

Sacramento/San Joaquin Delta Mercury Exposure Reduction Program

Community-Based Organization Interview Summary Report

Interviews conducted August 5 through September 30, 2014

Overview

In August and September of 2014, staff from the Pacific Gateway Group conducted interviews with representatives from 12 community-based organizations operating in the cities of Stockton and Sacramento and the central Delta communities of Rio Vista and Walnut Grove. The participating organizations (Appendix #1) provide community services in the areas of education, health, cultural preservation, and environmental advocacy. Based on the need to engage organizations that are actively providing community services in the Delta region, groups were selected through online searches, lists of community-based organizations compiled by the state and local governments, and referrals from local leaders and individuals interviewed for this project.

For the purpose of the interviews an agenda (Appendix #2) was developed to guide each meeting and questions (Appendix #3) were crafted to gain a better understanding of the organizations themselves, their area of focus, geographic territories and their constituencies. Additionally, the organizations were asked a number of questions about their familiarity with fish contamination advisories, barriers to education, and techniques that should/could be utilized to effectively educate hard to reach populations. The groups were also asked about their interest in participating in the Delta MERP.

Their responses are included in this summary.

Organizations Interviewed

The 12 organizations interviewed represent a vast array of service providers operating throughout the Delta region. In the Sacramento region, three organizations that work in the areas of education, health, and immigrant assistance were engaged and in San Joaquin County, six organizations work in the areas of cultural heritage, religion, housing, health, and education were interviewed. In the central Delta (Rio Vista and Walnut Grove communities), two organizations that provide education and family services were engaged. One Oakland-based organization focuses on environmental advocacy.

Languages Spoken

Though most of the organizations indicated that the majority of their constituencies speak languages other than English, representatives from the Filipino organizations said that most of their community is fluent in English. Organization representatives said the older, first generation residents not only don't speak English, but many are unable to read in their native languages. Overall, estimates for monolingual non-English speaking constituencies ranged from a high of 80% to a low of 50%. Languages spoken include, Spanish, Lao, Hmong, Vietnamese, Russian, Ukrainian, Cambodian and two languages spoken in the Philippines, Tagalog and Ilokano.

Overcoming Language Barriers

In all cases, organizations had staff that speak and write in the languages of their constituents. For the most part, the organizations produce materials in languages understandable to the focus population for distribution and publication.

Locations Where Organization Provide Services

The groups indicated that they provide services in a number of locations. Several organizations dispatch field workers to private homes, workplaces (agricultural), churches, and housing complexes. Others provide services at their offices and some regularly collaborate with other local groups to produce community events.

Delta Fishing and Fish Consumption

All the groups reported that their communities caught and ate fish from the Delta. According to the groups interviewed, Asian (Cambodian, Lao, and Vietnamese) residents were reported as being the most frequent fishers and consumers of Delta fish. All CBOs reported that fishers seen along the banks of the Delta are most likely to be Asian, particularly in the Stockton area. There was a variation in the populations that most often fish based on where they live, however. For instance, we were told that Latinos were the ones most frequently seen fishing in the rural, farming areas of the central Delta. It was explained that agricultural workers that live in the central Delta depend on caught fish to sustain their families because of the high cost of food. The Walnut Grove participants added there were no grocery retailers located in the small towns of the central Delta region that sold fish and that any fish residents eat is caught in the Delta.

It was also reported that some of the Latino, Filipino, and Russian fishers catch Delta fish to sell at local (Sacramento) stores and outdoor markets (Stockton) to earn extra income.

Common Fishing Locations

Most of the groups had little knowledge of specific locations where their constituents fished. Most anecdotally recalled places in and around their communities where they had seen people fishing. In Stockton, we were told that there are a number of popular locations throughout the area as Delta waterways wind through the Downtown and outskirts of the city. In Rio Vista, we were told that most people fish around the SR12 Bridge and the banks along the SR84. Some other locations mentioned by Adriana Bejarano of Rio Vista Care were Ryer Island, Liberty Island, and Hastings.

As for popular locations for fishing outside of the Delta, some mentioned San Francisco Bay. But, in Walnut Grove, we were told that most people fish locally because transportation is costly and not readily accessible to most families in the area.

None of the groups reported knowing of any fishing networks or clubs in their communities and most indicated that families and friends were most often the groups that fish together.

Fish Contamination Advisory Awareness

Responses to the question regarding awareness of mercury contamination in fish among their constituency varied. Most respondents indicated that they did not believe there was widespread awareness of mercury contamination in fish. They indicated that there was even less specific knowledge of published advisories regarding mercury contamination in Delta fish. Of all the groups interviewed, Filipino and Russian interview participants conveyed what they believed to be a fair understanding of the existence of mercury contamination in the Delta among their constituency. They did not believe, however that there was specific knowledge within their communities of information contained in published advisories.

Some participants explained that their constituencies had little or no awareness of mercury contamination in fish or the existence of published advisories. It was also explained that some communities believe that the exposure risk is based on the visual appearance of the water. They described the understanding as "The cleaner looking the water, the safer the fish," or that "fish caught in running water are healthy or safe fish." None of the individuals interviewed could recall information contained in the advisories including the types of fish that were most contaminated, the populations most at risk, or the recommended serving amounts.

There was a belief among the participants that the older, foreign-born residents were generally unaware of either the contamination exposure risk or the existence of published advisories. In contrast they stated that the younger, locally-educated children were more aware of the contamination risk.

Past Involvement with fish Contamination Projects

Only two of the groups had past experience in conducting community education about fish contamination. The Slavic Assistance Center, located in West Sacramento, and the Filipino Organization of Stockton had hosted presentations and distributed flyers.

Behavior Change Programs and Effective Education and Outreach Approaches

All groups indicated that their core expertise was in providing outreach services to educate and change behavior. They all indicated that it was vital that local individuals who had status and gained the trust of the community would be the most effective messenger. The groups also said that because most of their constituents are very low income it will be important to provide information in familiar settings and that the educational messages stress the health of the family when recommending limits on fish consumption. Home visits, health-related community events, and school-based activities are good venues for this type of education. Home visits are necessary because many of the target population lack access to safe and affordable transportation options.

Adriana Bejarano of Rio Vista Care suggested that advisories should be posted at fishing areas. Dr. Inez Ruiz-Huston of the University of the Pacific also indicated that posting advisories around fishing areas would help but added that the most effective way to promote change would be with school age children and/or the mother or individual who prepares the food in the household. They stressed that the male fisher may not be the best target for this kind of information. Most of the participants suggested providing information to school age children. In their experience this approach has proven to be an effective means to convey complex messages to the parents particularly in situations when the adults have limited literacy and/or English comprehension. Additional recommendations were to affiliate with other local groups to hold community events that would draw large crowds, and provide information at local churches. Clean Water Action, COMA and UoP Latino Outreach suggested that alternative food options, such as fish exchanges and fish farming be developed for low-income families. They believe these alternatives could reduce the dependence on Delta fish for low-income communities.

Barriers to Effective Education

All groups indicated that they have faced barriers to effectively communicate with and educate their respective constituencies. Though language is a common barrier, all groups employ staff that are fluent in the native languages of their communities. Notwithstanding the language barrier, the ability to read and comprehend is a significant challenge for many of the older immigrant residents.

All participants noted that written informational materials are not always effective. To overcome these challenges, most groups must provide information verbally either in one-on-one settings or group presentations. Other barriers included lack of trust in government notices, limited access to transportation, undocumented status, and long held ethnic rivalries between Slavic (Russian and Ukrainian) language immigrants.

Participants representing VIVO indicated that attempts to educate and encourage their community to eat fish containing lower levels mercury contamination were largely unsuccessful. They explained that Asians that caught and ate fish in Asia were accustomed to fish that had white meat and that fish such as salmon containing a more reddish meat was not appetizing. They added that many in the community believe that fish with colored meat may be contaminated.

Perhaps the biggest barrier to effective behavior change is that these populations have no other low/no cost options to feed themselves or their families.

Priority Activities

Some suggested that providing transportation to MERP public events, particularly for rural residents in the central Delta would increase participation. Others believed that information provided through local schools, contamination advisories posted at fishing areas, the use of trusted messengers, and leveraging other community groups should be considered primary activities to consider for the program. In Stockton participants believed that providing low-income families with food options other than Delta fish would give families the ability to limit consumption.

Involvement in MERP Activities

Most groups indicated that they could assist by providing translations, hosting presentations, and distributing information at events. Others indicated that there may be a possibility of integrating Delta MERP information in existing outreach and educational programs.

With one exception (Little Manila Foundation), all indicated that they would be interested in additional information and potentially participating in the Stakeholder activities.

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Appendices: #1 - MERP CBO Groups and Response Matrix
#2 - CBO Interview Agenda
#3 - CBO Interview Questionnaire

CBO	Organization Goals	Non-English Speaking	Communication Strategies	Geographic Area Served	Venues Where Community Engaged	Delta Fishing and Consumption	How Much Consumed	Common Fishing Locations
Rio Vista Care	Family Services, Referrals	70% of Latinos Non-English Speakers	Bilingual Staff	Rio Vista	Private Homes and Main Office	Most Clients Fish and Eat Delta Fish	Low income residents regularly consume Delta Fish	Throughout Rio Vista; Near SR 12 Bridge
Buddhist Temple of Stockton	Religious Organization	Majority Speak Cambodian	Members Speak/Write Cambodian	Stockton	Temple	Nearly all Fish for and Eat Delta Fish	Most Eat Fish Daily	In and Around Downtown Stockton
La Familia	Family Services, Education Programs	60% Speak Spanish	Bilingual Staff	Sacramento to Galt	Main Facility, Satellite Offices	Unknown	Unknown	Near Galt along the Canals
Filipino Organization of Stockton	Housing, Community Services	50% Speak Spanish or Tagalog	Multi-Lingual Staff	Stockton	Housing Complex	Many Fish for and Eat Delta Fish	Unknown	Unknown, Many Residents buy Fish at Flea Market
VIVO of Stockton	Health, Financial and Consumer Services	Most Clients Non-English Speakers	Multi-Lingual Staff	Stockton	Community Locations, Client Homes	Most Clients Eat Fish from The Delta	Most Eat Fish Daily	Unknown
Slavic Assistance Center	Immigrant Services	60% of Clients Non-English Speakers	Bilingual Staff	Sacramento, Placer, Sutter Counties	Community Center, Churches	Unknown, Fish is a Popular Food	Unknown	Unknown
Slavic Community Center	Immigrant Services, Job, Life Training	50% of Clients Non-English Speakers	Bilingual Staff	Sacramento County	Sacramento Slavic Churches, Media	Unknown, Fish is a Popular Food	Unknown, but Local Russian Markets Sell Delta Fish	The Shores and Banks in Rio Vista
Clean Water Action	Environmental Advocacy	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Unknown, Fish is a Popular Food	Unknown	N/A

CBO	Organization Goals	Non-English Speaking	Communication Strategies	Geographic Area Served	Locations Community Engaged	Delta Fishing and Consumption	How Much Consumed	Common Fishing Locations
River Delta School District	Education, First 5 Provider, Migrant Services	75% of Clients only Speak Spanish	Bilingual Staff	Isleton, Walnut Grove, Courtland	School, Private Homes	Many Fish for and Eat Delta Fish	Low Income Residents regularly Eat Delta Fish	Shores and Banks in Rio Vista
COMA	Organization Represents Latino Community Groups	Large Number Speak Spanish	Bilingual Staff	Stockton	Varies	Many Fish for and Eat Delta Fish	Some Latinos & most Asians Regularly Eat Delta Fish	Locally, In and Around Stockton
UoP Latino Outreach	Education, Health Services	80% Speak only Spanish	Multi-Lingual Staff	Stockton	Field, University	Many Fish for and Eat Delta Fish	Most Asians Regularly Consume Delta Fish	Locally, Stockton Area
Little Manila Foundation	Cultural, Heritage Preservation	Most Speak English	Bilingual Staff	Stockton	Center, Schools	Many Fish for and Eat Delta Fish	Most Filipinos Eat Delta Fish	Unknown

CBO	Other than Delta Locations	Fishing Groups/ Networks	Advisory Awareness	Past MERP Experience	Effective Communication Strategies	Experience in Behavior Change Programs	Same Communication Tools for MERP?	Barriers to Effective Education
Rio Vista Care	Ryer Island, Liberty Island & Hastings	Unknown	Possibly, But Not Specifically	None	Home Visits, Information Distribution	Yes, Mainly Nutrition Programs	Would Use Same Tools	Lack of Transportation
Buddhist Temple of Stockton	Unknown	Unknown	Very Low Among Older Residents	None	Trusted Messengers at Fishing Locations	Drug, Gambling and Alcohol Addiction Counseling	Talk to People, Temple Congregation	Unsafe Neighborhoods; Low Literacy
La Familia	Unknown	Unknown	Probably Not	None	Word of Mouth, Trusted Messengers, Public Events	Programs are Designed to Change Behavior	Integrate into Existing Activities	Limited Transportation; Unauthorized Residents
Filipino Organization of Stockton	Unknown	Unknown	Probably Not	2006 Fish Project, Hosted Meetings	In-person Meetings, Community Events	Nutrition, Health Classes	Conduct In-person Meetings	Low Literacy
VIVO of Stockton	Unknown	Unknown	Some Aware, Mainly Younger Residents	None	Home Visits, Information Distribution Public Places	Consumer and Financial Counseling	Engage Community at Public Locations	Lack of Trust; Literacy; Preferences in Fish
Slavic Assistance Center	San Francisco Bay	Unknown	Low Awareness, Overall	Hosted Presentations, Surveys	Engage Churches, Community Networks, Schools, Housing Complexes	Suicide Prevention Counseling	Would Use Same Tools	Lack of Trust
Slavic Community Center	Unknown	Most Groups are Unofficial	Most Aware, but not in Specific Information	None	Rely on Messenger Name Recognition, Reputation	Childhood Obesity, Heart Disease Prevention Education	Publicize in Newsletter, Presentations at Churches	Ethnic Differences
Clean Water Action	N/A	Fishing Groups are not the Target	Not Widely Known	Yes, Designed Exposure Reduction Programs	CBOs Effectively Communicate with Locals	N/A	Develop Alternative Food Options for Residents	Low Income People Have Few Food Options

CBO	Other than Delta Locations	Fishing Groups/ Networks	Advisory Awareness	Past MERP Experience	Effective Communication Strategies	Experience in Behavior Change Programs	Same Communication Tools for MERP?	Barriers to Effective Education
River Delta School District	Unknown	Unknown	None, Especially among Migrant Families	None	Home Visits, Health Fairs, Schools	Health and Education Programs	Would Use Same Tools	Limited Transportation, Nontraditional Work Schedules
COMA	Unknown	Unknown	Probably Not	None	Local Churches, Schools, Children	Violence Reduction	Focus Education on Women and Children	Low Literacy
UoP Latino Outreach	Unknown	Unknown	Probably Not	None	Visit Labor Camps, Schools	Health and Education Programs	Community Events, Engage Doctors and Nurses	Lack of Trust
Little Manila Foundation	Unknown	Most Groups are Unofficial	Some Aware, But not on Specifics	None	Collaborate with other Local Community Groups	Afterschool Programs	Use Trusted Sources	Lack of Understanding of Hazard, No other Food Option

CBO	Priority Activities	Training Tools	Interest in Training	Stakeholder Group Participation
Rio Vista Care	Signage at Fishing Areas	Will Help Design Tools	Yes	Yes
Buddhist Temple of Stockton	Not Given	Assist with Translations	Yes	Yes
La Familia	Provide Free Transportation	Potentially	Potentially	Potentially
Filipino Organization of Stockton	Not Given	Distribute Materials, Staff Community Events	Yes	Yes
VIVO of Stockton	Not Given	Assist with Translations	Potentially	Potentially
Slavic Assistance Center	Not Given	Conduct Outreach and Translations	Yes	Potentially
Slavic Community Center	Not Given	Place Articles, Radio PSAs	Yes	Potentially
Clean Water Action	Provide Low Cost Food Options	Assist with Developing Food Options	Yes	Yes

CBO	Priority Activities	Training Tools	Interest in Training	Stakeholder Group Participation
River Delta School District	Meet with Community	Integrate MERP in Current Programs	Yes	Yes
COMA	Engage other Community Groups	Not Given	Yes	Yes
UoP Latino Outreach	Engage other Community Groups	Conduct Outreach and Translations	Yes	Yes
Little Manila Foundation	Engage Trusted Sources	No	No	No

Needs Assessment Meeting Agenda

Date:

Organization:

Attendees:

A. Overview

1. Appreciation for meeting
2. Meeting goals
 - a. Explain new project (Delta MERP)
 - b. Conduct a needs assessment to learn about viewpoint/needs related to fish contamination
3. Needs Assessment will help guide how the Delta MERP continues to develop
4. Needs/additions to the agenda?

B. Background

1. PPT Presentation
2. Fish Mercury Project (05-08)
3. Mercury still a problem but more scientific support for health benefits

C. Delta MERP

1. A six-year project of the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board
2. Aims to reduce exposures to mercury from Delta fish
3. Funded by wastewater dischargers, State and federal agencies with jurisdiction over waterways, farmers and land managers in the Delta
4. Timeline

D. Needs Assessment

1. What is a needs assessment
2. Needs Assessment Goals
 - a. To better understand the cultural diversity, needs and strengths/assets of the Delta fishing populations
 - b. To identify local leaders, organizations, and resources
 - c. To learn about what tools and outreach work best in the Delta
 - d. To explore ways to collaborate with groups here
3. Approach and Process
 - a. We'll be meeting with 8-10 groups to do needs assessments
 - b. Present findings to Delta MERP work group for consideration in development of Delta MERP work plan
4. Needs Assessment Questions

Assessment Interview Questions Delta Mercury Exposure Reduction Project

Organization/Population Served

1. What are the main goals of your organization?
2. What populations do you serve? Average number of clients served annually?
3. Do the populations you serve include non-English speakers?
 - 3a. If so, what languages do they speak?
 - 3b. What percentage of your clients/community do not speak English?
 - 3c. How do you meet the language needs of your non-English speaking population?
4. Geographic Areas Served?
5. Places where clientele are commonly engaged? (office/field)

Fishing Activities

6. Do the populations you serve catch and eat fish from the Delta? About what percentage of your population eats Delta fish?
7. Do the populations you serve catch and eat fish from other areas in California?
 - 7a. *[If Yes]* What are the most common places they fish?

Advisory Awareness/Communication Networks/Priorities

8. Do you think the populations you serve have any knowledge of advisories on eating fish, including fish they catch themselves and fish they buy in stores? Are they aware of the advisories for the Delta? *[Would you say their level of awareness is low, medium, or high?]*
9. Are you aware of any formal or informal communication networks for fishermen in your area? *[These could be forums, physical posting boards, fishing shops, etc.]*
10. Among all the priorities you have, where does fish contamination fit in? Past Fish Activities
11. Has your organization been involved in any activities around fish contamination (currently or in the past)? These activities include answering questions about fish contamination, distributing educational materials, or helping to post advisory signs.
 - 11a. *[If Yes]* Please describe. *[If you have distributed educational materials (brochures, etc.). what were these?]*

Educational Approaches

12. In your current projects and activities, what tools or approaches have you found to be the most effective in doing outreach to your clients?
13. Do you have programs that aim to educate, or change habits and behaviors?
14. Would you use these same tools, approaches, and activities when communicating about fish contamination issues, or would you recommend other techniques? For example, how would you encourage your community to eat less fish, eat different kinds of fish. or fish in different places?
 - 14a. *[If 3 or more activities are mentioned]* Which of these activities do you think are the highest priority and should be done first?

15. What do you think are some barriers to the success of these activities and what would you suggest to address the barriers?
16. Are there activities you think the Water Board or CDPH, as state agencies, should be doing to communicate fish contamination issues?
 - 16a. *[if 3 or more activities are mentioned]* Which of these activities do you think are the highest priority and should be done first?
17. Would you and your staff be interested in training, workshops, educational materials, or other assistance so that you can provide information about fish contamination issues to your community?
 - 17a. *[if Yes]* What kinds of training, tools, or other assistance would be most helpful?
Stakeholder Group/Other Ways To Be Involved
18. Would you be interested in participating in a Stakeholder Advisory Group or as an informal advisor to help plan and implement the Delta Mercury Reduction Program?
 - 18a. *[if No]* Why not? Are there specific barriers to your participation on this project?
19. Are there other ways your organization would be interested in participating or contributing to this project?
 - 19a. *[if Yes]* How would you like to be involved?

Other Contacts/Other Information

20. Can you recommend other community leaders and community-based organizations or networks who would be interested in this project?
21. Is there other information you would like to share with us or is there anything we've missed?

NOTES FOR US: FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES: