Environmental and Public Health Laboratories: An Expanding Reach To Improve Environmental Health

M.E. Heintz, M.W. Latshaw, S. Sutaria, B. Waddington, D. Kim

INTRODUCTION
The Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL) works with government environmental laboratories to ensure they have the resources, training, and information they need to evaluate environmental contamination and its impact on human health. To determine the capabilities, needs, and concerns of environmental laboratories across the nation, APHL conducted its second Environmental Health Survey in 2012. The results highlighted issues such as collaborative opportunities, funding levels and testing priorities. The Survey also revealed new areas of concern and focus, including how laboratories communicate with the public and the disciplines they partner with.

METHODS
Using Qualtrics, an online survey platform, APHL launched the survey on June 19, 2012 to 121 APHL member and non-member public health, environmental and toxicology laboratory directors. Each survey respondent received an e-mail with a unique survey link and a copy of the survey. APHL received a 41% response rate (53 laboratories) that included 88% of states (45). The survey closed on August 17, 2012. Aggregate survey assessment results for all questions are available at http://bit.ly/159sXvW. The survey report is at: http://bit.ly/YaEoOx. Of the 53 respondents, 52 were state laboratories and one was a local laboratory.

RESULTS

Data Submitted to EPA Regulatory Programs
- Safe Drinking Water Act (radiochemistry)
- Safe Drinking Water Act (chemistry)
- Safe Drinking Water Act (microbiology)
- Resource Conservation and Recovery Act
- Other

Laboratory Funding Sources
- Federal
- State agencies
- Fees
- Private
- Other

Laboratory Funding: Average funding received per laboratory over the past three years.

Critical Issues for Environmental Laboratories
- Emerging contaminants dominate the discussion of critical issues.
- The threat of privatization cannot be overlooked.

Disciplines Partnered With
- Laboratory partners with multiple disciplines across many areas of public health, and do not conduct analyses in a vacuum.
- "Other" disciplines included toxicology, food safety, and academia.
- Multiple opportunities exist for laboratories to cross-collaborate with other disciplines.

CONCLUSION
Government environmental laboratories analyze a wide range of matrices to protect public health. These laboratories can collaborate with a wide range of partners while conducting public outreach. The reach of these laboratories cannot be understated.

For More Information
For more information, see the survey report at: http://bit.ly/YaEoOx. The aggregated survey data is available at: http://bit.ly/159sXvW. For any other comments or questions, please contact Michael Heintz at michael.heintz@aphl.org or 240-485-2786. © Copyright 2013, Association of Public Health Laboratories. All Rights Reserved.

Acknowledgements
APHL wishes to acknowledge the Survey Task Force who helped develop this survey: Jack Bennett (Katherine A. Kelley Public Health Laboratory (CT)), Jack Krueger (APHL Consultant), Martina McGarvey (Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection Laboratory), Tara Lydick (Delaware Public Health Laboratory), Michael Wichman (State Hygienic Laboratory (IA)), and Kathryn Wangsness (Arizona Bureau of State Laboratory Services). The 2012 Environmental Health Survey was 100% funded with federal funds. The total amount of funding received for the Environmental Health Program is $864,607. This poster was supported by Cooperative Agreement #U50HM000803 from CDC and/or Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of CDC and/or Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response.