

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

**U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Small Community Advisory Subcommittee
June 11, 2008**

Meeting Summary

Held at the:

**Red Lion Hotel
1415 Fifth Avenue
Seattle, Washington 98101**

Call to order: Steve Jenkins, Chair, called the meeting to order. Mr. Jenkins introduced guests and speakers. Mr. Jenkins advised attendees that the Small Communities Report was not yet available for committee review. Mr. Jenkins introduced Judith Leckrone Lee and Sandy Halstead from EPA region 10 to brief the committee on the work of Place Based Initiatives in Region 10. In attendance were: Steve Jenkins, Ken Fallows, Lurlin Hoelscher, John Bernal, Mike Linder, John Duffy, Jerry Johnston, Joe Palacios, Jimmy Kemp, Javier Araujo, Fran Eargle, Corey Buffo, Alicia Merschen-Perez, and Roy Prescott.

Judith Leckrone Lee, Manager Ecosystem & Community Health Unit, Office of Ecosystems, Tribal and Public Affairs: Lee discussed her unit, who works with small communities, and the place based staffers that are placed throughout the region in small communities. Lee discussed the mission of EPA Community based initiatives. Lee added that team members work on many issues such as environmental justice, climate change and children's health. Lee stated that Region 10 is the only region with a place based program.

The staffers are typically by themselves or are housed with another agency. John Duffy asked how the EPA picks the places that staffers live in. Lee stated that it depends on the types of issues that are prevalent in the communities. Staffers are placed in communities with the most pressing issues. Lee elaborated on the types of issues that the staffers are working on and the communities in which they live. Committee member Joe Palacios asked about what kind of training the place based staffers receive. Lee talked about the origin of place based initiatives, she stated that in 1995 a decision was made to increase community based environmental protection. Region 10 took the charge literally by creating the place based initiative. Lee showed the group photographs from Pocatello, Idaho and the work that is being done with tribes as well as describing the trust that has been built between the tribes and the place based staffer. Lee showed photographs of the CERLA and RCRA site in Pocatello. This site is one of the focuses of the Pocatello based staffer. Lee also showed photographs of LaGrande, Oregon and the air management system that is in place. Lee summarized her program by stating that place based staffers are the liaisons between local communities and the EPA region 10 office.

During the question and answer session, Steve Jenkins asked if the staffers do any enforcement work. Judith said that the staffers do not do enforcement work, except for the staffer in Soldotna, Alaska. Lee stated that the relationship with the community is important, and that is a reason for non-enforcement.

However, Lee did say that if they notice and issue that is egregious, they call the region 10 enforcement office. Lee also added that people do not often see the importance of the work that is being done by these staffers. Lee talked about the evaluations of the program that have been done, and that it is an effective program that has added credibility and strength to the EPA in regards to work with smaller and rural communities. Lee stated that the feedback from external partners indicates that having a permanent member who is part of the community is much more effective than the government truly cares.

Questions:

Joe Palacios asked if they play the role of negotiator, when dealing with enforcement. Lee said that often they do serve as negotiators, and meet with local officials. Jim Gitz asked if they could expand the program, to more than just the small amount of communities that currently have staffers. Lee said she would love to expand the program, but it is difficult to get funding for more people. Gitz followed up asking if they have meetings as a group of place based staffers. Lee said they do meet twice a year in Seattle, and often communicate. Jack Bowles asked about how the staffers interact with Region and State offices. Lee said that there are great lines of communication between the Region and the staffers. Jerry Johnson asked if the staffers could give communities access to funding, and Lee said that they help them with grant writing. Kathleen Jimino asked that these staffers that are throughout the community are more effective, why other Regions aren't following the example of Region 10, and getting out the staffers into the small communities. Jack Bowles responded as well to Jimino's question, saying that each region has a slightly different way of catering to the small communities, and that when Carol Browner was the head of the EPA, she tried to implement the proposal, but it became difficult.

Sandy Halstead, Prosser, Washington; Place Based Staff: Halstead mentioned that the fact that this job was not in a city, and allowed her to continue her job in agronomy was crucial. Halstead said the town she lives in has about 5,000 people, and she lives 8 miles from town. She says she is 200 miles from Seattle, and is the closest to Seattle than any other place based staff. Halstead's position works in a holistic approach to toxic exposure by the community and for the community called CARE. This approach is up to the community to decide what pollutants they are exposed to, and there is the ability for the community to take action on what they are exposed to. Halstead has very little industry, and the community is supported mostly by agriculture. Halstead reported that the community was able to get a grant to try and to build community capacity to identify problems and fix them. They get partners from within the community, such as Wal-Mart in Yakima County, WA. Halstead showed the 46 CARE communities in the country, and were coded by year and stage of program. Halstead said Yakima County is a large county, and has the highest level of DDT in their rivers from agriculture. The project is called El Proyecto Bienestar, and works with many different partners such as colleges and universities and state and local governments. Their main pollutants are non point

pollutants, from agriculture. In addition, Halstead reports, some other challenges are literacy, language, and other cultural barriers to the partnerships. The project is divided into three workgroups; Air Quality, Water Quality and Pesticides. Lee mentioned that most of the CARE projects do not have an EPA staffer working with them on the project, and having her there truly helps the project develop in an efficient way. Jerry Johnson asked about how tribes work with the CARE grants. Ken Fallows asked if there was a small community that needed a staffer for a few days, or a small amount of time is that available. Halstead mentioned that often the staffers do work with lots of communities, and extend their reach fairly large. Chuck Hafter asked if they dealt with other regulations, such as immigration laws, etc. and what the staffers do when they encounter other problems. Halstead said it is a difficult situation. Kathleen Jimenez asked how they encounter the issue of the local farmers not wanting to be "over-regulated" and feel like EPA is being too involved in their practices. Halstead said that they ask farmers who are being sustainable to reach out to their fellow community members on how to be sustainable. Lee said that in addition, EPA goes out to the local communities and listens to the concerns of growers, and wants to know their concerns as well. Peggy Beltrone asked if the staffers at the Region 10 office are held to the same amount of accountability as the place based staffers. Lee said that only the place based staffers are given this large amount of scrutiny. Beltrone also asked why the CARE grants seem to be around the regional offices, and not all over where there are needs. Halstead said it is a good point, and it is an argument for the addition of the place based staffers.

Draft Template: Jenkins moved onto item four, which is the SCAS Draft Template and asked them to review on it for comment. Jenkins asked to add other accomplishments to the draft. Chuck Hafter asked what the purpose of the template is. Frances Eargle said the idea was to make the effort of each workgroup of the LGAC more public and available. Jenkins mentioned that he just wanted to make sure he got the verb usage and accomplishments in the template. Jimmy Kemp said that most groups don't have the same type of leadership to make the effort for the small communities. Chuck Hafter liked the idea that it should be defined by capacity not by size. Mike Linder said that the mission statement should have advising the EPA in it, because it is the primary goal of the LGAC. Jack Bowles mentioned adding the small communities' roundtable from Washington, DC. Jenkins said they would bring it up at the next conference call. Jenkins set the conference call for July 8th at 1pm. Peggy Beltrone mentioned adding a clause about asking for place based community staffers. Ken Fallows agrees with Peggy Beltrone, especially with the new administration, that the policy of having place based staffers be pressured by SCAS. Jenkins asked for Javier to draft the addition to the Draft Template about the place based staffers. Mike Linder cautioned against just asking for staffers without asking the states first. Linder says states need to be involved in the process somehow, coordination is crucial. Chuck Hafter mentioned his support of the Ombudsman idea, and on LGEAN and how he isn't sure what it is, and it needs to be fleshed out. Jack Bowles mentioned Ombudsman vs. placed based staffers and that Araujo could draft something about what exactly the SCAS is looking for with greater technical assistance and access to resources. Jenkins asked if Linder was okay with the idea of Jack Bowles. John Duffy mentioned he thinks there needs to be more evaluation of the way the community based staffers are placed, and less top down. Linder wants

more information about how Region 10 has delegated to the states. Palacios said he saw some issues with what the committee was discussing, he sees two various issues as well as looking at how to coordinate with state offices. Bowles said the committee needs to look at everything and decide what works best. Hafter motions to send the letter as is with grammatical corrections. John Duffy makes a friendly amendment to add what Bowles discussed about making it different for each state. Motion passed. Bowles discussed the importance of micro loans/grants and funding for small communities and how important it will become. Jenkins asked for Bowles to help Araujo with work on the micro grant/loan projects. Jenkins closed the meeting.

We hereby certify that to the best of our knowledge, the foregoing minutes are accurate and complete.

Submitted by.



Javier Araujo, EPA (DFO)

7-21-08

Date



Steve Jenkins, Chair

9-22-08

Date