



Environmental Justice

Environmental Justice and Public Participation Through Electronic Access

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Introduction

For more than a decade, Hyde Park residents and other community residents have worked to improve our living conditions. Our work has been hampered by the multitude of industrial facilities, literally in our back yards. While some of these industrial facilities are inactive, others still operate. We are making progress.

We are pleased that Melinda Downing from the Department of Energy, Marsha Minter from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and John Rosenthal from Howard University's Urban Environment Institute have agreed to work with our community. Through their efforts, we have a community technology center. We can learn about computers and the Internet. We can teach children how to use computers and the Internet for educational purposes. We can do research about the chemical matters at the Savannah River Site.

We are also thankful for Melissa Checker, our hard working intern. Melissa has developed a website for our community. Paine College has given us access to the Internet. We can now tell our story all over the world. We can use our website and the Internet to get much needed information and technical assistance. Today is the first step towards learning how these computers and the Internet can help us meet our goals. We look forward to a long and beneficial relationship with the Department of Energy, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Howard University Urban Environment Institute and Paine College as we continue the struggle.

Reverend Charles N. Utley, President
Hyde Park/Aragon Park Community
Improvement Committee, Inc.

It really boils down to this: that all life is interrelated. We are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality tied to a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects us all indirectly.

**Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
December 1967**

Environmental Justice and Public Participation Through Electronic Access (continued)

Environmental Justice, Public Participation, Computers and the Internet

Melinda Downing
Department of Energy
Environmental Management Program's Office of Intergovernmental and Public Accountability

The Department of Energy (DOE) is committed to environmental justice and public participation. DOE is working to involve citizens early and often in the decision-making process. Meaningful public involvement can lead to better and more just environmental decisions. Involving the public is not always easy. But we try.

During 1998, we worked with Howard University's Urban Environment Institute to donate computers to communities around the country. The purpose of this effort is to facilitate community access to environmental information and to increase their ability to participate in environmental decision-making. We have donated computers to cities, community groups, public housing developments and an elementary school. Each donation was for a specific purpose. The donation to the Hyde Park/Aragon Park Improvement Committee was to develop a community technology center.

Hopefully, the community technology center at the Mary Utley Community Center will be a model for environmental justice communities nationwide. This can be a risk assessment and risk communication center. It is our intent for these centers to build capacity for public participation. This is a part of the process. The entire process should work as follows:

1. Create a community technology center with excess DOE computers. Simply adding a modem and Internet access to a 486 or better computer, connects community groups to all aspects of EPA, DOE and the vast array of environmental information on the Internet. We have done this in Augusta.
2. Conduct training workshops that consists of computer- based research, Internet research, geographic information systems, risk assessment, and other subject matter; establish a series of training classes to enable community residents to use computer-based tools and the Internet as information and communication resources; and present other workshops and forums relevant to DOE and EPA public participation efforts.
3. Supervise community use of the training and tools received in step 1 above.
4. Provide continuous technical assistance from Historically Black Colleges and Universities and other sources, in person and through Internet e-mail.

This training workshop is the first in this effort. We are looking to what happens at Mary Utley as a guide for making public participation through electronic access work. We are pleased to work with EPA's Office of Federal Facilities Restoration and Reuse and Howard University's Urban Environment Institute on this project. We look forward to the HBCU Technical Assistance Listserve to connect communities and colleges together. Taken together, this project promises great potential for environmental justice. You are a part of that promise.

Environmental Justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of race, ethnicity, income or education level, in environmental decision-making, such that no population suffers an unequal share of environmental burdens.

Environmental Justice and Public Participation Through Electronic Access (continued)

Capacity Building in Federal Facility Communities

Marsha Minter
Environmental Protection Agency
Federal Facilities Restoration and Reuse Office

The Federal Facilities Environmental Restoration Dialogue Committee was chartered to consider issues in federal facility cleanups. The Committee released a series of recommendations in its report, "Final Report of The Federal Facilities Environmental Restoration Dialogue Committee." Chapter 6 of the report focuses on capacity building. Chapter 6 states "the basic premise of this entire report is that federal facility cleanups will be more effective and efficient if there is a working partnership between the regulated agency, the regulating agencies, and the vast number of other stakeholders that are affected by environmental contamination at these sites. However, the effectiveness of most of the earlier recommendations in this report regarding community involvement, advisory boards, and including the other stakeholders in the budgeting and priority-setting process are dependent on the various stakeholder groups having the capacity to participate effectively. The Committee believes that the provision of resources for this purpose, particularly if provided in a cost-effective manner, is likely to reduce overall cleanup costs in the long run."

The Federal facilities Restoration and Reuse Office appreciates this opportunity to work with the Department of Energy and Howard University's Urban Environment Institute to help build capacity in the Augusta community. We are aware of your many years of environmental activism in Augusta, and the public participation opportunities presented by DOE's Savannah River site. This project gives us another opportunity to forge a stronger relationship with another federal agency in the best interest of the community.

There are other reasons that make this project and training workshop exciting. First, the effort to increase environmental justice and public participation through electronic access holds real potential for numerous community residents who would be otherwise unable to participate in environmental decision-making. Environmental issues can be highly technical and often very complex. If community residents can obtain technical assistance from reliable sources through e-mail, they will certainly be better able to handle these technical and complex issues. This will increase community participation in environmental decision-making.

Second, we are interested to learn about other uses of a community technology center. We have heard about the Hyde Park/Aragon Park website and how the community—written Brownfields Pilot application was posted on the website for public comments. The success of this community technology center holds implications for other community capacity building projects. Both of these reasons support the intent of the Federal Facilities Dialogue Committee and the Federal Facilities Restoration and Reuse Office.

Environmental Justice and Public Participation Through Electronic Access (continued)

Environmental Justice and Public Participation Through Electronic Access Summary

Augusta, Georgia – April 10, 1999

Organizations Represented:

- Department of Energy, Environmental Management Program's Office of Intergovernmental and Public Accountability
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Federal Facilities Restoration and Reuse Office
- Howard University Urban Environment Institute
- Hyde Park/Aragon Park Improvement Committee
- Paine College
- Highland Addition Resident Council, Washington, DC
- Center for Risk Excellence Team, Department of Energy, Chicago Operations Office

Final Recommendations

1. Federal agencies should support additional programs and activities that build capacity in communities to conduct risk-based decision-making activities.
2. Computer and Internet based models that are developed for environmental professionals should be designed for lay understanding and use.
3. Federal agencies should partner with Historically Black Colleges and Universities to help community groups understand risk-based decision-making, in order to be better informed participants in environmental decision-making.
4. Historically Black Colleges and Universities should develop environmental training classes for community residents.

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Conference Introduction

Reverend Charles Utley, President
Hyde Park/Aragon Park Community Improvement Committee, Inc.

This is the first in a series of training workshops that will be conducted at the Mary Utley Center. Thanks to the Department of Energy, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and Paine College, this Center has computers and access to the Internet. Our intern, Melissa Checker, has developed a website for the Center. With these resources, we can move closer towards our community environmental goals.

Earlier this year, we met with the City, Paine College and Howard University Urban Environment Institute to discuss a Brownfields Pilot project in Augusta. The City agreed to submit a Brownfields Pilot application to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency that would target the Hyde Park community. The Mayor gave us the lead responsibility for developing the grant application, since we have been active in the Brownfields arena for the last few years. With help from our intern, Melissa Checker, John Rosenthal, Paine College and others, we were able to prepare the proposal and get it submitted on time. We are now waiting to hear from the EPA.

This was a community-developed Brownfields pilot application. The draft application was posted on our website for review and comments. We actually received some comments from the web. Most of the work to prepare the application was coordinated through e-mail. This worked out very well. We expect to get the Brownfields project this time. This was the first use of the community technology center.

We can do a lot with these computers. We can conduct basic computer classes for adults and children. We can conduct environmental research to keep up with and participate in the environmental justice movement. We can learn about what is going on at the Savannah River Site, and give them our comments. We can seek funding sources. We can communicate on a regular basis with our elected officials in City Hall, the Capitol and in Washington. We can network with environmental justice activists around the country, to know what works and who works for us. All of these possibilities will contribute to a much better life for our community.

Environmental Justice and Public Participation Through Electronic Access (continued)

Community Technologies Centers

John Rosenthal
Howard University Urban Environment Institute

Environmental justice, like democracy, is a process and not an outcome. It is achieved by communities fostering meaningful and intelligent participation in environmental decision-making that affects their children, their homes, their health, their jobs and their future. Although it is a fact that the proximity of multiple pollution sources to minority communities produces adverse impacts on all aspects of their resident's lives, traditionally these communities have lacked resources and expertise to insist on protective environmental management and regulations. One of the goals of this public participation project is to help communities gain the requisite capabilities. It is clear that an environmentally literate community can protect itself much better than local, state or federal government, or any other entity.

The Howard University Urban Environment Institute (UEI) is dedicated to advancing the ideals of environment justice for the empowerment of communities that have been impacted by pollution and hazardous waste sites of all nature. The guiding principal of UEI is that community residents should have meaningful and knowing participation in environmental decision-making. Impacted communities must have the resources and ability to marshal data and other information in order to make informed decisions. UEI helps communities find alternatives to their current conditions by helping them gain access to environmental education, government decision-makers, technical assistance and other resources to yield meaningful participation in environmental decision making.

Access to, and the ability to use computers and the information on the Internet will, to a great degree, define those who will have access to economic opportunities and power in shaping public policies, and those who will not. There are few cases where good information and knowledge play an important role than in issues surrounding environmental cleanup, protection and development. Having access to information on a wide variety of information, models, etc., enables one to become a viable and contributing stakeholder in the science of projecting environmental risks that are somewhat indefinite and must rely on incomplete data, various assumptions and mathematical assumptions.

Through community technology centers, community residents will learn how to use computers and the Internet to access environmental information, and employ computer based tools that can help address community environmental concerns. Participants will receive training on the utilization of LandView 3, a Geographic Information System computer mapping program that was developed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the US Census, and other computer based tools. Once on-line, community residents will be able to share information and data with similarly situated communities and receive continuous technical assistance from Historical Black Colleges and Universities and other sources around the country.

Environmental Justice and Public Participation Through Electronic Access (continued)

Using Your Technology Center for Knowledge and Profit

Gloria Thurman
Highland Addition Resident Council, Washington, DC

The community technology center at Highland Addition is the first developed by the National Urban Internet and Howard University in 1996. It began with six computers and an AOL account. Since then we have received a number of computers from the Department of Energy, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and other sources.

Our first training was a basic computer class. We used the Internet to find grant opportunities. With Howard's help, we wrote a grant application and received a grant from EPA. We conduct regular classes for adults and children, and have helped residents at other public housing developments in the District to get their computers and classes.

We also run a training class for screen-printing. The students make the designs on the computer and send them over to a hot-press to put them on tee shirts, caps, bags and almost anything. The screen-printing training classes offer make a small stipend for the students. We want to teach the students skills that they can use to find a job or to create their own business. We are always looking for other opportunities for our residents and students. We have completed paperwork to become a 501(c)(3) non-profit community development corporation, and to take advantage of community development opportunities. This is only the beginning.

GIS in Communities Impacted by Environmental Hazards

Dr. Cynthia Warrick
Howard University Urban Environment Institute

In communities that are impacted by environmentally hazardous sites and facilities, it is helpful to look at all of the factors that may contribute to environmental emissions in a certain community, town, state, or region. Lay persons are able to recognize the number and location of sites that pose environmental risks when they are referenced on a map. Mapping these sites with demographic data and chemical data from the site, using geographic information system (GIS) software, enables the display of map features in conjunction with emissions data. This data can be used to compare impacted communities with those that do not contain environmental threats in order to determine whether some communities are disproportionately impacted by pollution. By using spatial data analyses, comparisons can also be made concerning the relationship between adverse health effects and exposures in these communities.

For today's presentation, I have outlined the following programs:

LandView III - created maps on Augusta, Georgia and the impacted community using CD-ROM.

RTK Network - described databases and mapping software on the RTK.NET website that anyone can access at no charge.

EPA Website - described mapping programs and databases located on the EPA website under the Envirofacts data warehouse.

Environmental Justice and Public Participation Through Electronic Access (continued)

Department of Energy Center for Risk Excellence

Fred Dolislager and Miriam Land
Department of Energy Center for Risk Excellence Team

The Center for Risk Excellence (CRE) is a new center formed by the Department of Energy to support the Office of Environmental Management's National Risk Policy Program. It was created to establish a resource group in the field to provide crucial site-oriented technical support.

The CRE partners with EM Headquarters in the National Risk Program.

The goals of CRE are the following:

- Be a valuable, independent technical resource;
- Be responsible to Field and program needs on risk assessment, management and communication;
- Vigorously support DOE's goal of developing and implementing policy, practices, guidance, and tools that result in credible risk-based decisions;
- Ensure that EM decisions protect human health and the environment;
- Involve stakeholders in the evaluation process; and,
- Continuously improve how risk information is developed and used to make sound decisions.

For today's presentation, we have reviewed and demonstrated the CRE website at <http://riskcenter.doe.gov>.

Human Health Risk Exposure Model – Showed how to calculate doses and risks by selecting chemicals and entering concentrations.