

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

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The seventh regional workshop (ninth workshop overall) in Coachella attracted a group of about 16 participants that included local residents and a government representatives. Members of Inland Congregations United for Change were present as well as a representative from the California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation. From the government, a representative from the California Department of Toxic Substances Control and a representative from the local Water Quality District participated in the discussion.

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:

- How are the effects of climate change being addressed in the model, if at all? Can things like increasing temperature be added in?
- What do the website addresses on the individual indicator pages in the report link to?
- What can be done about the odors from the lagoon nearby?
- There are a lot of tribal areas in the Coachella Valley that may have different regulations than other parts of the state. Need to make sure facilities and activities on tribal lands are accounted for. Also make sure to get accurate demographic information from tribal areas
- Tyler Watson's report compares several methods for examining cumulative impacts; all have strengths and weaknesses but together maybe they can be most helpful
- This document needs to be made more readable to lay-people. Maybe after methods section there could be a section that would explain the meaning in more plain terms
- A live presentation/demonstration of the tool on the web would be helpful
- Need more discussion on who is responsible for creating the pollution and how to hold them accountable. Need more talk on how to make/keep the environment safe

Geographic scale/Mapping:

- Need more flexibility with geographic scale: might be useful to be able to go up to county level or down to census tract level

- Concern that averaging indicators mutes the score for a component if a community scores low in just one indicator

Exposures:

- Isn't there any more current data for traffic than from 2004?
- TRI data is self-reported—what about companies that aren't reporting? How accurate is the TRI database? Is there a way to get more complete information?
- There is only one PM monitor in the Eastern Coachella Valley—how accurate can the score be out there? Many other areas have more monitors so they have more accurate data. Maybe look to other monitoring sources like local air districts
- All exposure indicators are from data that is self-reported—will non-self-reported data sources be considered/factored in?
- Are certain chemicals used more often in pesticides?
- UCLA has done research on diesel exhaust—is there any thought to include ultrafine particles?
- Water quality should definitely be added
- Concern over unknown data in the state like pollutants that are released in the air during plowing and other activities

Public Health Effects:

- Given the toxic effects of pollutants, has there been any consideration of birth defects or developmental delays/disabilities?
- Many regions have no nearby hospitals so ER visits may not capture true asthma rates. Can data from local health clinics be considered?
- Should consider other respiratory ailments besides asthma
- In the North Shore area residents lack transportation to get to clinics and hospitals (none nearby) so 3 kids died this year from heat stroke. Need more facilities in that area

Environmental Effects:

- Will there be any tests in the Salton Sea when looking at water quality? Some data has already been collected
- Has any thought been given to weighting impaired water bodies based on degree of impairment or based on size?

- There is a nearby dump that is not being tracked—is there a way to ground-truth this data and make sure everything is included?

Use of Tool:

- Wish there were a way to limit future impacts of pollutants in areas that are already heavily burdened
- How can this tool and the information be disseminated within communities? Could it be available at libraries so all community members could access it?
- There should be some sort of resource like a hotline or website for communities once they see the results of the modeling. People will want to know more about the impacts they're seeing and about their score and might need assistance in interpreting the results.