

Oregon State University Superfund program completes pilot assistance project

By Sara Mishamandani

A tool to educate K-8 students about mercury in the environment and its effects on human health is now [online](http://superfund.oregonstate.edu/teacher-resources-mercury-my-community-and-me) (<http://superfund.oregonstate.edu/teacher-resources-mercury-my-community-and-me>)

, thanks to a collaboration between the NIEHS Superfund Research Program (SRP) at Oregon State University (OSU), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the London School in Cottage Grove, Oregon.

The cooperative project was the first pilot for the Partners in Technical Assistance Program (PTAP), launched with the London School, located near the Black Butte Mine Superfund [site](http://yosemite.epa.gov/R10/CLEANUP.NSF/sites/bbm)

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in rural Cottage Grove, about 70 miles south of the university. The EPA Office of Superfund Remediation and Technology Innovation initiated the [technical assistance](http://www.epa.gov/superfund/community/pdfs/toolkit/tana.pdf)

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program in 2013 to help communities affected by Superfund sites understand technical information and to enable meaningful community involvement in the Superfund decision-making process.

During a Black Butte Mine community information session, London School principal Laurie Briggs requested that EPA create materials to teach students about the nearby abandoned mine, where mercury and other contamination from mine waste affect creeks that flow into the nearby Cottage Grove Lake and the Coast Fork Willamette River.

“EPA has a strong commitment to ensure that communities living near Superfund sites are informed and have opportunities to meaningfully engage in EPA actions to protect human health and the environment,” said Alanna Conley, EPA Region 10 Superfund Community Involvement Coordinator. “This is a model educational project and partnership with OSU, London School, and EPA that brings together environmental health science, local history, and a Superfund site.”

Linked Video

[Watch a video on the history of Black Butte Mine, which began operations in 1897. \(9:44\)](#)

Putting environmental health into context

The educational package Mercury, the Community, and Me is available online as [modules](http://superfund.oregonstate.edu/mercury)

(<http://superfund.oregonstate.edu/mercury>)

for K-8 teachers. The activities help connect students to the environment by defining environmental health, providing an overview of mercury and how it enters the environment and the food chain, and delivering information about mercury and human health. The resources include background information, presentations, worksheets, videos, games, and team assignments.

Two videos are also part of the curriculum. One provides more information about the Black Butte Mine Superfund site, including its historical background. The other introduces students to careers in science, highlighting scientists from the university and EPA.

The activities in the educational package build upon prior work on the [Hydroville](http://blogs.oregonstate.edu/hydroville/)

(<http://blogs.oregonstate.edu/hydroville/>)

project, a nine-week series to help high school students understand environmental health, developed through the university's Environmental Health Sciences Core Center.

Fostering collaboration and engaging stakeholders



An EPA Partners in Technical Assistance Program pilot project for the Black Butte Mine Site community in Cottage Grove, Oregon



Members of the PTAP team at the London School include, from left, Diana Rohlman, Ph.D., with the OSU SRP, Conley, Dan Sudakin, Ph.D., of OSU SRP, Briggs, and Hirsch. Other members of the team are Corey Fisher and Molly Kile, Ph.D., of OSU SRP, Dreyfus, Kira Lynch, EPA Region 10, and Richard Muza, Region 10 Black Butte Mine Project Manager. (Photo courtesy of Naomi Hirsch)

"The PTAP project provided a structure to build relationships with EPA Region 10 and impact a community living near a Superfund site," said Naomi Hirsch, OSU SRP Research Translation Core coordinator. "The final products also included contributions from our SRP trainees. We hope the educational resources are models for other schools and future partnerships."

"The excellent work done by the OSU SRP in collaboration with EPA and the London School in Cottage Grove demonstrates how the pilot PTAP can bring expertise and resources into communities near Superfund sites to meet technical assistance needs and enhance overall community restoration and cleanup," said Melissa Dreyfus, lead for the EPA Headquarters PTAP Pilot.

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