

Environmental justice discussion features SRP grantees

By Sara Mishamandani

The NIEHS Superfund Research Program (SRP), through its Community Engagement Cores (CEC), has a strong history of working with communities to support environmental justice goals.

During a conference call Oct. 24, organized by the Boston University SRP and its Research Translation Core partner, the [Collaborative on Health and the Environment \(CHE\)](http://www.healthandenvironment.org/),

(<http://www.healthandenvironment.org/>)

speakers from SRP centers at Brown University (BU), the University of Arizona (UA), and Louisiana State University (LSU) explained their innovative work engaging communities to promote environmental justice.

Linked Audio

[Listen to a recording of the conference call \(59:00\)](#)

Environmental justice is the fair treatment of people of all races, cultures, and incomes, through the development and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. "The Community Engagement Cores are dedicated to working with communities to support environmental justice goals," CHE Director [Elise Miller](#)

(http://www.healthandenvironment.org/uploads/docs/EliseMillerBio_2013.pdf) said in her opening remarks.

Participants describe programs geared to different needs

[Phil Brown, Ph.D.](#),

(https://research.brown.edu/myresearch/phil_brown)

addressed BU SRP activities across Rhode Island, which include working closely on environmental health and justice education and outreach with community-based partner organizations, especially the Environmental Justice League of Rhode Island; expanding after school health education for students; and developing science cafés to inform citizens of environmental health research and local issues. He also described BU SRP work with multiple levels of government aimed at developing comprehensive environmental legislation on remediation and reuse.

[Denise Moreno Ramírez](#)

(<http://www.superfund.pharmacy.arizona.edu/content/denise-moreno-ram%C3%ADrez-ms>)

discussed how UA SRP is working in the U.S.-Mexico border region, which is plagued by a growing environmental health crisis resulting from inadequate environmental infrastructure, uncontrolled disposal of hazardous waste, and widespread exposures to heavy metals from mining and metal processing. She talked about UA SRP work to empower underrepresented community members of the border region to become active participants in recognizing and resolving hazardous environmental contamination risks. She described one of their activities in collaboration with promotoras, Latina community health workers, which consists of a series of training modules to help them translate environmental health science in their communities.

[Margaret Reams, Ph.D.](#),

(<http://srp.lsu.edu/AbouttheResearchTeam/item22800.html>)

discussed LSU SRP work with residents and local environmental leaders facing potential exposure to contaminants from Superfund sites. LSU SRP collaborates with the Louisiana Environmental Action Network, a public interest organization with more than 100 affiliated groups, to reach leaders and members of grassroots environmental organizations. LSU SRP emphasizes the need to foster more resilient communities, and to enhance the capacity of communities facing cumulative environmental exposures to take steps to make them safer.



Brown is the BU SRP CEC leader and a distinguished professor at Northeastern University. (Photo courtesy of Phil Brown)



Moreno Ramírez is the UA SRP CEC coordinator. (Photo courtesy of Denise Moreno Ramírez)



Reams directs the LSU SRP CEC and is an associate professor of environmental sciences at LSU. (Photo courtesy of Margaret Reams)

Comments at the end of the call were made by Staci Rubin, a staff attorney with Alternatives for Community and Environment; an environmental justice organization in Massachusetts; and a community engagement core partner of the BU SRP. A recording of the call and background information is available on the [CHE website](http://www.healthandenvironment.org/partnership_calls/12806).
(http://www.healthandenvironment.org/partnership_calls/12806)

(Sara Mishamandani is a research and communication specialist for MDB Inc., a contractor for the NIEHS Superfund Research Program and Division of Extramural Research and Training.)

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