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October 23, 2009

Contaminated Communities Put Spotlight on EPA Region 4

Environmental Leaders from Six States Tell EPA to Address Legacy of Dumping in Dixie

EPA REGION 4 ACCOUNTABILITY MEETING AND PRESS BRIEFING SCHEDULE

Tuesday, October 27, 2009

- Meeting with EPA Region 4 (61 Forsyth Street, Atlanta, GA) 10:30am -- 12:00pm
- Press Briefing at EPA Region 4 (61 Forsyth Street, Atlanta, GA) 12:30pm -- 1:15pm

(Atlanta, GA) In the first meeting of this type in Region 4 in more than a decade, environmental justice leaders representing more than a dozen environmentally impacted communities from six states (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Tennessee) will meet in Atlanta with [EPA Region 4](#) acting administrator **A. Stanley Meiburg** and senior staff to present documentation of environmental injustice, unequal protection, and failures on the part of the EPA and state environmental agencies to protect the health and environment of low-income and people of color communities.

The EPA meeting is scheduled at the same time and just a few blocks away from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [National Environmental Public Health Conference](#)—where thousands of federal, state, tribal, and local public and environmental health professionals, academic researchers, physicians, nurses, and other healthcare professionals, representatives from communities and organizations, and policy and decision makers are “exploring new research and innovative practice in ecosystems and public health, healthy places and communities, sustainability, public health and chemical exposures,” according to CDC’s website.

Leaders from poisoned communities are driving to Atlanta and some of the elderly residents, such as 84 year old retired contractor Frankie Benton, are making their way to the meeting on a church bus provided by the Maranatha Faith Center, located in Columbus, Mississippi. The church property was found to be contaminated with creosote in 1999.

Leaders from poisoned communities hope to communicate to the new EPA administration the deadly impact of environmental racism and for it to make the elimination of environmental hazards in low-income and people of color communities a priority. The community leaders will present the Region 4 acting administration with their own written reports and convey personal “horror stories” that highlight the devastating impact of toxic contamination and EPA’s flawed protection model that appears to value good relations with state environmental regulators over enforcing the laws—allowing polluters to walk away in many cases unpunished. Some community leaders who are too sick to travel to Atlanta sent in written statements that will be

read. All of the written reports will be emailed to EPA Administrator [Lisa P. Jackson](#) in Washington.

The environmental justice delegation arriving in Atlanta are part of the 36 environmental justice, civil rights, faith, academia, and legal groups from all eight Region 4 states that signed a letter to [Congressman John Lewis](#), longtime civil rights and environmental justice advocate, requesting him to call for an Inspector General or U.S. General Accountability Office ([OIG](#)) investigation of EPA Region 4 given its poor track record on environmental justice. The full letter can be found [here](#).

Environmental Justice Leaders Available for Interviews

Dr. Robert D. Bullard – author of [Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class and Environmental Quality](#) and director of the [Environmental Justice Resource Center at Clark Atlanta University](#)

ALABAMA

Uniontown – toxic coal ash is cleaned up in mostly white East Tennessee Roane County and shipped to a landfill 300 miles away in mostly black and poor Perry County, Alabama. Residents of Perry County have potential exposure to airborne hazardous substances resulting from the disposal of metal-laden ash at the Arrowhead Landfill. The ongoing transport of millions of tons of coal ash from the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) Superfund site in Kingston, Tennessee to the Perry County (Arrowhead) Landfill threatens to place those living near the permanent coal ash disposal site at risk.

Contact:

Reverend James R. Murdock
President, Concerned Citizens of Perry County and Pastor,
Living Hope Missionary Baptist Church
Uniontown, AL

Barbara Evans
Organizing Coordinator
Wildlaw, Burkville, AL

Lisa Evans
Senior Administrative Counsel
Earthjustice
Marblehead, MA (

Anniston – The community has two superfund caliber sites, a PCB and Lead site. The community has concerns regarding the Lead Site Administrative Order of Consent (AOC). Residents feel that the Lead AOC allowed the responsible parties (RP's) to get away with too much.

Contact:

David Baker
Community Against Pollution
Anniston, AL

FLORIDA

Tallevast – In 2003, the residents of Tallevast, Florida, a small, but historic African American community just north of Sarasota, discovered that their groundwater had been contaminated. The plant site was a precision weapons manufacturing facility, which changed hands throughout the years, but is currently owned by Lockheed Martin. So far, Lockheed Martin and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) have identified ten chemicals, including beryllium, that have leached into the groundwater of the community.

Contact:
Wanda Washington
Resident and Activist
Tallevast, FL

Sarah Schwemin
Staff attorney
WildLaw
St. Petersburg, FL

Pensacola – environmental and health concerns about EPA clean-up, relocation, and property appraisals at two Superfund sites (Escambia Treating Company and Agrico Chemical Company) that impacted an African American community.

Contact:
Francine D. Ishmael
Citizens Against Toxic Exposure
Pensacola, FL

Fort Lauderdale – failure of EPA Region 4 to adequately clean-up contamination at the Wingate Superfund site.

Contact:
Deatra J. McCoy
Legal Environmental Social Justice
Fort Lauderdale, FL

Lake Apopka – predominately Latino and African American farmworkers and rural residents are plagued with respiratory illness and skin conditions from dangerous fumigant pesticides.

Contact:
Jeannie Economos
Farmworker Association of Florida

Apopka, FL

GEORGIA

Athens – toxic contamination at the predominately black Dunlap Road and Pittard Road communities. Pittard Road was given a cancer cluster investigation from 2003-2006 without DuPont/InVista's numerous environmental violations being documented or investigated by local, state and federal authorities.

Contact:
Jill McElheny
Vice Chair
Northeast GA Children's Environmental Health Coalition
Athens, GA

Charles Nash
Concerned Citizens of Dunlap Road
Athens, GA

Early County – proposal to build the coal-fired Longleaf Energy station and the disproportionate impact it would have on communities of color and low-income communities.

Contact:
Justine Thompson
Executive Director
GreenLaw
Atlanta, GA

Brunswick – EPA refusal to test the Altama Elementary School that abuts the Hercules 009 Landfill Superfund Site which are located in a low-income minority neighborhood.

Contact:
Daniel Parshley
Glynn Environmental Coalition
Brunswick, GA

MISSISSIPPI

Hattiesburg – A human health risk assessment was completed by Kerr-McGee and reviewed by EPA and MDEQ staff to evaluate "baseline" risk of the Gordon's Creek Site. The reviewed health assessment on file in the Hattiesburg Public Library recommended removing the residents from areas contaminated with creosote. A "worked out" settlement has left the impacted residents in harm's way.

Contact:
Sherri Jones

Founder and Organizer
Forrest County Environmental Support Team
Hattiesburg, MS

Columbus – Maranatha Faith Center was impacted by creosote contamination in ongoing releases since August 1999. A construction project began by the church discovered Creosote in a live stream running through Maranatha Faith Center property. The Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) requested a clean up plan from Kerr McGee in 2000. Maranatha Faith Center is still waiting for a clean-up plan. A groundwater assessment plan was requested from Kerr McGee by EPA Region 4 in 2000. And to date, no groundwater assessment plan has been presented.

Contact:
Reverend Steve Jamison
Pastor, Maranatha Faith Center
Columbus, MS

SOUTH CAROLINA

Williston – private wells and drinking water contamination in small rural community.

Contact:
Rita Harris
Environmental Justice Coordinator
Sierra Club, Memphis, TN

TENNESSEE

Dickson – EPA Region 4, County and City of Dickson, and the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation officials debated the safety of a black family’s well and the nearby leaky Dickson County Landfill while the family drank well water contaminated with contaminated with trichloroethylene or TCE, “a likely carcinogen,” for twelve years.

Contact:
Sheila Holt Orsted
Tennessee resident and plaintiff in civil rights and environmental lawsuits to cleanup TCE contamination in Dickson, TN

Oak Ridge – Residents in all-black Scarboro community, which was located next to the U.S. Department of Energy’s Oak Ridge Reservation, were exposed to multiple contaminants, including releases of uranium, especially from the Y-12 Plant.

Contact:
Margaret L. Jones or Blenza J.P. Tefera
Scarboro community resident
Oak Ridge, TN

Fredonia/Fayette County – noncompliance with the National Environmental Policy and anti-discrimination provisions under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 in assembling property and treatment of landowners.

Contact:
Gary Bullwinkel
Greater Fredonia Community for Environmental Justice
Fayette County, TN

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