



Environmental Justice  
WORKGROUP  
dvrpc

## March 24, 2015 EJ Work Group Highlights

### Presentation:

#### **Promoting EJ as an Essential Best Management Practice for Utilities in Economically Distressed Communities...***Andy Kricun, Executive Director, Camden County Municipal Utilities Authority*

Mr. Kricun presented recent developments to improve service and create a better relationship between the CCMUA's wastewater treatment center and the surrounding community. Water utilities face tremendous challenges as they work to deal with aging infrastructure, increasing economic pressures, and climate change. But, as the flip side of "challenge" is "opportunity", there is also a tremendous chance to make a positive difference in cities and towns. CCMUA demonstrates that clean water utilities have the resources and wherewithal to take a leadership role in environmental stewardship and community service. Wastewater managers can make a positive difference by:

- Optimizing water quality
- Minimizing odors
- Achieving cost efficiencies to reduce rates
- Embark on green initiatives, such as reducing carbon footprint.

Challenges and opportunities for wastewater managers are especially prevalent for utilities that are operating in economically distressed communities such as Camden, New Jersey. After receiving odor complaints and raising water rates, the CCMUA has looked to establishing new priorities to respond to. Odor prevention was established as a core priority, in response to community complaints, but CCMUA looked for other ways to help the community, beyond wastewater management.

Several environmental justice initiatives were instituted:

- Reduced rates for Camden City residents
- Elimination of truck traffic
- Creation of a waterfront park
- Creation of a community tree nursery
- Combined sewer overflow system improvements
- Federal grant assistance to the city
- Provision of technical assistance to the community and support to bring in other resources to the community

Mr. Kricun also highlighted the work of the Camden Collaborative Initiative, which is a collaboration among USEPA, NJDEOP, CCMUA, Camden City, and 25 other environmental and community agencies, working together to address environmental issues. Working groups have been formed

around flooding, contaminated sites, air emissions, recycling, environmental justice, and environmental education.

**Why Care About Trees?...** *Julianne Schieffer, Penn State Dept. of Ecosystem Science and Management*

Ms. Schieffer highlighted the value of trees in communities, and the resources available for communities to access. Trees, the original green infrastructure, are an integral and important part of a community's infrastructure for a number of reasons:

1. Trees are part of our infrastructure. Infrastructure provides vital services. They are the green infrastructure that pays back in so many ways
2. Trees are vital to the health of a community – they provide clean air, clean water, and psychological well-being.
3. Trees are a legacy. Future generations will reap the benefits of the trees that are planted and maintained today.
4. Trees have a positive impact on business in the community.
5. Trees are a wise use of our community budget dollars

Many communities have a renewed focus on community tree programs such as:

- Volunteer Tree Commissions or Advisory committees that help municipal officials, write grants, raise funds, plant trees, put out contracts, educate homeowners, develop ordinances and policies that protect community trees.
- Shade Tree Ordinances enact laws and policies for what is done to trees in the right-of-way. Borough Code, State Statute spells out the municipality's authority and responsibilities for trees growing in the right-of-way.
- Conducting a Tree Inventory helps a community plan for and prioritize work that needs to be done. It may discover specific issues related to trees, such as where all the dying trees are located or which species of tree is lifting sidewalks or being attacked by insects or a disease.
- Once an inventory is completed, a management plan will help guide the tree program by setting achievable goals and objectives for the short and long term.

Ms. Schieffer also provided the following resources:

- Pennsylvania Community Forests: [www.pacommunityforests.org](http://www.pacommunityforests.org)
- PA Trees: [www.patrees.org](http://www.patrees.org)
- Landscape and Human Health Laboratory: [www.lhhl.uiuc.edu](http://www.lhhl.uiuc.edu)
- Human Dimensions of Urban Forestry and Urban Greening: [www.naturewithin.info](http://www.naturewithin.info)
- USDA Forest Service: <http://na.fs.fed.us/urban/treespayusback/index.shtm>

**DVRPC Futures Working Group...** *Brett Fusco, DVRPC Senior Transportation Planner*

Mr. Fusco returned to the EJ Work Group to discuss identified future forces that will impact the region. Participants discussed the following:

- Is Philadelphia the energy hub of the future? How will this impact residents in bringing energy hub to the region? Placement, etc.
- What are the social costs of extractive energy- move toward alternatives, such as hydrogen
- Land use patterns (existing) predicated development, where people live/work. Driverless cars will substantially change that dynamic. Uber is already doing this.
- Access to technology is an EJ issue, particularly with taking part in the free agent economy

- Fracking may not be a long-term issue, significant adverse impacts, political pushback, and the wells are not lasting as long as predicted. Long term economic viability is uncertain. Why build Phila region into short-term energy hub. Wind, etc. becoming more economically viable, but siting alternative energy also has EJ implications.
- Farmland preservation – it is better to develop near the city than in Lancaster County. How much energy is used in sprawl development patterns? Cul-de-sacs, school buses, etc. and once it's built, it's hard to change.
- How do planners take responsibility and plan for these changes and anticipate their impacts
- Do millennials or boomers drive development? Older suburban houses won't have the value that some boomers think they will, which they are relying on for retirement income.
- Enduring urbanism and EJ: Gentrification is an issue, but be proactive to anticipate housing plans that ensure mixed income – education is the best way to improve EJ communities
- Transportation infrastructure investments prioritized and look to inexpensive transportation options. Low-income individuals have smart phones, but there is difference technology is used (more for games)
- PennDOT remediation (I-95 reconstruction) in Chester, action steps to improve EJ commutes, sustainability action committees, community outreach on reconstruction. Prioritized transportation alternatives. Where will bike stations be sited? This is an equity issue.
- Land preservation strategies in urban areas – not just rural area – quality open space improves food security in urban centers (agriculture)
- What structural changes need to be made re: educating students for the future
- Last mile – pedestrians need to be considered + more connections / coordination of real-time transit info
- Alternative industries – has any city ever tried to partner with a wood products company to grow and harvest trees in the city?
- Bike share – it is a challenge for low-income communities where many people don't have access to a credit card
- Green spaces in underserved areas – correlation between poverty and open space, where impoverished areas have the least amount of vegetative cover. There are social impacts due to lack of open space, which must be prioritized in EJ communities.

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