



Improving the Environment In Indian Country and Environmental Justice Communities



US Environmental Protection Agency, Region 6
Office of Environmental Justice and Tribal Affairs

Fiscal Year 2006



From the Director

The following report highlights the environmental accomplishments achieved in Indian Country and the Environmental Justice communities of Region 6 during fiscal year 2006.

This report reflects the work done by Region 6 staff and Region 6 tribes, Environmental Justice communities, state partners and stakeholders. As indicated in the following pages, substantial progress has been made this year in improving the environment and public health, and in building essential relationships.

The Office of Environmental Justice and Tribal Affairs is a liaison and advocate for the communities we serve. We strive to incorporate the principles of empowering communities and respecting culture and tradition while working with our partners to achieve environmental results.

Our Tribal Team is committed to honoring the federal trust responsibility pursuant to negotiated agreements, federal law and EPA's Indian Policy. This is accomplished through protecting natural resources and traditional lifeways while encouraging capacity building.

Vulnerable communities throughout Region 6 turn to our Environmental Justice Team for support in addressing the disproportionate environmental impacts that threaten them. The critical element in all of our activities is collaboration with the various program staff and with the communities themselves.

Thank you for your contributions toward this year's successes in both Tribal and Environmental Justice contexts. We look forward to another challenging year in 2007.

Jonathan B. Hook
Director, Office of Environmental Justice and Tribal Affairs
January, 2007

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Region 6

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Clean Air in our Communities

Air Quality in Indian Country

Tribal lands in Region 6 generally have limited outdoor air quality issues. Five Region 6 tribes received EPA grant support specifically for air quality activities.

Seventy percent of the 65 federally recognized tribes in the Region have completed an initial grant to investigate air quality issues. As part of this initial investigation, tribes complete a preliminary assessment of emission sources on their lands and make general assessments of the potential for air quality problems.

Seven Region 6 tribes are currently conducting additional monitoring, either to supplement existing monitoring networks or to further investigate problems identified in their initial project period. Monitoring being conducted by the tribes includes particulate matter, ozone, toxics and bio-aerosols.

Air Quality Monitoring Assistance Provided by ITEC

The Inter-Tribal Environmental Council (ITEC) was created in 1992 to maximize the use of funding and environmental services for Region 6 tribes. Since its formation, ITEC's membership has grown to include forty tribes from Oklahoma, Texas and New Mexico. EPA has provided ITEC with a series of grants, including \$737,000 this year, to assist with air quality improvement in Indian Country. ITEC assists tribes with developing air monitoring programs and maintaining air quality monitoring equipment, and by providing information and training on various air quality issues. The consortia also assists tribes with air quality related data entry and independent equipment audits. ITEC's work capitalizes limited resources, resulting in cleaner air for the Region's tribes.

Indoor Air Quality

Tribes in parts of New Mexico and Oklahoma live in areas with high levels of indoor radon. This year three New Mexico tribes, the Jicarilla Apache Nation, the Pueblo of Taos and the Pueblo of San Ildefonso, and three Oklahoma tribes, the Cherokee Nation, the Eastern Shawnee Nation and the Seminole Nation, received EPA grant support to run radon programs to test homes, schools and businesses.

- These six tribes received radon canisters for testing purposes, provided free by EPA's Las Vegas laboratory, and conducted radon testing.
- All six tribes provided radon outreach material to their members this year.
- The Jicarilla Apache Nation conducted a demonstration project to reduce radon levels in homes with high radon readings.

Region 6's Asbestos-In-Schools program inspected eighteen charter schools in Environmental Justice areas.



Buffalo grazing at the Pueblo of Picuris

Clean and Safe Water

The United States has one of the safest water supplies in the world today. However, in 2003, only 60 percent of the tribal population in Region 6 received water meeting all drinking water health-based standards. Significant EPA resources have been directed toward improving tribal drinking water, including funds for drinking water infrastructure, training and technical assistance. The investment has paid off. In the third quarter of fiscal year 2006, more than 91 percent of the Region 6 tribal population was receiving drinking water that met all health-based standards under the Safe Drinking Water Act.

Region 6 continues to focus on the provision of safe drinking water to the tribal population. Fifty tribes in Region 6 received EPA grant support for water quality and/or drinking water quality. Source Water Assessments have been completed for 76 (96 percent) of all public water supply systems on tribal lands. Sixty-three (80 percent) of those systems have partnered with Region 6 to develop and implement programs that add an additional level of protection to the drinking water sources for more than 60,000 Native Americans.



Water sampling at the Pueblo of Taos

This year over 30 Region 6 tribes had active water quality monitoring programs for surface waters.

Ten tribes in Region 6 have EPA - approved water quality standards.

Region 6 and the New Mexico Environmental Finance Center conducted five training sessions on Safe Drinking Water Act implementation to reduce risk at targeted facilities. A total of 468 continuing education credits were earned at these training sessions.

Safe Drinking Water for the Kickapoo Traditional Tribe of Texas

As part of a Tri-National Emergency Response Exercise involving the U.S., Mexico and the Kickapoo Traditional Tribe of Texas (KTTT), the Region 6 Superfund Emergency Readiness Team and Drinking Water Section coordinated to provide a one-day drinking water training session in September 2006. The Kickapoo Nation hosted the training at their reservation. Approximately 50 people attended the training, including representatives from KTTT, Mexico and the U.S. The training covered drinking water system information and regulations, EPA Emergency Response guidance for intentional contamination incidents, security assistance options for water systems, sampling procedures and techniques and using field testing equipment. EPA staff also included training information specifically designed for KTTT staff and their current concerns, strengthening relations between EPA and the Tribe.

Region 6 awarded 42 grants to local communities to address drinking water and wastewater infrastructure needs.

Region 6 awarded four grants to tribal communities to address immediate water infrastructure needs this year.

Protecting and Restoring Land

The protection and restoration of land remains a high priority for Region 6 tribes and communities. Region 6 is working closely with our tribes to assess, clean up and close the many open dumps on tribal lands. Region 6 is also partnering with the Indian Health Service on an initiative for the agencies to coordinate the tracking of tribal solid waste measures and continues to work closely with our tribes on the assessment, monitoring and clean up of hazardous waste sites.

Region 6 Superfund Success

Staff assessed 18 sites for hazardous waste on the tribal lands of 16 Region 6 tribes this year.

Funded six management assistance programs, through which tribes provide technical assistance at Superfund and other hazardous waste removal sites.

Sponsored two Hazardous Waste and Emergency Response training sessions for Region 6 tribes.

Conducted Superfund Cost Recovery and Enforcement training sessions for several Oklahoma tribes and the Santa Clara Pueblo of New Mexico.



EPA is helping tribes clean up open dumps, like this one at the Kickapoo Traditional Tribe of Texas.



This former Mica Mine site at the Pueblo of Picuris is an example of land that has been blighted by mining activities.

The Ponca Tribe of Oklahoma successfully cleaned up four illegal dump sites on their trust land with EPA solid waste management grant support - \$85,293 this year. The Tribe is now using a hidden surveillance system on a fifth site to catch illegal dumpers in the act, and created a Web site to post video of illegal dumping at the site. The Tribe has also coordinated with the local newspaper to distribute warnings about illegal dumping to all residents.

Protecting and Restoring Land

The Inter-Tribal Environmental Council's Solid Waste Achievements

EPA Region 6 provided the Inter-Tribal Environmental Council (ITEC) \$99,900 in FY 2006 solid waste management funding. ITEC was able to assess approximately 45 open dumps within ITEC member tribes' boundaries and assisted with open dump screening for closure activities of 21 open dumps. ITEC also developed a Quality Assurance Project Plan for open dump assessments utilizing GIS technology and field screening technologies. This Plan will serve as a model for tribes and will enable ITEC to conduct confirmatory sampling of open dump sites in the future. This service will greatly assist tribes without adequate funding or expertise. To provide outreach to Region 6 tribes on the importance of cleaning up open dumps, ITEC coordinated a session at their annual conference, featuring EPA and tribal speakers.

EPA Region 6 and Indian Health Service Solid Waste Collaborative

EPA Region 6 and the Indian Health Service (IHS) are collaborating on an initiative to coordinate the tracking of tribal solid waste measures, in order to reduce confusion for the tribes and resolve reporting discrepancies. Region 6 and IHS coordinated a National Solid Waste Management Workshop and Training for tribes in August 2006. This was the first national training for multiple tribes on the new draft model Integrated Solid Waste Management Plan that EPA is helping to develop. Tribes provided feedback on the draft plan and shared successes and challenges related to their solid waste programs. The successful workshop included representatives from 15 tribes, EPA regions 6 and 8, IHS and the New Mexico Environment Department. It is now being considered as an EPA model for future trainings throughout the country.

Tar Creek Superfund Site

The Tar Creek Superfund site is home to some members of nine Region 6 tribes. The site is a former lead and zinc mining area located in Ottawa County, Okla. Previous mining activity deposited large quantities of mine tailings in piles on the ground, known as "chat piles." Chat piles, some of which are owned by tribes, have good economic value and can be used as aggregates in transportation projects.

In the fall of 2005, Region 6 did a Source Oriented Air Monitoring study of the Bird Dog tailing pond and chat pile. One of the objectives of the study was to provide field training to the Quapaw Tribe Environmental Department personnel on the latest air monitoring equipment and proper air sampling techniques and methodologies. In May 2006, EPA provided the Quapaw Tribe \$175,000 to perform Source Air Monitoring tasks in and around the chat sales/processing facilities pilot project area and to monitor chat sales activities to ensure that dust is not adversely affecting public health and the environment. This chat sale pilot project and the air monitoring being done by the Quapaw will potentially serve as the model for future chat removal operations within the Tar Creek Superfund site.



*Chat piles at the Tar Creek Site
dominate the horizon.*

Healthy Communities

The successful protection and restoration of communities and ecosystems in Region 6 depends on collaboration with our federal, state, tribal and local government partners and community stakeholders. Region 6 strives to work with tribes and communities to protect the environment by strengthening those communities and respecting culture and tradition.

Lead-Based Paint Inspections

This year, Region 6 focused lead-based paint inspections on areas known to have potential Environmental Justice concerns, conducting nearly 25 percent of these inspections in Environmental Justice areas. Residents were informed of the risk in their homes following the inspections, allowing for more informed decision-making by the community.

Tri-National Emergency Response Exercise

During a week in September 2006, Region 6 participated in and assisted with the coordination of a tri-national exercise, at the request of the Mexican government on behalf of the Procuraduría Federal de Protección al Ambiente (PROFEPA), Protección Civil and the The Kickapoo Traditional Tribe of Texas (KTTT). The KTTT has lands in both the U.S. in Eagle Pass, Texas and in Nacimiento, Coahuila, Mexico, giving the KTTT a unique set of environmental challenges.

The purpose of the exercise was to improve coordination and communication in the event of a hazardous material spill or biological threat along the U.S./Mexico border that could potential affect all three national communities. The exercise activities included training, a simulated chemical spill and response and a tabletop exercise designed to mimic a biological threat.

Brownfields Achievements

This year, Region 6 provided a \$165,000 Brownfields grant to the Inter-Tribal Environmental Council and the Cherokee Nation to write Brownfields law and regulations.

Region 6 also provided \$75,000 in Brownfields grant support to the Absentee Shawnee Tribe. The Tribe conducted training on "Brownfields 101" and for tribal members who are dealing with structures that were illegal methamphetamine labs.

Through the Brownfields Job Training program, three environmental job training programs were created. The programs, established in Oklahoma City, Shreveport, La., and the Absentee Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma, train students to perform work involved with environmental assessment and cleanup activities. Almost 100 students were trained this year alone.



Jhana Enders of EPA Region 6 and Tribal Administrator Roy Bernal of the KTTT attend the Tri-National Exercise.

Healthy Communities

Tribal Grant Workshops

Region 6 held three workshops for tribes focusing on Solid Waste, Brownfields and Community Action for a Renewed Environment (CARE) grants. In October 2005, about fifty participants from 17 Region 6 tribes attended two of these workshops held in New Mexico. Region 6 staff, in conjunction with the Indian Health Service (IHS), presented information on Solid Waste Open Dump grants, Brownfield grants and the new CARE grants. EPA is helping tribes better understand how the grants are ranked and the elements of a competitive proposal. The New Mexico Environment Department also discussed their Voluntary Cleanup Program and potential opportunities for tribes to have the State and/or EPA conduct free site assessments of contaminated properties on tribal lands, particularly for open dumps, which are a growing concern. IHS helped advertise the workshops, discussed services offered to tribal communities and distributed an electronic copy of presentations from the workshops to the tribes.

In December 2005, Region 6 and The Inter-Tribal Environmental Council (ITEC) sponsored a third workshop in Okmulgee, Okla. Representatives from 14 Region 6 tribes attended the workshop, hosted by the Creek Nation. The tribes saw presentations on the Region's Tribal Solid Waste Program and the new CARE program. EPA also provided information on the Brownfields program and how the tribes can increase their involvement. EPA presenters again focused on grant basics, such as grant-ranking and writing strong proposals. ITEC presented information on their Brownfields and Solid Waste programs and the environmental services they offer to their tribal members.



Participants listened to an EPA speaker at a New Mexico Grant Workshop

Alternative Dispute Resolution

The Region 6 Office of Environmental Justice and Tribal Affairs (OEJTA) strongly promotes the use of Alternative Dispute Resolution and/or Environmental Conflict Resolution as a tool for addressing differences between EPA, states, tribes and communities. OEJTA has provided several opportunities to resolve conflict. Several listening/consultation sessions were held relating to the implementation of Section 10211 of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act of 2005, including a facilitated session with tribes and Ann Klee, EPA's former General Counsel. OEJTA has also worked with several Environmental Justice communities on dispute resolution, including an ongoing multi-stakeholder project targeting the former Kelly Air Force Base and the New Orleans East Vietnamese community following Hurricane Katrina.

Household Hazardous Waste Educational Outreach Video

The Yselta del Sur Pueblo created an educational video about the identification and proper disposal of household hazardous waste. The video, *Black River*, was produced with a Border 2012 grant from EPA.

Black River also highlights the hazards of illegal dumping, particularly used motor oil, which is a prevalent problem. The video's target audience includes tribes and indigenous communities on both sides of the U.S./Mexico border and was produced in both English and Spanish.

Region 6 Colonias Initiatives

In Spanish, the word *colonias* means neighborhood, but the term is also used to describe unincorporated settlements in the border region with generally substandard housing and little infrastructure. Colonias often lack basic necessities, such as safe drinking water and sewer connections, paved roads, and in some cases, even electricity. Colonias settlements are prevalent in the states that border Mexico.

Nueces County Regional Colonia Initiative

Community residents of Corpus Christi raised concerns to EPA Region 6 about the deplorable conditions in which many colonia residents are forced to live. However, since most of the problems associated with colonias are local or county issues, EPA generally does not have the authority to address them. In Texas, the Office of the Secretary of State is charged with seeking solutions for the more than 1,600 colonias along the Texas border. After consulting with community leaders, EPA and county officials, the Secretary of State's office proposed forming a colonia initiative and inviting stakeholder representatives to participate. EPA Region 6 assisted with an initial summit meeting in February 2006, which began the Nueces County Regional Colonia Initiative. The group continues to meet each month, and participants include county officials, various state, local and federal agency representatives, non-profit organizations, faith-based organizations, health groups, academia, and grassroots and colonia organizations.

The group is currently developing a strategic plan and working to define goals and objectives with determined timeframes. Serious challenges under discussion include the lack of potable water, lack of sewer and waste collection, water-borne health problems, lack of proper drainage, lack of paved roads, soil contamination due to oilfield wastes and emergency response issues. Each stakeholder having a voice at these meetings should ensure that the resulting strategic plan will provide viable solutions to the real problems of these communities. As a result of the creation, planning and activities of this broad-based coalition, the residents of these communities have realistic expectations for addressing their environmental and quality-of-life problems.



Colonia residence south of Albuquerque



Water supply for colonia residence south of Albuquerque

Region 6 Colonias Initiatives

New Mexico Colonias Summit

The plight of colonias residents in New Mexico received attention during the four New Mexico Environmental Justice Listening Sessions, held in 2004. To address this issue, the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) decided to undertake a Colonia Summit with the support and assistance of EPA Region 6. The Summit was designed to build strong coordination among all levels of government to resolve critical environmental justice and health issues, resulting in improved living conditions in colonias and rural communities. An Advisory Steering Committee, composed of colonia community leaders, non-profit and state representatives, provided guidance and advice. Various agency and key community leaders met to discuss current issues and create a plan of action, which was later shared and refined at informal community discussions, or Juntas Comunitarias. An initial launch was held in late 2005, and the Juntas Comunitarias began early in 2006 in Dona Aña County. The overall goal of the project was to conduct a detailed analysis of colonias and rural communities' environmental issues, focused on three communities in Eddy, Dona Aña and Luna counties.

Five Juntas Comunitarias were held in the colonias, providing forums for discussion at the local level. At these informal meetings, the Advisory Steering Committee began to address critical community environmental issues identified by community residents and other stakeholders. The Juntas Comunitarias also provided an opportunity for participants to recommend creative ways for the State to partner with local communities and provide the necessary tools for understanding and resolving environmental concerns.

NMED held "Colonias Day" in Santa Fe on February 4, 2006. The day was a tremendous success, with more than 100 colonias residents in attendance. The residents attended the legislative sessions and met with their legislative representatives to advocate for critical infrastructure projects in their areas. Gov. Richardson subsequently created an Environmental Justice (EJ) Task Force to work with colonias and other EJ communities and to make subsequent recommendations for improvement to the State. NMED anticipates holding a series of "Toolbox Trainings" and steering committee meetings in 2007 to begin addressing the issues identified at the Juntas Comunitarias.



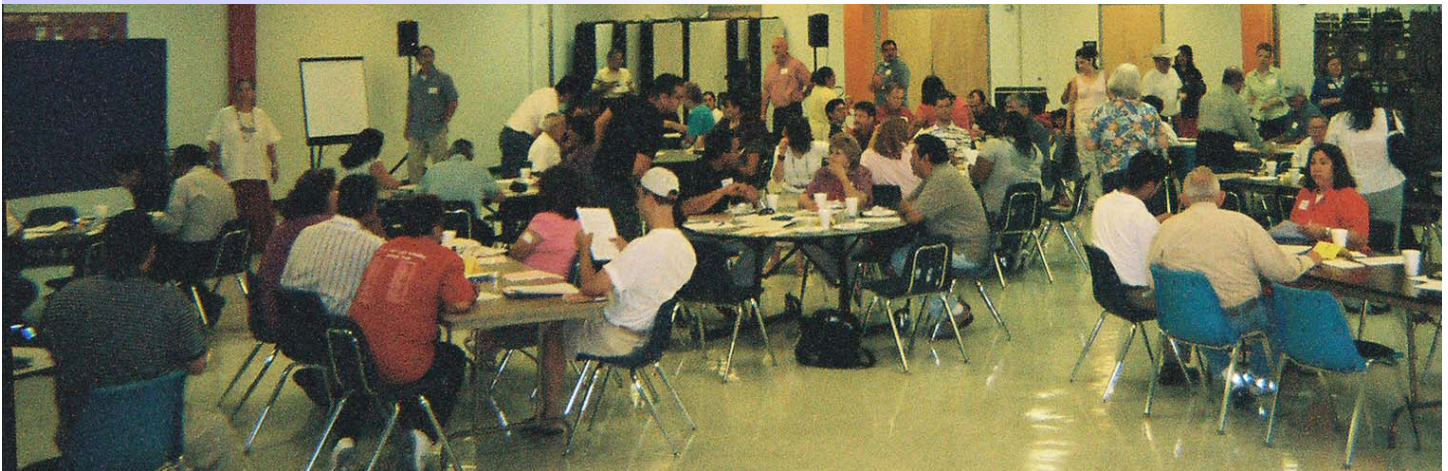
This colonia in El Paso County, Texas, is an example of the difficult living conditions faced by colonia residents.

Kelly Area Collaboration

In 2003, the Federal Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice workgroup (IWG) selected the Kelly Area Collaborative as one of its national pilot projects. Kelly Air Force Base (KAFB) is a former U.S. Air Force base located in San Antonio. For years, many residents in the low-income, 90 percent Hispanic neighborhoods near KAFB have believed that their health problems were caused by the Air Force contaminating the area with an industrial solvent, trichloroethylene.

The Air Force Real Property Agency, EPA Region 6, San Antonio Metro Health, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) and Kelly USA agreed to participate in the project. EPA, San Antonio Metro Health and the Air Force Real Property Agency shared facilitation expenses for the planning meetings and the roundtables. Additional partners in the collaborative effort included the Edgewood Independent School District, City of San Antonio's Planning Department and the Quintana Neighborhood Association.

The first community meeting was held in May 2006, to identify community concerns and priorities regarding the environment, health and economic revitalization of the KAFB area. The 60 participants devised a plan for future roundtables and implementation meetings, including an Environmental Roundtable and a separate Health Roundtable. The group is working collaboratively to identify solutions for the challenges they face together. This collaborative process leverages the limited resources of several agencies throughout various levels of government in order to maximize results. The Kelly Area Collaboration process has removed barriers and moved forward the agenda for restoration and revitalization of the area.



Participants networking at a Kelly Area Collaborative Community Meeting



Old Acres Homes Citizen's Council

Old Acres Homes Inc. is an historically African-American, low-income community in Houston. There is widespread perception among the community residents that former landfills in the area contributed to water and soil contamination and are negatively affecting neighborhood health. The Old Acres Homes Citizen's Council, Inc. is a community organization working to bring social, environmental and economic revitalization to the area.

In 2006, the Old Acres Homes Citizens Council used an EPA Environmental Justice Small Grant to conduct baseline data gathering to evaluate the potential impact of landfills on water quality in The Acres Homes area. The Council conducted interviews/surveys through door-to-door and telephone polling, attending community and civic meetings, and interviewing at the community Health Center, Multi-Service Center and the gym. Students from Prairie View A&M University assisted with survey completion, and the City of Houston Health Department, Planning Department and Mayor's Office also provided technical expertise and guidance.

Approximately 225 community members participated in three Community Forums hosted by the Council to provide information about the project, request active participation and report on the project's final outcome. The City of Houston provided educational material on environmental health issues at these Forums.

The survey results showed that community residents consider the landfills to be a problem. They were concerned about smell, run-off, drainage and trash dumping. Respondents reported health problems, ranging from skin rashes and coughing to cancer.

The partners involved in the project continue to meet to discuss health issues and seek additional funding to continue community education and resolution of these issues. In addition, through the

work of this project, the Acres Homes community residents, businesses and other stakeholders have increased their ability to understand and seek solutions to environmental health issues proactively.



Old Acres Homes Citizen's Council Community Meetings included presentations on environmental health issues.

Compliance and Stewardship

Region 6 strives to improve environmental behavior by empowering and assisting the public to ensure compliance with federal environmental laws and regulations. We are working with our communities and tribes to increase voluntary and self-directed actions to minimize pollution before it is generated and to promote environmental stewardship.

Building tribal capacity and improving compliance while ensuring tribal sovereignty are key elements for protecting the environment in Indian Country. Currently 94 percent of the 65 federally recognized tribes actively working with EPA in culturally appropriate ways to improve the environment in Indian Country. This year, Region 6 supported tribal capacity activities by awarding General Assistance Program grants to 50 tribes and 2 tribal consortia. Region 6 staff also provided on-site technical assistance to 61 Region 6 tribes on General Assistance Program grant applications for fiscal year 2007.

Compliance Assistance for Tribes

All of the 66 tribal drinking water systems in Region 6 subject to federal drinking water requirements received compliance assistance materials from EPA.

Approximately 10 tribal professionals received inspector training at one of five inspector workshops hosted by Region 6. The Region also initiated work with the Pueblo of Sandia to authorize a Tribal inspector to conduct federal NPDES inspections in 2007.



Black Bear Creek runs through the Pawnee Nation of Oklahoma

Environmental Education

Several Region 6 tribes have incorporated Environmental Education into their outreach programs.

- The Caddo Nation and Chickasaw Nations have now incorporated Environmental Education into their Head Start programs.
- The Wichita and Affiliated Tribes of Oklahoma make environmental presentations at health fairs and are working on an environmental newsletter.
- The Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma produces annual calendars and other environmental educational materials for their community and schools.
- The Jena Band of Choctaw sponsors a summer Environmental Education camp for tribal youth and has created games and other outreach materials focusing on Environmental Education.



This waterway streams through land of the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians of Oklahoma.



Improving Drinking Water for Low-Income Communities in New Mexico

The majority of America's drinking water comes from large scale municipal water systems, whose sources are rivers, lakes and reservoirs. However, millions of Americans depend on private water sources, such as wells and aquifers. EPA Region 6 and the state of New Mexico work to ensure that all drinking water systems are in compliance with Safe Drinking Water Act regulations, focusing on securing projects to improve drinking water for low-income communities whose annual average incomes range from \$10,000-\$19,000. These drinking water standards apply to public water systems, which provide water for human consumption through at least 15 service connections, or regularly serve at least 25 individuals. Public water systems include municipal water companies, homeowner associations, schools and businesses.

Lordsburg – serves 3,100

This system has historically battled high fluoride levels. People who drink water with fluoride levels above EPA's drinking water standard of 4mg/L for many years could get bone disease, causing pain and tenderness. EPA has set a secondary fluoride standard of 2mg/L to protect against dental fluorosis, which causes brown staining and even pitting of permanent teeth. EPA and the State issued a Joint Enforcement Order to require Lordsburg to bring its drinking water into compliance with the fluoride standards and to notify the community about the violations until they are corrected.

Lordsburg is installing an activated aluminum treatment and filtration system. When the project is completed in spring 2007, fluoride will be reduced, providing improved drinking water to residents.

El Barranco Mutual Domestic Water Users Association – serves 25

High levels of total coliforms and turbidity caused routine violations of the Safe Drinking Water Act and raised concerns about the safety of the water. These violations are usually a result of problems with the treatment system and/or the distribution pipes. They indicate that the water may be contaminated with bacteria that can cause life-threatening disease.

Citations had also been issued for minor violations, such as not sampling and testing the water as required to ensure safety. Because of an Administrative Order issued by EPA Region 6, El Barranco converted from a surface to a ground water source. A new well was drilled and a new storage tank, water distribution system, chlorination system, well-head, pumphouse and security fence were installed.

In July the system achieved full compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act and is now providing safe water the community.

Miami Domestic Water Users Association – serves 130

EPA Region 6 issued an Administrative Order to the system for failing to appropriately disinfect and filter drinking water. After installing an ultra-filtration membrane water treatment and plant and equipment, the system is delivering safe drinking water to the community.

Columbus – serves 2,000

This system is also working to reduce high fluoride levels as a result of a joint effort by EPA Region 6 and the state of New Mexico. The installation of filtration media is scheduled to be complete by the end of the year.

Fort Sumner – serves 1,200

Historically high levels of combined Radium 226/228 caused violations of the Safe Drinking Water Act and potentially increased long-time residents' risk of developing cancer. Citations had also been issued for minor violations, such as not performing required sampling and analysis. After EPA Region 6 issued an Administrative Order requiring compliance, the system installed two reverse osmosis filtering units, a chlorination station and a cooling facility. They also installed a slow, sand filtration pretreatment unit and new plumbing and equipment. Since July, this system has maintained full compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act.

Hurricane Response

The devastation caused by hurricanes Katrina and Rita and the monumental recovery effort that followed solidified the importance of incorporating Environmental Justice (EJ) activities and considerations in environmental decision-making, particularly in relationship to natural disaster response. Although natural disasters do not discriminate, minority, low-income, elderly and tribal populations are often more vulnerable to related environmental and public health impacts. Hurricane victims may be exposed to hazards through flood waters, mold and debris. The disruption of normal health care services exacerbated public health concerns. Two important steps taken by the Region 6 Office of Environmental Justice and Tribal Affairs were the deployment of an EJ Liaison to the Incident Command Center to assist with identifying and addressing EJ issues and the creation of an interagency and community focused taskforce.

EJ Interagency Task Force

EPA Region 6 coordinated the establishment of a regional response mechanism, the Environmental Justice Interagency Taskforce (EJIT), to collaboratively address environmental and public health concerns in areas impacted by hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The primary goal of EJIT was to provide an avenue for involved agencies to gather input and concerns from impacted communities.

Participants: In addition to representatives from federal, state and local governments, the taskforce included participants from academia, industry and the community.

Meetings: EJIT conference calls were held weekly to share information on response activities and community concerns.

Site Tour: EPA and the city of New Orleans co-sponsored a tour of several areas impacted by the hurricanes in order to give EJIT participants an “on the ground” perspective of the impacts.

A secondary outcome of the taskforce was the sharing and channeling of cleanup information between agencies and communities by making outreach materials accessible to the taskforce members. Perhaps more importantly, the EJIT established an informal communication network for information sharing that went beyond the official conference calls.

Integrating EJ into Emergency Response

During the hurricane response, it became apparent that the implementation of the Incident Command System was not sufficient to meet the potential needs of EJ and Tribal communities. EPA is in the process of evaluating its disaster preparedness and response procedures to ensure that all communities, including minority and low-income communities, are not disproportionately and adversely affected by federal decisions. Region 6 will continue its work with the Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response to ensure the integration of EJ into the Incident Command Structure, at both the national and regional levels.



Hurricane destruction in the Ninth Ward of New Orleans

Hurricane Response

EJ Liaison

The EJ Liaison established and maintained relationships with federal, state and local agencies in order to provide public health information to vulnerable populations.

Staffing: The Office of Environmental Justice and Tribal Affairs staffed the EJ Liaison by rotating staff on a two to four week basis. The EJ Liaison attended public and community meetings and assisted with distributing environmental and public health flyers in English, Spanish and Vietnamese to communities impacted by the hurricanes.

Community Outreach: In partnership with a local community organization, federal, state and local agencies, the EJ liaison hosted a community meeting, providing a forum for communities to have their environmental concerns addressed by the appropriate agencies.

Outreach to Tribal Population: The EJ Liaison provided outreach to the United Houma Nation of Louisiana and worked with the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals to develop a low-literacy fact sheet and presentation on the risks and health effects associated with mold.



Hurricane Katrina destroyed homes in the Ninth Ward of New Orleans

Grant Assistance to Hurricane Impacted Areas

In response to the hurricanes, the EPA Office of Environmental Justice made grant money available to Region's 4 and 6 to fund community based projects directly related to environmental justice issues in hurricane affected communities. To assist communities in successfully competing for these funds, Region 6 held grant workshops in four communities affected by hurricanes Katrina and Rita: Houma, Lake Charles and New Orleans, La., and Beaumont/Port Arthur, Texas. The presentations focused on the contents of the grant solicitation, helpful hints in writing a successful grant proposal, and a question and answer period. Subsequently, the Region awarded three \$50,000 grants in September 2006 to assist communities with recovery efforts:

The Bayou Interfaith Shared Community Organizing group will conduct a project to form collaborative partnerships to identify, prioritize and develop plans to address hurricane related environmental problems and perceived health impacts.

Texas Recyclers Association, Inc. will provide educational outreach, interactive activities and hands-on training related to energy conservation to promote safe environment practices for economically-disadvantaged households affected by hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

The Louisiana Environmental Action Network will provide protective gear, educational materials and training sessions to help protect recovery workers and residents from exposure to mold and other hazardous substances found in flood damaged homes and buildings.



Outreach to the Vietnamese-American Community

Providing vital environmental information to hurricane affected communities was a top priority for EPA. Region 6's Vietnamese-American staff routinely offer their skills in translating Agency documents into Vietnamese. Providing information in native languages increases awareness of environmental and public health issues and enables people with limited English proficiency to make more informed decisions regarding their lives and their local environments. This service has never been more imperative than after hurricanes Katrina and Rita, which displaced approximately 50,000 Vietnamese-Americans.

Region 6 led a translation team consisting of native-speaking Vietnamese-American staff from the Office of Water, Office of Pesticides and Regions 3 and 9 to ensure that all EPA translated documents were technically accurate, linguistically appropriate and culturally sensitive. Approximately 20 brochures, pamphlets and flyers and eight public service announcements were translated into Vietnamese during the hurricane recovery efforts.

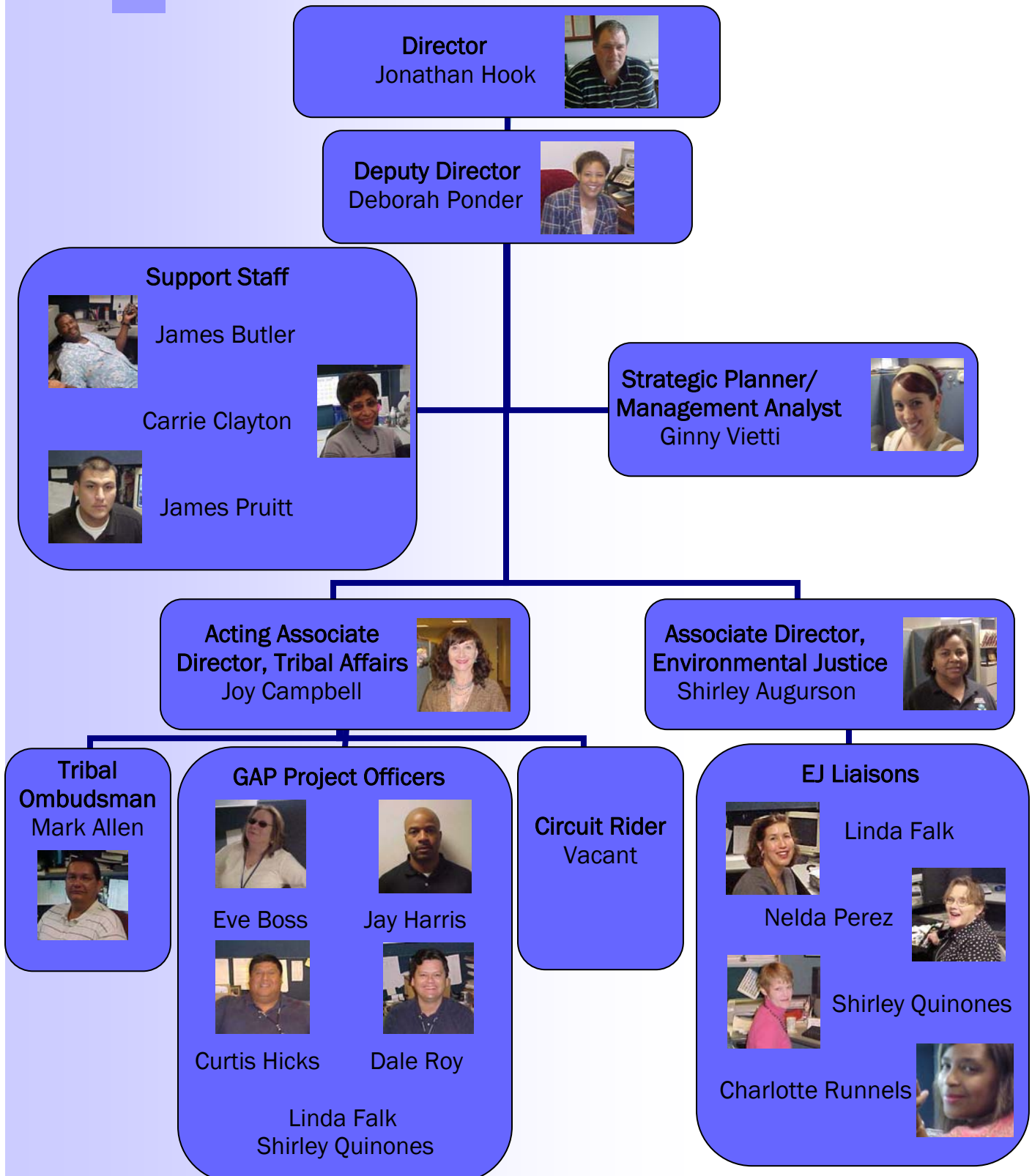
Translated products included vital information and guidance on subjects such as the emergency disinfection of drinking water, how to deal with mold, flood water, asbestos and lead, how to clean up sediments, what to do when returning to homes and businesses after hurricanes, hazardous waste disposal and how to deal with commercial debris.

Region 6 also assisted in creating a Web site to post EPA resources in Vietnamese for hurricane preparation and recovery and assisted the Agency's New Orleans Command Center in distributing more than 3,000 flyers and handouts to Vietnamese-American evacuees and communities in the affected areas. To publicize EPA's newly created Vietnamese Web site and resources in Vietnamese for hurricane preparation and recovery, Region 6 participated in talk shows broadcasts on local ethnic radio stations in Dallas and Houston.

These locales were chosen because the majority of hurricane-affected Vietnamese-Americans were relocated to these areas. Saigon Houston Radio is the major radio station for more than 150,000 Vietnamese-Americans living in Houston. Region 6 staff also provided interviews to the Vietnamese-Voice of America and Vietnamese Public Radio in Washington, DC, and The Times-Picayune in New Orleans. Vietnamese-Voice of America broadcasts more than 1,000 hours of news, information, educational, and cultural programming every week to an estimated worldwide audience of more than 100 million people.

The Region 6 Office of Environmental Justice and Tribal Affairs facilitated communication between a New Orleans East Vietnamese community, industry and the State regarding the use of a local landfill for hurricane debris disposal. Community residents were opposed to the use of the landfill since they believed the long-term impacts would have negative consequences on health, quality of life, recovery and revitalization. This process highlighted the necessity of interjecting public participation into the emergency response decision-making process. Region 6 is working with the state and EPA's Office of Solid Waste to evaluate the current public process to make recommendations for change.

The OEJTA Office and Staff



Region 6 Office of Environmental Justice and Tribal Affairs

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