Fresno Regional Public Workshop on the Draft California Communities Environmental Health Screening Tool (CalEnviroScreen)

Wednesday, September 5, 2012
Cecil C. Hinton Community Center, Fresno, CA 93706

The fourth regional workshop in Fresno attracted over 40 participants that included local residents and business and government representatives. Members of the California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation, the Community Water Center, and California Women for Agriculture were present, as well as some city planners and people representing specific agricultural industries. Governmental representatives from the US Environmental Protection Agency, the Fresno County Department of Public Health, and the Fresno County Department of Agriculture also attended.

Staff sought comments and suggestions related to the overall approach taken and specifically on proposed indicators, data sources, and the methodology. Numerous comments were made at the workshop and are grouped and described below. Comments made more than once were consolidated and placed in the most appropriate category.

Methods/General:

- State agencies should coordinate efforts
- There are several groups within the community that are not represented at this meeting
- It's hard to get people to be engaged
- We have to make an effort to make sure that the most affected communities feel welcomed to the process
- We should get in touch with the communities early, find out how to help them get to the meetings, and just get more involved in outreach regarding the meetings
- Should reach out to people that have relationships with community members
- How often will the scores be recalculated?
- What does "Screening tool" mean? Need clear definition
- What are you screening for?
- Are regulatory controls taken into account in looking at risk?
- How do we know what risk is exactly—100 pounds, for example, means what risk?
- What if exposures are within legal limit?
- This tool seems very subjective
- This tool assumes 100% risk; disagree with this
- Is there an overlay of Census Bureau info?
- Is population density taken into consideration?

- Must consider and communicate difference between actual risk vs. perceived risk
- Tool should be made more simple
- The uncertainty for each component varies, especially in pinpointing harm
- Scoring gives sense of risk rather than just saying it is present; giving a community a number implies risk
- What can a community do with the information that they are exposed and another is not?
- What is the purpose or mission statement here?
- Should get more input from small businesses for development of tool
- There is incomplete and inaccurate data going into the tool
- There's a bigger harm from using poor data
- Why is population characteristic a multiplier of 1-6? Multiplier concept difficult to understand
- Why are exposures ranked 1-10? Need evidence to externally validate or justify
- It is hard to get info for unincorporated areas or hamlets
- Why are averages taken for indicators within a component?
- What's the distinction between Exposures and Environmental Effects? I think there's overlap. Also there's a cause-effect relationship for some
- There's a difference between how these things affect people vs. how they affect the environment
- What are the economic costs and benefits?
- West Fresno's areas/issues are diluted
- Will data be available on the internet?
- Method is rather complex and appears to use duplicate/overlapping data
- Simplification of the methodology would be good
- Could cover the essential indicators, e.g. those with the best data
- Should make the method more understandable to community members
- Many exposures are impacted by topography, ethnic choices, poverty, eating preferences
- Communities can use all the help they can get
- Will drinking water be in the exposures component?
- How will you get comments on the drinking water indicator?
- How will the tool be updated?
- More indicators are better so that you don't miss something

Geographic scale/Mapping:

- Why was the analysis done by ZIP code? This could be problematic because there are lots of places not included
- The graphics imply more resolution than is there
- The data is not that refined and is unrealistic to use ZIP codes as some are small and some are large
- Suggestion to go to the precinct level because the data doesn't have to be as refined
- Would like to see more cities than are on this map, will this be an option?
- Certain ZIP codes have a range of impacts depending on communities that make up the ZIP
- Should show regional comparisons and rankings *within* regions
- What's the difference between Census ZIP codes vs. postal ZIP codes?
- Maps lack refinement- could be interpreted that living in highly impacted areas means living in 100% exposures. Makes many communities look really bad
- Collection based on ZIP codes is less meaningful in rural areas; smaller unit would be better
- ZIP codes reflect great economic and ethnic disparities, this may skew data
- Smaller geographical unit would be better
- If maps are available online, find a way to link them with Food Emergency Response Network (FERN) and Kern Environmental Enforcement Network (KEEN)
- Online map should have a water table layer to provide more information
- Want to see larger area for indicator maps

Exposures:

- Do you think the exposure concerns are adequate? Fresno county and Tulare county show up the same color
- Should leave pesticide data out because it’s unclear how use relates to exposure
- Would rather see something accurate than incomplete data (especially for the toxic release data).
- Toxic Release Inventory (TRI) data is terribly bad and inaccurate
- Use district release data such as California warning center release data
- Traffic counts should include traffic types and exposure since there is a lot of heavy truck traffic in Fresno
- Emissions Factors (EMFAC) data from the Air Resources Board (ARB) wouldn't help much to refine the traffic data
- Add train data- is incomplete along the rail corridor

- Should include diesel emissions using data from local air quality board
- There have been efforts on the ground to incorporate local data, these data should be considered
- How will you incorporate water quality data?
- Department of Pesticide Regulation tests wells all the time, should consider incorporating this data; especially important in unincorporated areas
- Community pilot drinking water study – Stakeholder Oversight Action Committee (SOAC) in Tulare County – may be a good resource for data
- Consider well water in drinking water indicator
- The VOCs have been reduced for many pesticides, so criteria should reflect current pesticide formulations (Chlorpyrifos for example)
- Include pesticides that contaminate the water as well as air
- How do the current air regulations play into this project?
- Would like if community members could access maps and could get messages about what needs to be corrected
- If a pesticide was not volatile, then it won't be in the indicator? So Roundup is not included?
- Air quality analysis is possibly too simple; consider more sophisticated modeling for PM and ozone that reflects meteorology, wind direction, geography
- Consider moving the pesticide, toxic release and traffic indicators to the environmental effects component
- Include violations for TRI sites
- Identify drinking water problems and burdened communities
- Department of Water Resources is designating "Disadvantaged Communities" and will allocate funding based on these designations
- OEHHA has opportunity to holistically address drinking water issues and move other agencies to designate impacted drinking water quality within communities
- Other ozone contributors are motor vehicles, stationary sources, consumer products
- The radii used for the air monitors are inappropriate
- Pollution source: diesel from farm equipment, especially older equipment
- Are efforts being made to screen for household pesticide use in regards to PM 2.5?
- Community members need air monitoring devices to report results to Cal/EPA

Public Health Effects:

- Are prison populations included in public health statistics?
- Are tribal populations included in public health statistics?

- For asthma, look at diagnosed, not just hospitalizations. Lots of people with asthma don't go to the emergency room
- Better asthma indicator would be prescription data
- Overall life expectancy or premature mortality would be better indicators
- Low birth weight may be driven by ethnicity more than environmental causes
- Lumping all cancers into a single indicator is problematic because there are a lot of contributing factors
- The Tribal Health Service has health data that may be useable and more accurate for tribal groups
- Is health data reported in ZIP of hospital/clinic or patient's residence ZIP?
- Death certificates for heart disease may not be the best source of information
- Why isn't diabetes used as an indicator?
- Prisons are a significant and sometimes dominant part of population in rural San Joaquin Valley; should consider data from prisons
- Can compare a mobile population (prisoners) with a stationary population (long-time residents)
- There is a high cancer rate in Chowchilla Prison
- Should look at incidence of Valley Fever
- UC Berkeley has a study on children's health and air pollution but not useful for a statewide tool
- Asthma is over-diagnosed in the Central Valley; how much asthma is endemic or pollen as opposed to a real condition?
- Many public health issues are a function of air movement; the topography is the problem
- Autism and developmental delays should be included as indicators
- How are Native American populations accounted for?
- Look at rates of childhood diabetes in Native American populations. Could be due to dietary choices and other factors
- How does access to health care figure into this?
- Are you assuming pollution causes heart disease, cancer, and low birth weight?
- You're assuming 100% of these public health effects are due to environmental factors but regulations are having an effect in lowering these
- Cancer runs in families, heart disease is a reflection of dietary preferences, alcohol use, etc. You're tainting your study by using inaccurate data
- People go to the emergency room multiple times for the same underlying conditions. It is skewing the data
- A lot of these health problems are due to indoor factors, not environmental
- You're not taking into account mitigating factors like regulations

- Not opposed to looking at cumulative risks but you're taking shady data and then someone down the line is going to use this to prevent economic growth
- What type of cancer are you categorizing?
- 16-17 year old girls at Chowchilla prison are getting cancer polyps after 1 year because of the water there, state isn't watching it
- Also ovarian cancer is more closely related to chemicals than many other kinds of cancer
- Dr. David Lighthall at the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District has a lot of health data on air pollution
- We know that people in low-income areas go to emergency rooms more
- Might make more sense for the public health indicators to be a model of susceptibility

Environmental Effects:

- Should be including farms' pesticide sprayer loading sites
- Once data is available, the California Environmental Reporting System (CERS) database should be included. Focus on location of California Accidental Release Prevention (CALARP) program facilities
- Data should be updated on a regular basis
- Population weighting should be done for environmental effects indicators
- How do you discern between environmental effects and exposures? Are exposures implied?
- Site doesn't appear to be accurate on map. How to ground truth?
- Biomass plants should be accounted for in this component
- How does this indicator represent effects? Is there a direct connection between environmental effects and exposures?
- Gas released from solid waste sites could drift elsewhere; how is this accounted for?
- If a site is remediated, it should not be scored as high as an un-remediated one
- Indicators should not be averaged. Instead, the "worst case scenario" should be used for the component score. Highlights the biggest problem for that community.
- How can networks of septic tanks be accounted for so that we can identify if they are seeping elsewhere other than their point source location?
- Are methamphetamine cleanup sites included in the component?
- How can communities locate sites causing the most pollution?
- How do we account for pollution from dairies?
- How to account for leaking septic tanks in rural communities?
- How is radon being accounted for?

Socioeconomic Factors and Sensitive Populations:

- How do we account for sensitive populations in the workplace?
- Should use percent pregnant women in sensitive populations
- Should look at linguistic isolation and consider all native language speakers, not just Spanish (many Southeast Asian language speakers in CA)
- There is a large margin of error in the income data from ACS; should highlight areas where there are inaccuracies
- Can look at percent of kids on free or reduced price lunches
- Consider the type of employment of community members; workforce investment organizations have info on types of employment
- Could look at unemployment rates
- Should consider cost of living
- Could index income ratios
- A regional analysis would better capture cost of living
- Should consider lack of access to healthcare
- Large differences in access between urban and rural areas, lots of unincorporated communities in the valley
- There is less tax base in unincorporated communities to set up health care systems
- There is some fundamental distrust of the health care system that affects use of and access to health care
- Farmworkers could be considered a sensitive community- hazards at work and at home
- Farming is an asset to the Central Valley but hazards need to be recognized
- We need to look for solutions on both sides so communities can fix long-standing problems related to farming.
- Why wasn't population density factored in?
- Should use percent pregnant women in sensitive populations
- Rates of violent crime contributes to community health, affects sense of safety
- Could look at crime statistics
- Should consider populations with chronic diseases
- Consider disabled populations
- Consider access to insurance
- Consider political isolation due to lack of documentation, geographic isolation; school districts and some faith-based organizations may have info on undocumented communities
- Lack of community empowerment creates vulnerability

- Issues with poverty indicator: extreme poverty in the valley and other areas is diluted by using twice the national poverty level and by northern California low income households. Poverty differs by region
- Should only use the national poverty level (not twice)
- Could look at multigenerational poverty
- Look into Gini Coefficient: what share of population has what share of wealth
- There are extreme differences in levels of affluence in the Central Valley
- Consider immigrant population or non-documented population instead of Hispanic population; Hispanic groups might not experience same issues
- Is 'percent non-white' sensitive enough to capture risks
- More recent immigrants experience different risks than, say, a Latino family that has lived in CA for several generations
- Different education levels over generations- look at recent immigrants for sensitive population
- Can look at percent births to immigrant mothers (OSHPD data) as proxy for immigrant population numbers
- Consider a community's access to the system
- Census data is inaccurate for tribal areas
- Why income AND poverty? Why not just poverty?

Use of Tool:

- How will the product be used by other entities for other purposes?
- How is the body of information going to be used?
- As the state uses info to allocate resources, will tool be used to withhold funds from local jurisdictions until their score improves?
- Do not want more regulations and less business
- Using this tool will increase unemployment (due to more regulations negatively affecting businesses)
- Worried that people will get the idea that they are worse than they really are
- Can see value in promoting as a resource allocation tool vs. control and regulation
- Concerned about impacts to legislation and LAFCOs (Local Agency Formation Commissions)
- Want feedback on how other agencies might use tool
- Concerned that tool could be used to force disadvantaged communities to be annexed by a city
- This could be used to force political/geographic boundaries

- Is this to be used city by city or just statewide?
- Individuals and planners could take a more refined look
- What assurances can we expect that this won't be used to promulgate new regulations, laws, and penalties/fines on businesses?
- How do we create this tool without vilifying agriculture?
- This tool would seem to retard investment and business development in all the worst scoring areas
- Support the purpose and potential uses of the project, especially the sources of grant funding, prioritizing grants and cleanups
- Will you be able to look up your ZIP code for this project?
- How can this tool be designed to aggregate resources for communities?
- Identify areas where to provide additional resources, generate improvements
- Could be used for policy implementation
- Use for land-use and long term planning
- Could use as formal part of reviews for local governments
- Concern that tool could negatively affect investment in communities (could be a disincentive for new projects such as rail)
- Concern for misuse on where to put funding
- Provides education for all levels of decision making, especially at the state level, which allows for understanding of cumulative impacts of decisions
- Make sure to cross-pollinate and coordinate between agencies
- Recognize facilities that are placed in disadvantaged communities and stop their further placement
- Use to help historically neglected communities move forward in an equitable way
- We should look at sources not where impacts are felt