

## **Thinking Locally, Acting Federally: Strategies to Improve Oregon Air Quality through Collaboration with the Environmental Protection Agency**

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PRESENTATION FORMAT: 15 minute oral presentation

TOPIC/TARGET AUDIENCE: environmental health professionals, community activists

ABSTRACT: Though concerned citizens may approach local public health agencies about air quality concerns, most aspects of emissions control are driven by federal-level policy. Oregon public health practitioners have some experience working with the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), which enforces federal standards, but jurisdiction, political pressures, and resource constraints the agency's health-promotion work. As part of a team that included state and local health department employees, a community advocate, and an academic, we developed a strategy for advocating to the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to better address the negative health impacts of diesel emissions. We found EPA very receptive to public health perspectives, particularly when we were able to provide empirical research showing making a health case for an EPA action. Further, EPA was eager to incorporate community groups into their work, particularly in the form of "citizen science" projects. However, the approach to acting on this information varied across different parts of the agency. We discuss lessons learned about the distinctive roles played by EPA regional offices, national advocacy organizations, and regional air quality organizations and offer suggestions for mobilizing these various entities to catalyze local efforts.

OBJECTIVE(S): Evaluate opportunities for local practitioners and activists to address local environmental health issues by engaging in federal policy.

Identify the unique contributions public health practitioners can offer to Environmental Protection Agency staff.

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