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# Cowlitz County Health Department

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## News Release

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Longview, WA 98632

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## Community Residents Need to Participate in Workgroup on Local Environmental Health Issues

Longview, WA – Did you know that you can join fellow Cowlitz County residents to work on local environmental health concerns? Since August 2008, a core group of community members have met monthly to learn more about local environmental health issues. Using the results of the 2008 Community Survey, the group has focused their efforts on five key environmental health issues. These issues are air quality, water quality, solid waste/recycling, land preservation and environmental education. Small groups are working on these topics to identify ways to make Cowlitz County a safer and healthier environment for all of us. If you have an interest in your local environment, now is the perfect time to join the group for the upcoming year and beyond. As Dr. Jennifer Vines, the Deputy Health Officer stated, “Environmental health issues are complex, and positive changes rarely happen without citizen participation and input.” Community members can also volunteer in a community-based healthy homes project focusing on asthma and substandard housing in our community.

The 2008 Community Survey gave randomly selected Cowlitz County residents the chance to share their opinions about local quality of life, environmental health concerns, mental health, and tobacco use. Survey respondents shared nearly 1400 comments regarding environmental health issues of importance to them. Among those responses, the most common theme was air quality. Water quality was the next most common response. Other top issues of concern included solid waste, the natural environment, safety, and recycling.

Respondents were also asked about the “best things” about living in Cowlitz County. The most common responses were the beauty and recreational opportunities in our natural environment and community parks.

Among residents living in incorporated cities, the most commonly cited environmental health problems were outdoor air quality, drinking water, illegal dumping, limited alternative transportation, pedestrian/cycling safety, and recycling. Among residents living in unincorporated areas, the most

commonly cited problems were illegal dumping, limited alternative transportation, recycling, access to recreational opportunities, fish habitat, and pest control.

Among all respondents, females were more likely to report that safe and affordable housing was a problem. Males were more likely to report illegal dumping as a problem.

The environmental health workgroup welcomes new participants! Community members with a passion for air quality, water quality, solid waste/recycling, land preservation and/or environmental education are invited to join us. Residents with specific skills in assessment, analysis, communication, policy development, and partnership building are also invited to participate. Please contact Heather Morrow-Almeida, 360-501-1218, to learn more about the process and upcoming meeting dates.

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