



DTSC Uses Federal Grant for Environmental Justice Projects

The California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) is using a \$160,000 federal grant to build partnerships and collaborate with community groups on showcase projects that address environmental impacts in one of the most industrialized sections of Southern California – the Highway 710 corridor.

Some of the projects are innovative enough that they could be replicated in other parts of the nation. They include a self-reporting, real-time environmental monitoring system that uses crowd sourcing to enable Wilmington residents to report releases of hazardous waste and environmental concerns.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) awarded up to \$160,000 to each of five states to conduct specific projects under the new State Environmental Justice Cooperative Agreement (SEJCA) program, which was developed by EPA's Office of Environmental Justice (OEJ), with input from the National Environmental Justice advisory Council (NEJAC).

DTSC was the only department in California – which was one of only five states – to receive this prestigious grant.

“This is a very significant opportunity for DTSC and California to make meaningful partnerships with impacted communities,” said Roger Kintz, Environmental Justice Coordinator for DTSC. “We are the only department in California that was selected. It was very competitive.”

The EPA grant is specifically designed to fund state government's work with vulnerable and under-served communities that are disproportionately burdened by environmental harms and risks and to create model projects that can be replicated to reduce environmental impacts in those communities.

In the Boyle Heights community, DTSC and the Los Angeles Environmental Justice Network are coordinating youth groups through the 2013 Los Angeles Environmental Justice Youth Conference to electronically map illegal e-waste dumping and truck idling hot spots.

A groundbreaking study paid for by the grant will include assessing the health effects of living next to an oil refinery in Wilmington, which has one of the highest concentrations of oil facilities in the state. Air monitors will be placed outside homes bordering refineries, and the

Goals of the State Environmental Justice Cooperative Agreement:

- Achieve measurable and meaningful environmental and public health results in communities;
- Build broad, robust and result-oriented partnerships, particularly with community organizations within affected area;
- Pilot activities in specific communities to create models that can be replicated or expanded in other geographic areas;
- Strengthen the development and implementation of specific approaches to achieve environmental justice.



UCLA School of Public Health will study the health results.

The programs fall within DTSC's mission, which is to protect public health and the environment from toxic harm.

The grant helps fund projects underway in Maywood, Wilmington and Commerce, which are within the 710 corridor, a 23-mile artery that links the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles with the rest of Southern California – and is home to one of the largest concentrations of oil refineries and rail yards in the state. About 90% of people living along the 710 corridor are people of color, and they bear the disproportionate burden of air pollution for the transportation of the things we use every day. Air pollution from cars and trucks can cause serious health effects such as asthma, lung and neurological problems, heart attacks, stroke, cardiovascular disease and cancer.

DTSC's goals are to improve environmental conditions in the communities, identify sources of contamination and pollution and come up with mitigation measures, inform and educate residents and reduce health threats at local schools.

The projects include:

- A self-reporting real-time environmental monitoring system that uses crowd sourcing to enable Wilmington residents to report releases of hazardous waste. The program is called Innovation Value Access Networking or IVAN, and allows people to report illegal dumping, bad air, pesticide releases and other incidents anonymously via email or mobile devices. Versions are operational in Coachella and Imperial valleys as well as Fresno and Kern counties.
- Identifying contaminated property in Commerce and applying for grants to clean them up and turn them into "green zones" such as parks. In action, Youth will conduct bike tours to identify truck idling "hot spots" in partnership with DTSC and the Air Resources Board. These hot spots are areas where large trucks idle and emit exhaust. "No idling signs" will be posted.
- In Maywood, where residents have identified water quality as their No. 1 environmental concern, DTSC's role was to assess the community's drinking water quality and report back to community members. With the assistance of local high school students, DTSC distributed 3,500 fact sheets and community meeting information.

These three cities have a combined population of about 92,000 and were selected because they face heavy environmental burdens.

"This is the first time in DTSC's history that we are able to award grant funds to deserving community organizations in support of the valuable work they are doing to address environmental impacts and build healthier communities and schools" Kintz said.