

Wylie transcript

Wylie explains a need for engaging the public in environmental health research, says today's tools can be modified and used to further research and data gathering, and describes what she hopes for the future of civic science.

Time: 1:45; Size: 1.65 MB

[Wyle-audio.mp3]

I think we have pressing environmental health problems that our agencies just don't have the capacity to be on the ground researching all the time. So particularly with large-scale industries like the oil and gas industry, an agency might only have a handful of well inspectors and thousands of wells to investigate. Yet we have people who live right next door to them, who live around that infrastructure all the time, and how we can we make them the eyes on the site to build a rigorous monitoring system is kind of the core of my work. So I think this is really about changing who gets to do science, who gets to be involved in research, and I hope that will change the kinds of research questions that we see scientists investigating.

There's so much capacity packed into our cameras and our cell phones and the question is how can we actually unlatch and start getting people engaged in really using that capacity rather than just being consumers. We've surrounded ourselves with incredibly powerful computational devices and the internet provides you a really great way of sharing that information that can help you validate it and validate the tools that somebody used.

The possibility of the public using its diverse expertise — whether they're software engineers or programmers, or high school science teachers, or formally trained toxicologists — to collaborate in building a scientific infrastructure that's in the public domain, and that supports public agencies, and that supports public inquiry in an affordable fashion.