different concepts of the environment and of environmental justice. Despite these challenges, OIA is succeeding in finding interesting and innovative ways to integrate EJ into all of its projects.

#### OIA's 2006 Environmental Justice Activities

- Collaborative problem-solving with American Indians.
- Assisting Indonesia and various African countries transition to unleaded gasoline through the United Nations' Environment Program's (UNEP) Partnership for Clean Fuels and Vehicles.
- Sponsoring an annual theater production in South Africa on the dangers of lead; the production reaches thousands of people who cannot read or write.
- Addressing pesticides and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in areas of northern Russia inhabited by indigenous people.
- Participating in the Global Campaign for Sulfur Reduction in collaboration with UNEP.
- Retrofitting vehicles for cleaner performance in India, China, and Chile, and along the U.S./Mexico border.
- Improving urban air quality through the EPA-sponsored International Transport of Air Pollutants (ITAP) workshops.

## EPA Releases RFAs for Environmental Justice Financial Assistance Programs

On June 22, 2006, the Environmental Protection Agency, through the Office of Environmental Justice (OEJ), released two Requests for Applications (RFA) —the Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving Cooperative Agreement (EJ CPS) Program and the Environmental Justice Small Grants (EJ SG). The application period for these RFAs will close on midnight, October 23, 2006.

Under the EJ CPS Program, OEJ will provide \$100,000 assistance awards to community-based organizations that plan to utilize the collaborative problem-solving model and partner with other stakeholders to address their communities' environmental and/or public health issues. The EJ SG Program will provide \$50,000 in financial assistance to community-based organizations working on local solutions to local environmental problems.

Previous RFAs for the EJ CPS and EJSG Programs were announced on February 1, 2006, with a closing

date of March 31, 2006. However, these RFAs were cancelled and no awards were made because OEJ did not receive enough applications from each EPA region to meet its national program objectives. As a result, OEJ made significant changes to these RFAs to simplify the application process and solicit more applications. Any organization that applied under one of the earlier RFAs must submit a new application. Some of these changes include:

- The definition of 'eligible applicant'
- The contents of the application package
- The format of the workplan
- The Threshold Eligibility Criteria

EPA plans to select the award recipients by February 2007.



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