

FY '00 ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE SMALL GRANTS PROFILES OF SIX (6) AWARDEES

Casco Bay Estuary Project **Amount Awarded - \$20,000***
Muskie School of Public Service
University of Southern Maine
Exposure of Asian and Low-Income Populations to Toxic Chemicals Through Subsistence Shellfishing in Casco Bay
96 Falmouth Street
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Organization: In 1990, Casco Bay was designated an “estuary of national significance” and included in the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency’s National Estuary Program, established in 1987 to protect nationally significant estuaries threatened by pollution, development or overuse. As a result of this designation, the Casco Bay Estuary Project (CBEP) was formed with the mission of preserving the ecological integrity of Casco Bay and ensuring compatible human uses of the Bay’s resources through public stewardship and effective management.

This mission is being accomplished through a community-based, cooperative effort that involves concerned citizens, local governments, business and industry, state and federal agencies, and academic and research institutions. Using a basin-wide approach that encompasses a 985-square mile watershed consisting of 41 municipalities, the work of the CBEP is directed toward improving and maintaining the health of the Casco Bay Ecosystems as a whole.

Objectives: The purpose of this research project is to provide the first-ever available data on the low income and ethnic populations in Casco Bay who are placed at risk due to subsistence shellfishing of polluted areas as identified by the Casco Bay Estuary Project. Local shellfish officers have noted that subsistence shellfishing in closed clam and mussel bed areas is taking place. Low income families and immigrant populations in the Asian community appear to make up the majority of subsistence shellfishers. There is presently no confirmed information available as to who is eating the shellfish from polluted areas or what their rates of consumption are.

Through this project research will be conducted to answer two important questions: (1) who is collecting and eating mussels and clams from polluted areas in Casco Bay and (2) how high are their rates of consumption?

It is anticipated the research will result in an identification of the populations exposed to polluted shellfish and the consumption rates for those populations. This information will enable the state toxicologist to develop advisories as needed. In addition, it will form the basis for an education and outreach campaign targeted at low income and immigrant subsistence shellfishers.

Campaign to Protect Chinatown

Amount Awarded - \$15,000

Campaign for Chinatown Resident Empowerment

33 Harrison Avenue, 3rd Floor

Boston, MA 02111

CONTACT: MARTHA TAI

(617)426-0643

Organization: The Campaign to Protect Chinatown was formally established in 1994 and grew out of a community struggle over Parcel C, one of the last developable pieces of land allocated for community use in Chinatown. In June 1993, when the New England Medical Center proposed to construct a 455-car garage on Parcel C, a coalition of 26 organizations and numerous concerned residents formed the Campaign to Protect Parcel C for Chinatown ("CPPCC"), (now known as CPC), to oppose the garage. CPC mobilized support from other neighborhood, environmental, health care advocacy, and historical preservation groups during the 15-month campaign which consisted of rallies, a community referendum, community-wide meetings, newsletters, newspaper articles, and legal action. As a result, CPC created a method of community education and a forum for democratic decision-making which led to, in October 1994, a signed agreement by the City of Boston to keep Parcel C for community use.

At the beginning of this year, CPC's steering committee agreed to shift its organizational structure into a collaborative project supported by the Asian American Resource Workshop, the Chinese Progressive Association, and the Harry H. Dow Legal Defense Fund. Despite its evolution, CPC continues to work for the advancement of democratic community participation in the areas of environment, land use, and transportation.

Objectives: The focus of this project is to provide environmental education on the immediate and long-term effects of pollution and construction. This will establish a foundation of understanding and capacity for residents to recognize local environmental justice problems and arm residents with the

tools to actively participate in public meetings and to make compelling evaluations on the impact that developments bear in their life and community. The project team consists of an expert in environmental health and a 20 year veteran in Chinatown activism who will process the technical data in a cohesive and understandable form that draws from real life scenarios. The curricula developed through this project will be used now and in the future to educate Chinatown residents and promote informed decision-making.

The curriculum will consist of the following modules:

- 1) Motor vehicle exhaust—what are its health effects?
- 2) Construction waste and dust—what are its health effects?
- 3) Traffic and construction noise—can it affect your health?
- 4) The role of government agencies in protecting the environment.

Each module will be constructed in a manner that conveys basic facts by connecting them to everyday experiences in Chinatown. Modules will be prepared in both English and Chinese.

Nuestras Raices

Amount Awarded - \$15,000

Community Based Environmental Justice Project

60 Hamilton Street

Holyoke, MA 01040

CONTACT: LUIS SAEZ

(413)535-1789

Organization:

Nuestras Raices (Our Roots), Inc. is a non-profit grassroots organization that promotes economic human and community development in Holyoke through urban agriculture. Nuestras Raices draws its membership and leadership from the ninety low-income families and individuals that participate in its network of community gardens. The organization was incorporated in 1993 in order to manage the LaFinquita community garden and to develop a greenhouse in downtown Holyoke.

Nuestras Raices involves community members in all stages of planning, implementation and evaluation of its projects. About half of the members of the board of directors of Nuestras Raices are current or former participants in the projects of the organization and five out of eight of the members are Latino. All Nuestras Raices staff members are bilingual and many reside in the area affected by the organization's projects.

Objectives:

The purpose of the proposed project is to respond to two vital needs in the community. These needs are:

One, environmental justice issues are clearly present in the Holyoke neighborhoods, including poverty, high rates of asthma and lead poisoning among children, foul odors from a nearby sewage treatment plant, a high number of vacant lots and burned out and abandoned buildings and a severe lack of green open space. What is unclear is to what extent these problems are affecting the residents and whether any action is being taken to address them by the city, state, or anybody else.

Two, the population of inner city Holyoke is a young population with a median age of about 23 years old. This population is being disproportionately affected by the lack of economic opportunities in the city. Many youth that have been in the gardening program for a few years are intelligent and responsible, but need education and employment opportunities to continue on a positive path. With the support of the Greater Holyoke Youth Service Corps (GHYSC) and the Environmental Science program at UMass this project can start addressing environmental justice issues in the city, while at the same time providing employment and training for Latino youth and encouraging them to pursue careers in the environmental field.

This project will build the capacity of the community to identify local environmental justice problems by training members of the community to conduct their own environmental health assessment and GIS mapping. The project will enhance access to, and understanding of, environmental and health information by training community members to facilitate the discussion and dissemination of the information within the community.

Four young adults will be trained to conduct basic environmental and health assessments, GIS mapping, and to educate the community. The four young adults, members of the Americorps, will be contracted from the GHYSC, and will be based out of the offices of Neustras Raices. They will focus on collecting environmental and health data and educating the community about those issues. Much of the training will be provided by experienced Neustras Raices staff, in consultation with faculty members at the UMass Department of Environmental Sciences. UMass will provide a graduate student to guide and mentor the youth and they will be encouraged to pursue further studies in environmental sciences.

The Way Home
\$15,000

Peer Education as a Model for Environmental Justice

20 Merrimack Street, Suite B

Manchester, NH 03101

CONTACT: MARY SLINEY

(603)627-3491

Amount Awarded -

Organization: Housing issues in Manchester, New Hampshire became a focus for community concern in the late 1980's. In response, a group of community leaders and members of a center for low income women and their children created a program to help low income families compete for safe, affordable housing. The Way Home, Inc. was incorporated in 1989 as a nonprofit social service agency to continue this program. In the past eleven years, the Way Home has helped more than 3500 low income families. The Way Home's mission is to help low income households obtain and keep safe, affordable housing with direct housing assistance services; empowerment of low income tenants and advocacy for community involvement in low income housing issues.

Objectives: With a population of 102,000, Manchester is the largest city in the three northern New England states and has the dubious distinction of being the State's "epi-center" for lead poisoning. A large concentration of multi-family dwellings burdened with lead paint are located in its' center city. Designated a preferred refugee resettlement area, Manchester has a diverse and growing minority population (reflected in the more than 70 languages spoken in its schools), many of whom are center city residents. Recently, Manchester reported the following statistics for its center city neighborhoods: 1) a 400% increase in minorities since 1980, many of whom face language and cultural barriers, 2) 32% of individuals live below the poverty level; and 3) 65% of the housing stock is more than 50 years old, much of which is in need of repair. Burdened with poverty and/or minority status, center city families confront numerous roadblocks to safe housing. Consequently, lead poisoning is a significant environmental risk for these low income and minority households. Their housing is also likely to contain agents such as cockroaches, dust mites, mold which may trigger asthma episodes, adding to the hazards in their homes. rodents, and environmental hazards in their homes.

The Way Home's project integrates a peer educator process (including a Spanish translator) with community coalition building to facilitate cooperation among landlords, tenants, City Health Department and Building Department officials--groups that often are in conflict--to protect children from environmental health hazards in the home. In addition, GIS will be used as a mapping tool to educate tenants, landlords, city officials and others about the relationship of environmental hazards in the home and children's health.

Paddle Providence, Inc.
Community Boating and Educational Project
P. O. Box 2397

Amount Awarded - \$15,000

Providence, RI 02906
CONTACT: DONNA BAER
(401)453-1633

Organization:

Paddle Providence, Inc. is a non-profit organization which was incorporated on November 13, 1998 to provide canoeing and kayaking as a vehicle to promote environmental and recreational education to city residents of Providence and all of Rhode Island. The founders draw on 12 years experience in the outdoor industry and 5 years experience bringing canoeing and kayaking programs to inner-city youth. In the past year Paddle Providence was successful in reaching over 900 children from the most impoverished neighborhoods in Providence through collaborations with schools, community organizations and Boys & Girls Clubs that serve in those communities. By establishing canoeing and kayaking on the urban rivers as a safe form of recreation for inner-city youth, Paddle Providence has created a vehicle to heighten the awareness and understanding of potential environmental hazards and environmental justice issues pertaining to the residents of the communities along the river.

Objectives:

The purpose of this project is to provide safe boating and educational programs to the communities most affected by the degradation of the Woonasquatucket River through collaborations with eight existing community organizations. Paddle Providence will educate the children and their families living along the river, about the safe uses of the river and parks and the health issues associated with them. Paddle Providence will also encourage participants in the program to become more involved with the revitalization of the river in the future.

Paddle Providence will coordinate with the Providence Plan, Save the Bay, The National Parks Service and the Northern RI Conservation District to provide education to youths and their families about the safe uses of, and hazards existing in the River. By engaging in the recreational activities of canoeing and kayaking on this urban river, youth and families living along the river will witness the effects of the pollution in their environment and will begin to form an appreciation for this natural resource. This kind of boating activity will stimulate dialogue about the affects of interactions between humans and the environment. This project will address the communities just downstream of a Superfund site. Part of the Woonasquatucket River has been designated part of the Superfund site, and through this project residents will be taught about the risks and safe uses of the downstream portion of the river.

It is anticipated that the summer program will directly involve up to 200 low-income youth and the two final weeks of the programs will include the

family and friends of the participants which will allow an estimated participation rate of approximately 400 residents in the target areas.

Youth in Action

Amount Awarded - \$3,500

Youth Environmental Technology Project

393 Broad Street

Providence, RI 02907

CONTACT: KAREN FELDMAN

(401)751-4264

Organization: Youth in Action (YIA) is Rhode Island's first non-profit organization created and controlled entirely by young people from the community. YIA was founded in October of 1997 by four teens and one adult, and built upon the dream that with support, young people could run their own organization. The primary mission of YIA is to better the community by teaching local youth to become leaders. All Youth in Action projects are selected and coordinated by the leadership core of 65 youth; the role of the adult staff is to support the youth in the implementation of their ambitious programs. 24 multicultural youth control the Board of Directors. An Advisory Board of 18 adult community leaders provides critical guidance, but does not have a vote with the Board of Directors.

Since its existence YIA programs have reached over 2500 people. The teens have been instrumental in informing families within their community about environmental issues and they have helped families get resources such as lead testing for children; testing of soil outside the home for hazardous waste; and reducing pollutants inside the home for asthmatic children. They have also coordinated community forums where residents can unite and plan collective ways to address environmental injustice.

Objectives: The goal of this project is to create access for members of the community to GIS mapping and other technology systems. 15 multicultural youth will be provided training in GIS mapping, and its uses by experienced GIS experts from the Providence Plan and the Urban Environmental Lab at Brown University. They will learn how to input GIS data, and how to use this data in simple forms to make it accessible to the average community person.

The youth will be supported to use this technology to benefit their community by bringing it to 40 of their neighbors through multi-lingual door-to-door outreach. The Training Coordinator will support the youth in bringing the information they learned about GIS to residents in a simple, relevant fashion, showing residents how to use this information

to attack the environmental challenges in their neighborhood. As the youth go door-to-door, they will compile a list of residents who want to be more involved with advocacy efforts.

* - Denotes Superfund \$s.