

Toxinformer

Environmental Health Coalition

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The People's Plan for cleaning up *Metales* Page 3

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Environmental Health Coalition

Organizing for Justice

Environmental Health Coalition is dedicated to environmental and social justice. We believe that justice is achieved when empowered communities act together to make social change. We organize and advocate to protect public health and the environment threatened by toxic pollution. EHC supports efforts that create a just society which foster a healthy and sustainable quality of life.

The Border Environmental Justice Campaign (BEJC) works in solidarity with social justice groups in the border region to promote worker and community right-to-know about the chemicals used by the maquiladoras, to increase their capacity to influence conditions that directly affect their health, and to demand cleanup of abandoned and contaminated sites.



The Clean Bay Campaign (CBC) unites workers, bayside communities, and conservationists to clean up, restore and protect San Diego Bay as a clean and healthy multi-use water resource capable of supporting a diverse range of activities.

The Research and Community Assistance Program responds to the needs of residents by providing scientific, technical, and policy information and assistance, and empowering residents with appropriate and effective strategies.

The Toxic Free Neighborhoods Campaign (TFN) works with affected residents to promote land use and planning reforms, the relocation of hazardous industries to industrial zones, and the reduction of toxic air contaminants released by industry.



The Campaign to Eliminate Childhood Lead Poisoning (CeCLP) works with community residents, housing advocates, health officials, and government agencies to eliminate the sources of lead exposure in San Diego County.

STAY INFORMED! BECOME A MEMBER OF EHC TODAY!

Yes, I want to become a member of EHC. I am enclosing my tax-deductible membership contribution of:

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Chilpancingo residents present community-based solution to the toxic Metales y Derivados problem

For more than a decade, residents of Colonia Chilpancingo, Tijuana, have suffered while the bureaucracies of the U.S. and Mexican governments failed to remedy the toxic problems plaguing the community. Now, Environmental Health Coalition and members of Colectivo Chilpancingo Pro Justicia Ambiental, EHC's Tijuana affiliate, have taken a bold step in the fight to clean up the abandoned lead smelter that continues to poison children and families in the Colonia.

During a demonstration staged on May 16, 2003 at the opening of the Encuentro Fronterizo cross-border conference in Tijuana, EHC and members of the Colectivo presented a comprehensive community-based cleanup plan for *Metales y Derivados*, the notorious abandoned lead smelter that stands just 150 yards from Colonia Chilpancingo, home to more than 10,000 people. Almost 24,000 tons of mixed hazardous waste remain at the site, including 7,000 metric tons of lead slag exposed to the elements.

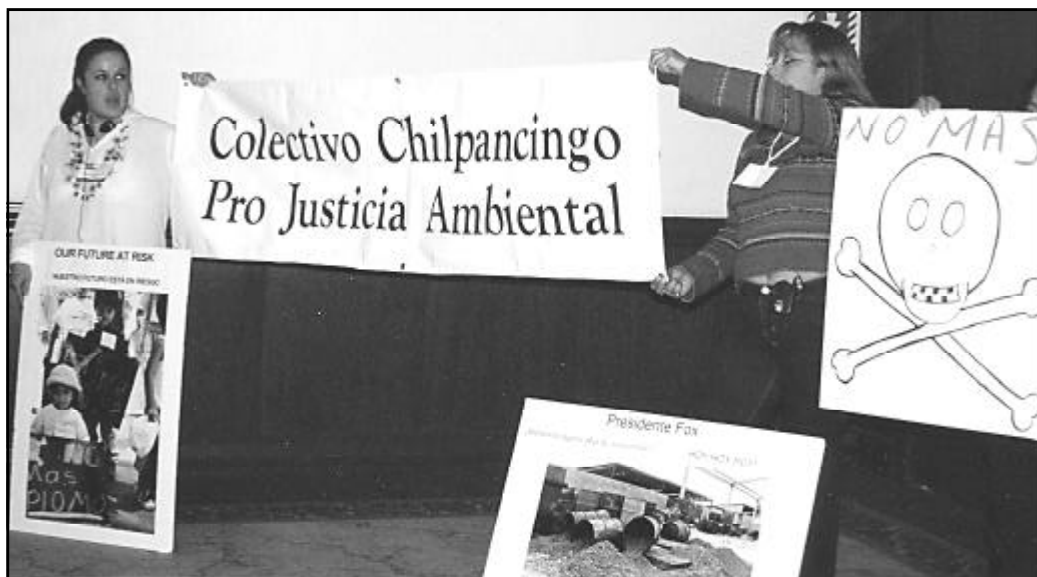
Holding signs and chanting, "Our community demands cleanup! Here's our solution!" residents presented the cleanup plan to U.S. and Mexican officials.

"The people of our Colonia will no longer tolerate the poisoning of our community," said Lourdes Luján, a Colectivo organizer and resident of Colonia Chilpancingo. "The U.S. and Mexican governments have failed to defend our right to a healthy and safe environment, so we took charge and developed a solution. We demand that the Mexican government respect the voice of the people, and implement this cleanup plan immediately."

A community-based solution

Colonia residents selected a cleanup plan, prepared for EHC and the Colectivo by Enrique Medina of Alliance Consulting International, that calls for comprehensive remediation of the *Metales* site, and a return of the hazardous waste to its country of origin – the United States – as required by Mexican environmental law and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

Under the Colonia's plan, all waste at the site will be excavated, placed in containers, and transported to a



Lourdes Luján, left, and Andrea Pedro Aguilar, display the banner of Colectivo Chilpancingo Pro Justicia Ambiental during a demonstration to promote the community-based cleanup plan for *Metales y Derivados*.

hazardous waste landfill in the U.S. The areas to be excavated contain lead slag waste in drums and bundles, contaminated concrete, and two enormous piles of toxic waste. The plan calls for the structures on the site to be demolished and scrapped.

This remediation plan is simple from a technical feasibility standpoint, and presents the lowest level of risk after the cleanup is concluded. The estimated cost is \$7.2 million, based on disposal at a U.S. facility.

"The Mexican government's argument that it does not have the money to cleanup *Metales y Derivados* is not valid," said Amelia Simpson, Director of EHC's Border Environmental Justice Campaign. "We know that Mexico paid over \$16 million in an environmental dispute filed under the investor's provisions in NAFTA's Chapter 11. You can't put a price on human life, or on the health and welfare of a community. The Colonia has done the difficult work of developing a cleanup plan. It's now up to the Mexican government to implement this plan."

Metales y Derivados recycled lead from car batteries for 12 years before Mexican authorities closed it in March of 1994 for violations of Mexican environmental law. The smelter's parent company, San Diego-based New Frontier Trading Corporation, left behind tons of toxic waste when its owners abandoned the site. The person responsible for the company, José Kahn, fled Mexico after a warrant was issued for his arrest in 1995 for alleged environmental crimes. Kahn currently lives and continues to operate his business in San Diego.



Colectivo member Verónica Cruz García discusses the *Metales y Derivados* problem and the efforts of EHC and Colonia Chilpancingo residents to develop a community-based solution.

CLEANUP, continued from Page 3

Adverse health effects confirmed

A report released in February 2002 by NAFTA's environmental oversight commission validated community health concerns about the toxic contamination from *Metales y Derivados*. Independent analysis by experts cited in the report confirms the need for urgent action to halt adverse health effects on people living or working in proximity to the unsecured, hazardous site. Even though NAFTA's own environmental agency has confirmed the threat that *Metales y Derivados* poses to the community, there are no provisions in the trade agreement to compel a cleanup of the site. A petition filed in 1998 by EHC and Colonia Chilpancingo prompted the NAFTA report. The petition asserted that Mexico had failed to enforce its environmental laws when safety measures were not taken to prevent contamination from mounds of abandoned lead, cadmium, arsenic, and antimony.

Chilpancingo residents expressed increased concerns about health risks after EHC and the Colectivo organized blood tests of a small sample of 16 children who live near the *Metales* site. The blood lead levels of all children tested were more than double the average U.S. level of 1.66 micrograms per deciliter. The average level for a Chilpancingo child is 3.93 and the range is from 3 to 9.

According to a recent study reported in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, lead levels below the current U.S. and international allowable standard of 10 micrograms per deciliter are dangerous, and can cause a drop in I.Q. of up to 7.4 points. In December 2002, the Mexico City newspaper *El Universal* reported that state health officials plan to conduct more blood tests for lead among people living near *Metales y Derivados*.

A February 16, 2003 *Washington Post* article by Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Kevin Sullivan prompted even more concern among Chilpancingo residents. In the article, Sullivan details abnormally high rates of birth defects among children in the Colonia. In

one two-block area of Colonia Chilpancingo, at least eight babies have been born with anencephaly or hydrocephaly since *Metales* was shut down. Baja California State health officials are carrying out a study of neural tube defects in Tijuana, due to alarmingly high rates. There is evidence to suggest that lead is one cause of neural tube defects, especially anencephaly.

"If all of this toxic waste were a few yards from Mr. Kahn's home, I'm sure it would be cleaned up," said Andrea Pedro Aguilar, whose home is directly downhill from the *Metales y Derivados* site. "It's hard for people like us, with limited resources, to pick up and leave. I have two children with lead poisoning. My husband and I are angry and scared. This is what environmental injustice means."

Mexico Responds

In a letter dated May 14, the Colectivo called on Mexican President Vicente Fox and Víctor Lichtinger, Mexico's Secretary of the Environment and Natural Resources, to implement the community's cleanup plan in order to comply with Articles 170 and 134 of Mexico's environmental law (Ley General del Equilibrio Ecológico y la Protección al Ambiente). Within two weeks, Mexico City authorities replied, explaining that a committee formed in February 2003 was already meeting to discuss and find a solution to *Metales*.

“The Colectivo is disturbed that they were not included in the committee, which is comprised of federal, state and other institutional authorities,” Simpson said. “The *Metales* case represents a chance to set the example for increasing citizen participation and transparency in Mexico. The Colectivo expects that the authorities will seize this opportunity to work with community residents and implement the community-based cleanup plan.”

At the annual ministerial meeting of NAFTA’s Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC), held on June 23 – 25 in Washington D.C., Simpson presented a public statement on behalf of the Colectivo to the environmental ministers of Canada, the United States and Mexico. Simpson proposed a deadline of August 1, 2003 to Secretary Lichtinger for authorization of funding for cleanup of *Metales y Derivados*. Lichtinger accepted the deadline, indicating that by August 1, Mexico would announce that it could dedicate about \$2 million to the site remediation. The Secretary expressed his hope that the U.S. would also contribute funds, since the contamination at *Metales y*

Derivados affects both sides of the border, and cooperation is needed to resolve the problem. Christine Todd Whitman, Secretary of the U.S. EPA, said her agency is “very actively engaged in this process.” Declaring that “we are focused and devoting energy” to resolving the *Metales y Derivados* case, Whitman explained that the EPA is seeking funding from Brownfields, the International Development Bank, and other sources to address this binational issue. She also indicated that the EPA was investigating new technology for the remediation project. However, Whitman resigned from her EPA position effective June 27.

In anticipation of Lichtinger’s August 1 announcement, EHC and the Colectivo Chilpancingo Pro Justicia Ambiental have offered to support the Secretary’s efforts to follow up on Whitman’s co-funding initiative.

For the latest news on *Metales* and other BEJC projects, visit the EHC Web site at www.environmentalhealth.org

Take action online to defeat the FTAA!

The trade ministers from the Americas will be meeting in Miami, Florida from November 19-21, 2003 to continue the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) negotiations.

Despite NAFTA’s dismal record, the Bush administration is moving ahead to create the FTAA, an expanded NAFTA that would include all countries in Latin America, North America, and the Caribbean, except for Cuba. FTAA talks have been going on for several years without substantive input from civil society organizations.

Environmental Health Coalition is joining a Call to Action by a diverse coalition throughout the Americas united in its opposition to the FTAA to say:

- Yes to trade policies that reduce poverty;
- Yes to trade policies that create living wage jobs and protect workers’ rights;
- Yes to democratic and transparent trade negotiations that include broad-based citizen consultation and participation;
- Yes to trade policies that protect environmental and public interest laws and regulations;
- Yes to trade policies that support family farmers and food security;
- Yes to trade policies that enable countries to invest in sustainable development policies; and
- No to the FTAA!

Many people will converge in Miami in November to participate in peaceful and permitted mobilizations to demonstrate the growing opposition to the FTAA.

Those of us who cannot go to Miami can join the millions of people who will cast their votes on the FTAA.

Go to www.aflcio.org/stopftaa, print the FTAA ballot, fill it out, and sent it to the AFL-CIO to be delivered to the trade ministers in Miami. You can also cast your FTAA vote online by going to the section on the right hand side where it says “take action” and click on the “Vote Now to stop the FTAA” link.

**Join us in our campaign to defeat the FTAA!
Fill out the FTAA ballot or vote online and make your voice heard!**

Chula Vistans support relocation of South Bay Power Plant

EHC calls for Regional Energy Strategy that protects public health and the environment

The South Bay Power Plant for decades has loomed like a metallic toxic monster on the South San Diego Bay shoreline, belching toxics into the air, damaging the health of South Bay residents, and decimating the Bay's sensitive ecosystem. Now, Environmental Health Coalition and residents of Chula Vista are fighting to protect the health of South Bay residents and San Diego Bay by removing and replacing the inefficient power plant.

Survey results released on May 7, 2003 by EHC show that 72 percent of Chula Vistans favor relocating the South Bay Power Plant from San Diego Bay to an industrial area. When told that relocating the plant would reduce environmental hazards, but also could result in a loss of city revenues, 44 percent of respondents said it did not change their opinion about relocating the plant, and 27 percent were more in favor of removing the plant. Only 18 percent stated that the loss of revenue would cause them to be more opposed to removal of the plant.

Douglas S. Coe, Director of the San Diego State University Research Laboratory, directed the survey. The results were compiled from English and Spanish interviews with 500 randomly selected Chula Vista residents. The results have an error margin of plus or minus 4 percent.

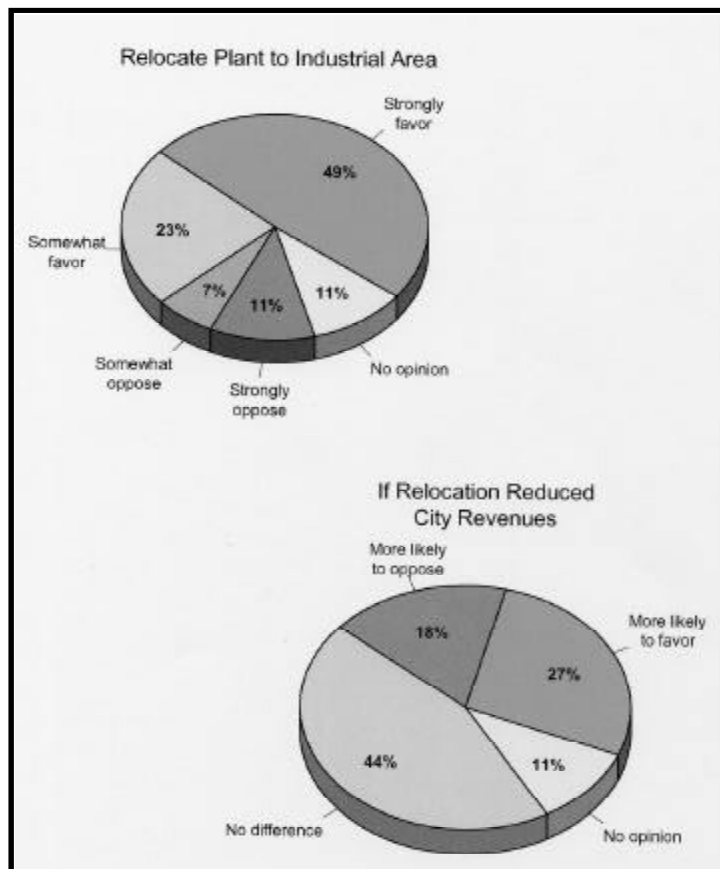
"These survey results clearly show that Chula Vistans support a change in this region's energy strategy that will protect public health and the future of San Diego Bay," said Laura Hunter, Director of EHC's Clean Bay Campaign.

EHC released the survey results as part of its comments on the San Diego Regional Energy Strategy (RES) developed by members of the Regional Energy Planning Advisory Council. EHC has been actively involved as a non-voting advisory member of the Council since the beginning of the regional energy planning process. The Council approved the RES on May 8, and sent it to the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) for review on May 9. A final vote on the Regional Strategy will occur on July 25 at the SANDAG meeting.

Energy with Justice

EHC supports a Regional Energy Strategy that would require feasible, viable, and protective alternatives to the water-cooling system used by the South Bay Power Plant. Dry-cooling technology has been used in power plants for 40 years and results in a reduction of impacts on human health and the environment when compared to water cooling. It eliminates the need to use valuable water

resources by using air to cool the power plants, and enjoys fewer air emissions, no unsightly plumes, and no impacts on local waterways. Furthermore, dry-cooled plants can be built anywhere and they are permitted much faster. The RES should ensure that our regional power needs are met through the use of indigenous power plants that employ clean and efficient technologies, and the aggressive deployment of renewable, efficient energy technologies in the San Diego region. Meeting the energy needs of the San Diego region through indigenous generation that does not significantly impact our region's environment, the health of our communities, and that promotes quality jobs, is the key to the region's energy



independence.

EHC also believes the RES should reflect a strong commitment to mitigating the environmental justice impacts of energy generation and transmission in our region, at the U.S-Mexico Border, and in Mexico. Additionally, EHC supports the creation of a Regional Energy Authority that is accountable to the public to implement the RES.

Deadly Power

The South Bay Power Plant is more than just an eyesore on the Bayfront. Consider:

- The plant emits 3.1 tons of smog-forming pollutants daily, pollutants that are linked to asthma and other adverse health effects. In fact, childhood hospitalization rates for asthma in Chula Vista are significantly higher than the rest of the County.

- The plant's outdated water cooling method uses up to 601 million gallons of Bay water daily, sterilizing 20 percent of the southern part of the bay South Bay waters while killing and poisoning marine life.
 - The plant is economically inefficient, with an energy conversion efficiency of about 38 percent compared to modern power plants, which have design efficiencies upward of 56 percent. A new plant that generates the same amount of electricity would use significantly less natural gas and emit less air pollution.
 - The location of the plant highlights environmental justice impacts. According to a 2002 report by the Latino Issues Forum, 89 percent of plants sited in California during and after the energy "crisis" are proposed in majority low-income communities and communities of color. Although this is not a new plant, seventy-seven percent of Chula Vistans living within a six-mile radius of the plant are Latino or people of color, with 15 percent living below the poverty line. These populations located near the plant are at elevated risks for negative health effects from inhaling the polluted air and particulate matter.
 - The power plant is also a blight on the South Bay, inhibiting quality redevelopment of the area, which is long overdue.
- "There are no good reasons to keep the South Bay Power Plant," said Al Huang, Policy Advocate for the Clean Bay Campaign. "It's time to move away from energy strategies that are outdated, inefficient, and compromise the health of our communities and our ecosystem. EHC and communities throughout the San Diego region call for support of a RES that aggressively pursues the use of clean and renewable energy sources and efficient technologies."
- For more information on EHC's position on the South Bay Power Plant, log onto www.environmentalhealth.org/DeadlyPowerCover.html*

Take Action!

EHC encourages community members to take action and submit comments to SANDAG by September 2003 stating the following:

- South Bay Power Plant should be dismantled and retired. The plant has significant environmental and public health impacts that will only be eliminated if the plant is.
- All new power plants in the San Diego region should utilize dry cooling technology, or other technologies that minimize water and air quality impacts.
- Any Regional Energy Authority that is created must be democratically operated and fully accountable to the public. The Authority should have the power to finance and build power plants, including renewable energy generation.

For more information on the RES, visit the San Diego Regional Energy Office Web site site at www.sdenergy.org/planning/policy.html. If you send a letter, please let EHC know (or send us a copy).

Send your comments to:

Chairman Ron Morrison and Board Members
San Diego Association of Governments
401 B Street, Suite 800
San Diego, CA 92101

Fax: (619) 595-5305

E-mail: Nan Valerio, Senior Regional Planner and Project Manager for the RES
nva@sandag.org

Community, labor and environmental leaders join EHC in opposition of Bayfront Commons development

In the continuing efforts to save the last undeveloped site on San Diego Bay, 11 leading community, labor and environmental organizations representing more than 1,000 Chula Vista residents in June joined Environmental Health Coalition in signing a joint consensus letter opposing dense residential development on the Chula Vista Mid-Bayfront, and expressing support for a comprehensive planning process for the area.

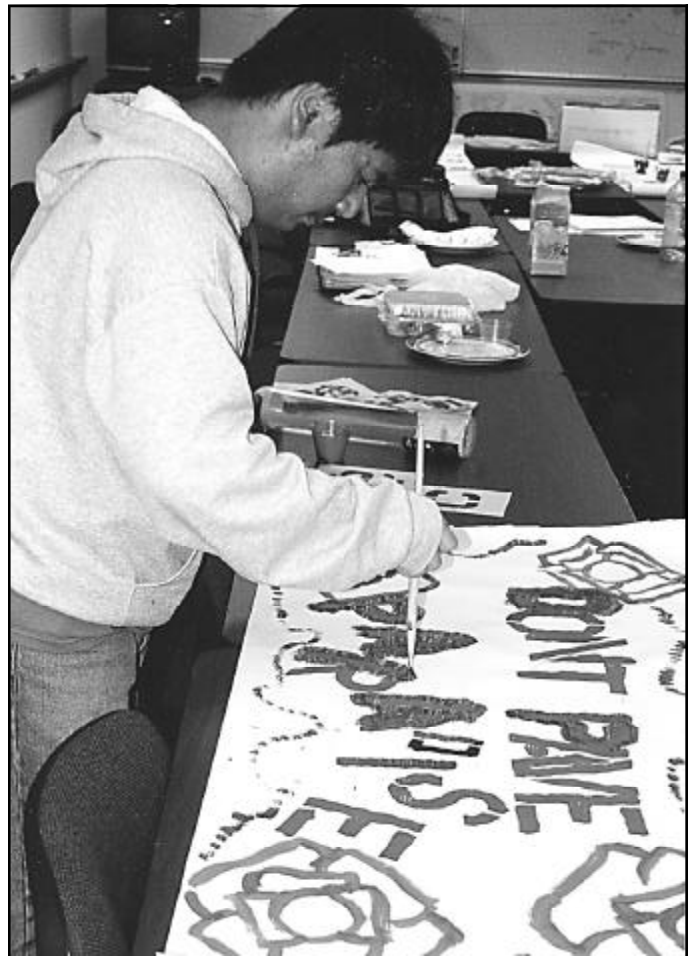
The position statement was signed by the following organizations: California Native Plant Society, Center on Policy Initiatives, Crossroads II, Friends of San Diego Wildlife Refuges, Hotel Employees Restaurant Employees Local 30, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers IBEW Local 569, San Diego Audubon Society, San Diego Baykeeper, South Bay Forum, South Bay Greens, and EHC. Community and coalition members delivered copies of the letter to officials with the City of Chula Vista, the San Diego Port Commission, and the California Coastal Commission. Residents also delivered more than 300 cards to the Coastal Commission supporting the consensus position.

Don't Pave Paradise

The 125-acre site known as the Chula Vista Mid-Bayfront forms the northwest corner of Chula Vista. The site is located adjacent to the Sweetwater Marsh National Wildlife Refuge and Chula Vista Nature Center. A proposal by developer Pacifica Cos. for high-density residential development threatens to devastate the fragile ecosystem surrounding the site, and usurp the last available open space accessible to western Chula Vista.

The letter also suggests guidance on a variety of important planning issues including:

- The Bayfront must be a place where people from throughout the region have public access and can enjoy this precious resource.
- Appropriately sited, the Bayfront is ideal for a high quality, destination hotel with adequate facilities for local events.
- Any development must protect and conserve the habitat, species, and ecosystems of the surrounding area including San Diego Bay and the existing wildlife refuges.
- Development of residential units is not an appropriate or acceptable use of mid-bayfront land because it can only be enjoyed by those who live there, it is not accessible to the general public, and it causes immitigable environmental impacts.
- The City of Chula Vista should ensure that jobs related to Bayfront development provide fair wages, affordable health care, and be a positive force in the local economy.
- The City should pursue acquisition of Mid-Bayfront property by means of bond funding for public use primarily as open space and parkland.



EHC youth activist Francis Go prepares a sign that reads "Don't Pave Paradise." For information on EHC's two-month summer program for youth in leadership roles, please see page 10.

For the latest updates on the struggle to preserve the Chula Vista Mid-Bayfront, log onto the EHC Web site, www.environmentalhealth.org. Or contact CBC Organizer Nohelia Ramos at (619) 235-0281 or email NoheliaR@environmentalhealth.org

EHC making strides in fight against childhood lead poisoning

During the past year, Environmental Health Coalition's Campaign to Eliminate Childhood Lead Poisoning (CeCLP) has made significant strides to address lead hazards in substandard houses located in many San Diego County neighborhoods. The CeCLP campaign has been successful and effective in advocating that local housing agencies begin to build capacity to address the issue of childhood lead poisoning. In addition to the CeCLP work locally, as a member of the Southern California Healthy Homes Collaborative, EHC successfully advocated for the establishment of a statewide policy, SB 460, which makes creation of lead hazards a violation under the State of California's housing code.

Other CeCLP accomplishments in the past year include:

- Five homes in Sherman Heights identified by EHC's community inspection teams as needing lead hazard control were made lead-safe as part of a mini-pilot that began in September 2002. The pilot project was created to find cost-effective ways to make housing lead-safe by maximizing the use of available resources and developing local expertise in lead hazard control.
- Under a grant from the Community Environmental Health Research Center's (CEHRC) Healthy Homes initiative, 10 Promotoras were trained to inspect homes for lead and other environmental health problems. Two hundred homes have been inspected by the promotoras and tenants and landlords received education and referral services. CEHRC is a project of the Alliance to End Childhood Lead Poisoning.
- County of San Diego lead hazard control funds have been allocated in the neighborhoods of Sherman Heights, Logan Heights, Barrio Logan, Memorial, Grant Hill, Stockton, Shelltown, Southcrest, Linda Vista, City Heights and in National City. To date, the County's HUD Lead Hazard Control Program has enrolled 73 houses, and 63 have been made lead safe.
- National City code enforcement inspectors have been trained on lead poisoning and lead hazard identification and now know how to educate tenants and landlords about the dangers of lead. Since January 2003, 181 homes inspected under National City's Housing Inspection Project have been found to have potential lead hazards. Seventy percent of the homes have undergone repainting or minor repairs by owners or landlords to reduce the hazards. Twenty-seven of the homes received free paint from the National City Building and Safety Department. Sherwin-Williams Paint Company donated the paint to City to assist with the program.



Ramon Hernandez from the Metropolitan Area Advisory Committee (MAAC Project) preps for lead hazard control work on a Sherman Heights home.

- EHC successfully advocated for the creation of a lead hazard control program in the City of San Diego. Workers are now in the process of making the first 35 homes lead-safe.

An extensive study released by EHC in 2002 documented the need for lead hazard control in many San Diego County communities. Based on the sampling results, EHC estimates that more than 68,000 home in San Diego County have lead hazards and qualify as low-income household using the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition. These homes are located in communities that contain large numbers of units constructed before 1978, high poverty rates, a large number of children under age six, and poorly maintained rental units – a combination of factors that places the communities at high risk for childhood lead poisoning.

EHC will continue to use data collected through its home inspection programs to improve housing conditions in San Diego County by creating partnerships with local agencies and advocating for remediation resources to be targeted to communities with the greatest need and least access to funds.

For more information on EHC's lead programs or to request a presentation on childhood lead poisoning prevention, contact Leticia Ayala at (619) 235-0281 or email LeticiaA@environmentalhealth.org

New FCC media rules threaten free speech, democracy

Ignoring widespread public opposition, the Federal Communications Commission on June 2, 2003 voted to remove key restrictions on corporate media ownership and consolidation. The new rules strike a blow to free speech and democracy by changing the ownership rules governing giant media companies, which now control much of what you see, what you hear, and what you read. Under control of corporate media interest, issues important to Environmental Health Coalition and the communities we serve could easily go unreported or misrepresented to serve the interest of corporations.

The new FCC rules include a number of sweeping changes and could result in one company owning three TV stations, eight radio stations, the local newspaper and the local cable system in the largest markets.

In a July 2 interview with AdAge.com, FCC Commissioner Michael J. Copps, one of the two commissioners who voted against the changes, said the decision “empowers America’s new media elite with unacceptable levels of influence over the media on which our society and our democracy so heavily depend.”

Learn More, Take Action

On June 19, the Senate Commerce Committee responded to the public and legislative outcry to overturn the FCC decision by approving Senate Bill S. 1046, the “Preservation of Localism, Program Diversity and Competition in Television Broadcast Act of 2003.” If approved by Congress, the Bill could address the creation of a more independent and less monopolized media.

Now more than ever, legislators need your support to block the FCC’s attempt to hand complete, unregulated control of the public airwaves to giant media corporations.

To learn more about the fight to preserve free speech, and how you can get involved visit the following Web sites:

www.mediachannel.org

www.commoncause.org

www.democraticmedia.org

www.mediareform.net

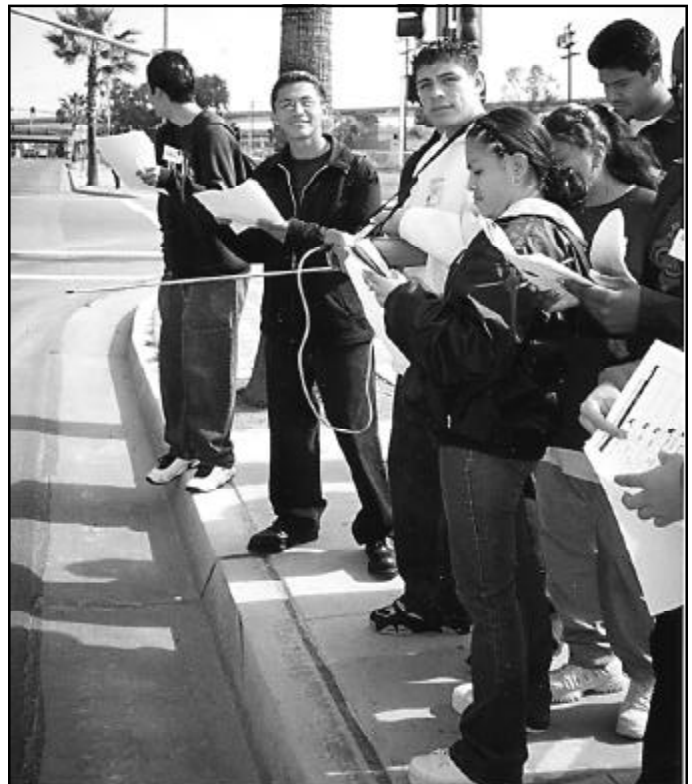
EHC to host summer training for local youth activists

One of the goals of Environmental Health Coalition is to create a toxic-free environment for future generations. And as EHC continues to grow and expand its campaigns for social and environmental justice, the role of San Diego County youth activists who want to make a positive change in their communities also increases.

Clean Bay Campaign organizer Nohelia Ramos, who has worked to organize Chula Vista youth around issues affecting South San Diego Bay Communities, said youth activists bring dedication, energy, and new perspective to EHC’s efforts.

This summer will mark a cornerstone in youth organizing and advocacy, with EHC’s development of a two-month training program for youth in leadership roles. The program will include an introduction to advocacy, focusing on contacting local, state, and national officials, and showing real avenues to political access. The youth also will be familiarized with EHC’s key issues, so that they can take action on those issues that they find most significant. The project is supported, in part, by a grant from the San Diego Foundation Civil Society Program.

For more information about EHC’s youth activists or this summer’s program, contact Nohelia Ramos at (619) 235-0281 or email NoheliaR@environmentalhealth.org



Students from San Diego High School conduct air monitoring and count truck traffic in Barrio Logan. This summer, youth activists will participate in an EHC training for youth in leadership roles.

EHC joins opposition to ‘Racial Privacy’ initiative

The state initiative proposed by political consultant Ward Connerly is dangerous, deceptive and irresponsible. Connerly’s so-called “Racial Privacy” Initiative, also known as the Classification by Race, Ethnicity, Color, or National Origin Initiative (CRENO), would take away one of the basic tenets of the environmental justice movement: our Right-to-Know. More aptly described as the “Information Ban,” this initiative would prohibit state

The fact is that this initiative is not about our privacy rights — it is about barring our access to crucial information and hiding inequities.

and local agencies from gathering information needed to identify racial and ethnic disparities in public education, health, environmental protection, contracting, and employment. The fact is that this initiative is not about our privacy rights — it is about barring our access to crucial information and hiding inequities.

There is significant documentation that environmental hazards are disproportionately concentrated in communities of color. These include the likelihood of living near abandoned waste dumps, hazardous waste treatment, storage, and disposal facilities, or facilities that release toxic chemicals; living in areas that fail to meet the Clean Air Act’s health-based standards; suffering from childhood lead poisoning or pesticide-related illnesses; and eating contaminated fish. For example, African-American children are five times more likely to suffer from childhood lead poisoning – widely recognized as the most serious environmental health hazard facing young children – than white children. These studies demonstrate, moreover, that race, not income, education, or other factors is the most important reason for the disparities in environmental harms that exist.

Some of the most important demographic data on which studies are based comes from the California Department of Finance, the Department of Health, County Health Departments, and California Environmental Protection Agency, to name just a few. If CRENO were enacted, state, local, and county agencies would be precluded from collecting this data. Thus, communities

would be deprived of critical evidence about how pollution and other environmental hazards are distributed in California.

From healthcare, to education, to basic civil rights protections, banning demographic information – basic vital statistics – about race and ethnicity is a bad idea for the following reasons:

- It undermines accountability;
- It blinds us to real differences between racial and ethnic groups;
- It prevents state and local governments from undertaking efforts to address environmental inequities based on race and ethnicity;
- It takes away from doctors, educators, scientists, and advocates powerful tools to identify and measure how well we’re doing to treat, educate, and protect all Californians; and
- It handicaps community groups, local governments, and the state as they develop solutions to racial and ethnic disparities in our diverse state.

Demographic information helps us make smart choices. Racial and ethnic groups experience differences in treatment, have different rates of risk behavior, and respond to different prevention methods and messages. Health experts agree: race and ethnicity matter in prevention.

EHC co-chairs the CalEPA’s Environmental Justice Advisory Committee that is charged with developing an environmental justice policy that will guide all member agencies of the California Environmental Protection Agency. The passage of CRENO initiative will undo all the hard work of that committee, thus stalling our efforts to ensure that environmental and social justice issues are addressed by key state agencies.

The initiative is qualified for the March 2, 2004 ballot, but supporters hope to include it on this November’s ballot. Environmental Health Coalition strongly urges you to reject this insidious initiative, and join us in our efforts to defeat it.

For more information about CRENO, contact the Coalition for an Informed California at (213) 977-5241 or visit their Website at www.informedcalifornia.org.

In addition, Californians for Justice (CFJ) are organizing throughout the State to oppose CRENO. To get involved in local organizing efforts, contact CFJ at info@caljustice.org or call them at (619) 641-7750.

Logan Area residents take on truck traffic

EHC members are building their own expertise on one of the most important environmental justice issues in the Logan Area. This year, the San Diego City Council, the Port of San Diego, and CalTrans will be taking a hard look at trucks and land use, and EHC members want an informed seat at the table. Trucks are a serious cause of safety, noise and health problems in the Logan Area, and Barrio Logan's flawed land use plans make trucks an unfair burden. In May and July, EHC members and staff performed firsthand monitoring and analysis of the truck problem on Cesar Chavez Boulevard. EHC and residents will use the results to support our demands to reroute the trucks.



Barrio Logan resident Madai Ocegueda, right, holds a wind direction monitor while Pati Cuevas, center, counts trucks and EHC organizer Francisca Jiménez records data. Every day, an average of 500 trucks rumble down Cesar Chavez Parkway on their way to and from the Port of San Diego.

Residente de Barrio Logan Madai Ocegueda, derecha, detiene un monitor de viento mientras Pati Cuevas, centro, cuenta camiones y Francisca Jiménez organizadora de EHC registra los datos. Un promedio de 500 camiones retumban por Cesar Chávez Parkway de ida y venida hacia el Puerto de San Diego a diario.



Francisca Jiménez and Barrio Logan residents Sofia Solache, Pati Cuevas and Rosalba López analyze data after a morning of truck counting on Cesar Chavez Parkway.

Francisca Jiménez y los residentes de Barrio Logan Sofia Solache, Pati Cuevas y Rosalba López analizan datos después de un conteo de camiones en Cesar Chávez Parkway.

Residentes de la Zona de Logan desafían el tránsito de camiones

Los miembros de EHC están fortaleciendo su experiencia en uno de los temas de justicia ambiental más importantes de la zona de Logan. Este año, el Consejo de la Ciudad de San Diego, el Puerto de San Diego, y CalTrans analizarán a fondo los camiones y el uso de suelo, y los miembros de EHC quieren un lugar informado en la mesa. Los camiones son una causa seria de seguridad, ruido y problemas de salud en la zona de Logan, y los planes mal hechos de uso de suelo en Barrio Logan hacen de los camiones una carga injusta. En mayo y julio, miembros de EHC y el personal llevaron a cabo monitoreo y análisis de primera mano sobre el problema de los camiones en Cesar Chávez Parkway. EHC y los residentes emplearán los resultados para apoyar nuestras demandas para cambiar las rutas de los camiones.



Diesel engines emit a high concentration of ultrafine particles, thought to be particularly harmful to respiratory health. Here, EHC staff member Hays Witt, left, shows Barrio Logan residents Luis Ocegueda and Agustin Gallegos how to use an ultrafine particle meter to measure the amount of pollution coming from passing trucks.

Los motores de diesel emiten una concentración alta de partículas ultra finas, consideradas especialmente dañinas para la salud respiratoria. Aquí, Hays Witt, izquierda, muestra a los residentes de Barrio Logan, Luis Ocegueda y Agustín Gallegos como usar un medidor de partículas ultra finas para medir la cantidad de contaminación de los camiones que pasen.

Back at the Mercado Apartments, Witt and Ocegueda view a computer analysis that shows ultrafine particle counts spiked as semi-trucks bound for the Port rolled by.

De regreso en los Departamentos Mercado, Witt y Ocegueda observan un análisis de computadora que muestra como las partículas ultra finas brincaron cuando pasaron por allí los camiones de carga con destino al Puerto.

