

Introduction

Collaboration is the cornerstone of the South Valley Partners for Environmental Justice (SVPEJ). The SVPEJ is a project funded by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS). Since 2001, the project has strived to address environmental health threats to South Valley residents by bridging communication gaps between the community, environmental health researchers and agencies, and health care providers. By using a combination of provider, promotor, and community-based trainings, the SVPEJ has increased our community's capacity to identify and respond to environmental health concerns. Many residents and grass-roots organizations working in the South Valley have devoted unlimited hours toward the goal of achieving environmental justice in the South Valley, without their efforts and dedication, the work of the SVPEJ could not be accomplished. This report summarizes activities, challenges and progress made toward improving environmental health in the South Valley. It encourages involvement from the community to improve and protect our community's health by using an interactive approach.



Promotor meeting



Auto shop in the South Valley.



South Valley farmer selling produce.

Timeline of SVPEJ activities 2001-2005

Environmental health survey shows residents' top concerns are water quality, air quality, crime and litter.

2001

Proper waste disposal training given to auto shop owners and operators.

2002

Community profiles developed for five areas within the South Valley.

2003

Promotor training and partnership organizing.

A gravel pit serves as a catalyst in recognizing that many environmental health concerns originate from poor land-use decisions.

Testimony given on the expansion of the Southwest Landfill on Pajarito Mesa.

Testimony given for the Mtn. View neighborhood on health impacts of a proposed asphalt plant.



Tomasita Gonzales & Julio Dominguez, promotors for the South Valley.



Dust from trucks driving to the landfill on Pajarito Mesa.



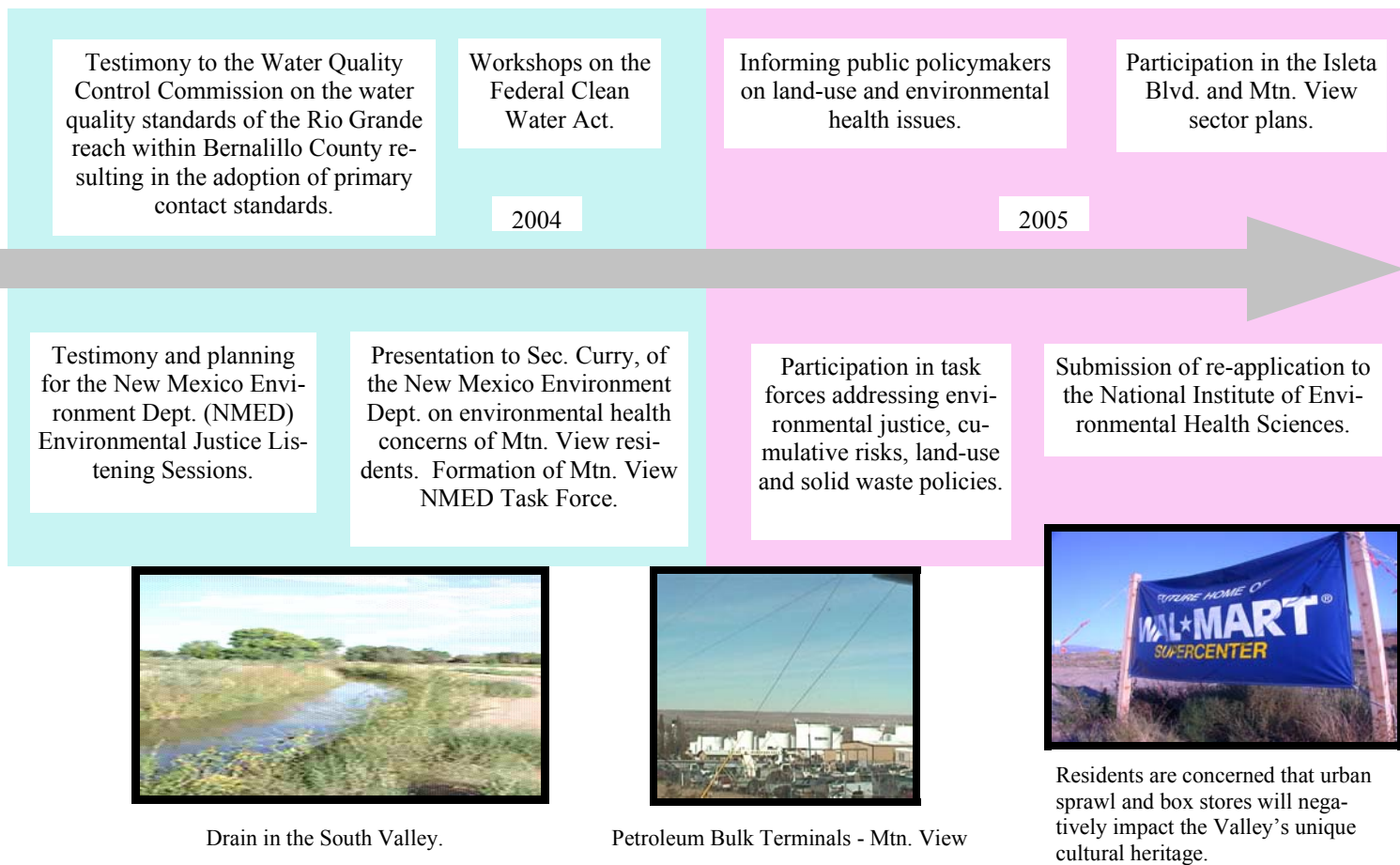
A steady stream of uncovered trucks visit SW Landfill.

SVPEJ partners include:

1. The *Rio Grande Community Development Corporation (RGCDC)*, whose role is to increase community capacity to identify, eliminate or reduce environmental health risks for South Valley residents. The RGCDC formed the South Valley Clean Environment Campaign to create a broader base of community involvement and participation.
2. The *Bernalillo County, Office of Environmental Health (BCOEH)*, whose role is to provide technical assistance, project coordination and project oversight. The County is responsible for ensuring that all grant requirements are met.
3. The *University of New Mexico Community Environmental Health Program (UNM/CEHP)*, whose role is to provide interdisciplinary environmental health education to community residents, promoters and health care providers and to assist with community-based research and resulting actions.

The overall goals of the SVPEJ include:

1. Assess the environmental risks and related health outcomes in the South Valley from community, provider, and science-based perspectives.
2. Respond to community and health care provider environmental health training needs.
3. Recruit and train promoters living in the South Valley to provide local expertise to the community about local environmental health concerns and to act as resources for the community.
4. To develop an Environmental Justice Community Advisory Committee (CAC) to provide guidance to the Partnership.



Profiles of Four South Valley Communities

Los Pañillas

Community Demographics

- 64% Hispanic and Latino
- 86% Owner occupied housing units
- \$36,789 Median household income
- 43% Speak Spanish at home

Environmental Health Concerns

1. Lack of Information on Water Quality of Private Wells, Acequias, and Drinking Water Supply
2. Possible Pesticide Exposure
3. Possible Illness from Mosquito Bites
4. Dust that Affects Upper Respiratory System



Community Assets

- Polk Middle School
- Los Pañillas Elementary School
- Wildlife Sanctuary
- SV Childcare and Preschool
- YDI Head-start Program
- Nazarene Bible College
- Ascension Catholic Church
- Full Gospel Church
- Turquoise Lodge
- First Choice Clinic
- Horse Riding Stables
- Cowboy Polo Park
- Acequia Right-of-ways

Impacting Industry

- Albuquerque Excavators
- Southwest Landfill
- Dairies
- Greenhouse

Pajarito Mesa

(includes 18,000 acres)

Community Demographics

- 90% Hispanic or Latino
- 1,400 persons, 370 Households
- 60% of population is less than 18 years old
- Majority of population falls below the federal poverty level

Environmental Health Concerns

1. Lack of Safe and Clean Drinking Water
2. Frequent Illegal Dumping
3. Smoke from Wood Burning Stoves
4. Carbon Monoxide from Butane Heaters
5. Dust from Unpaved Roads
6. Sun Exposure and Dehydration
7. Food Poisoning from Lack of Refrigeration
8. Possible Exposure to Toxins from Illegal Dumping
9. Vandalism and Crime, Done by Outsiders

Community Assets

- Community Residents are Skilled in Water and Energy Conservation
- Limited Television Viewing and Higher Reading Scores
- Limitless Skies and Views
- No Gang Activity
- New Water Supply System, Established by Committed Community Residents

Impacting Industry

- Two Landfills
- Race Car Track
- Bernalillo County Jail



Girl, protecting her eyes from dust on Pajarito Mesa.

Mountain View

(Includes Rio Bravo Estates, Padre Estates, Kinney Brick, Los Caminos, Poco Loco)

Community Demographics

73% Hispanic or Latino

78% Owner occupied housing units

\$32,134 Median household income

54% Speak Spanish at home

Environmental Health Concerns

1. Water quality, Noise
2. Odor emitting industries
3. Crime and Land-use
4. Air Quality, Land Development
5. Pesticides, Herbicides, Rodents



Community Assets

Mountain View Neighborhood Association

Mountain View Fire Station

Mountain View Elementary School

Churches

Mountain View Community Center

Lovelace Health Care Center

Rio Bravo Veterinary Hospital

Impacting Industry

- 76 Junk Yards
- 7 Chemical Facilities (oil, fuel etc.)
- 35 Hazardous Waste Facilities
- 1 Sewage Facility
- 1 Auto Racing Track
- 1 Brick Plant (Kinney Brick)
- 1 Trash Convenience Center
- 1 Dairy
- 1 Fertilizer Factory
- 1 Chicken Farm



GE facility

Armijo

(includes Five Points, Arenal, Sunset & Vecinos del Bosque)

Community Demographics

80% Hispanic or Latino

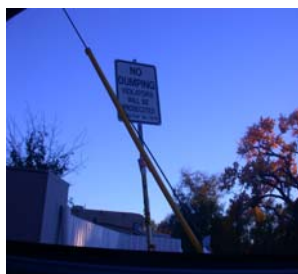
57% Speak Spanish at home

\$27,835 Median household income

34%-38% Age 20 years & younger

Environmental Health Concerns

1. Crime
2. Water Quality
3. Air Quality
4. Noise
5. Land Development
6. Rodents
7. Animal Control
8. Land Use
9. Safe Food
10. Pesticides/Herbicides



Illegal dumping sign

Community Assets

Armijo Neighborhood Association

Westside Community Center

SV Economic Development Center

Several Non-profit Organizations

Cornucopia Senior Day Care

Sanchez Farms

Armijo Village Center

St. Ann's Church

Old Armijo School

First Choice Community Clinic

Topahkal Family Practice & Traditional Medicine

Community Clinic



New Armijo Placita

Impacting Industry

Auto, Paint & Body, Radiator, Tires & Brake Shops, Airport Flight Path, Air Force Base, Polluting Industries to the East of the Rio Grande

Selected Accomplishments

Collaboration or 'united work' to improve Environmental Health in the South Valley

The purpose for our community, county government, and university collaboration is to work together and with other partners to



help solve the environmental injustices facing South Valley residents. Identifying the root causes of air quality, water quality, and illegal dumping problems led to a critical understanding of the linkages between environmental quality and land-use. We also truly appreciate the importance of

collaborating with residents impacted by poor land-use decisions and are working together to create a healthier use of our lands. With time, our role in the community evolved from identifying resident environmental priorities to providing resources and technical assistance, when requested, by neighborhood associations, community groups, government agencies, and elected officials. Through mutual communication, information exchange and problem solving, the expanded partnership was able to increase awareness of environmental justice and aspects of environmental health, including the realization that control of urban sprawl must be the next step toward preventing further environmental health degradation in the South Valley.

Pajarito Mesa

Pajarito Mesa residents have worked on several issues within the past four years. Residents have testified before the County Planning Commission and the County Commission on the possible expansion of Southwest Landfill, a construction and debris landfill. Primary concerns shared by residents included the dust raised by truck traffic, the location of the landfill in a crucial ground water zone, and the possible dumping of trash at the landfill, other than construction and debris. Pajarito Mesa residents have also been granted a permit for a public water supply system; this will ease residents' needs for a high quality water source.

Community residents have also painstakingly conducted their own census and have developed maps illustrating roads, residents' homes and private wells.



Pajarito Mesa truck, hauling drums of water

Mountain View Air Quality Survey

The Mountain View phone survey was conducted to study community empowerment and environmental justice. Before designing the survey, approximately 20 community members were interviewed to determine the topic of the survey. Residents' greatest environmental health concerns surrounded air quality in their community. So, air quality became the topic of the phone survey. About 36% of the persons called participated in the survey.



Above is Mountain View resident, co-investigator, and SVPEJ promotor Julio Dominguez conducting a phone interview.

Phone Survey Accomplishments

Gift certificates for produce sold at the local Farmers Market were offered to participants.

Two community forums (English and Spanish) were held at the local community center to discuss survey results, residents' concerns on air quality, and to provide an opportunity for participation in an air monitoring study. A packet including the gift certificate and survey results will be mailed to participants in the Summer of 2005. The project's report will be stored locally for residents' access.



Mtn. View Air Quality Team

Youth Involvement

Working with South Valley students is fundamental to achieving the overall goals of the SVPEJ project. By engaging youth participation, the project has gained youth perspectives in the resolution of identified issues regarding environmental health risks.

The SVPEJ collaborated with Kalpulli Izkalli in implementing the South Valley Environmental Justice Youth Media Project. The project was an effort to actively engage youth in increasing the public's awareness of environmental health issues. Through their participation, effective media outreach and educational tools were developed for public education.



Youth Water Monitoring Workshop
Kalpulli Izkalli & SVPEJ



Youth in production of the video
“Illegal Dumping...Just Stop it!”
Show-cased at Environmental Day,
2005 Legislature.



Youth from the Indio-Hispano Academy for
Agricultural Sciences receiving awards for
testifying at the Water Quality Control Com-
mission's Triennial Review.



SVPEJ promotor using the ground
water model during Kalpulli Izkalli
Summer Youth Program.

Follow Through Actions: Air Quality and Acequia Moni- toring

In the Spring of 2005, the Partners began monitoring air quality for contaminants, such as volatile organic compounds in Mtn. View. This was a follow-up from Mountain View air quality concerns. The Partners are also beginning to monitor acequias for metals, pesticides and gasoline by-products in the South Valley. This was a follow-up from workshop series with Amigos Bravos on water quality. Results from these monitoring efforts will be provided to the community in Fall of 2005.



Personal air sampling badge

ILLEGAL DUMPING...JUST STOP IT!

In 2003, the SVPEJ launched the “Illegal Dumping...Just Stop It!” Campaign in an effort to clean up the South Valley and protect water resources. Through this campaign, the Partners set out to educate the community and small businesses on where and how to dispose of household and hazardous waste and developed a fact sheet. In early 2004, the Partners undertook an information gathering process in an effort to address policy and practices impacting illegal dumping issues. As a result, the Partners:

- Collaborated with other groups to develop more comprehensive illegal dumping ordinances and to improve the Solid Waste Act language. As part of this initiative, the Partners sought funding for increased staff to provide stronger enforcement of existing regulations and for educational outreach for judges, law enforcement, and the public.
- Participated in the New Mexico State Task Force on Illegal Dumping.
- Participated on the New Mexico Environment Dept. , Solid Waste Act Revision Task Force.
- Developed Illegal Dumpsite Prioritization Tool.



What's Next: Land Use and Environmental Health

The future challenge for SVPEJ will be to strengthen a locally based participatory process for land-use decision-making that integrates Smart Growth Principles resulting in healthier sustainable communities while incorporating traditional land, water and cultural aspects. Continuity from the past four years will be attained by working with existing and new community partners to identify, train, and develop leadership, utilizing the promotor model. To date, a positive response has been received regarding additional funding requested from the National Institutes of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) by SVPEJ and we are anticipating project renewal.

List of Collaborators/Community Resources

Amigos Bravos
(505) 452-9387

Nuestros Valores Academy
(505) 452-9603

Bernalillo County, Office of Environmental Health
(505) 314-0310

Rio Grande Community Development Corporation
(505) 452-8525

Indio Hispano Academy for Agricultural Sciences
(505) 877-8200

South Valley Coalition of
Neighborhood Associations

Kalpulli Izkalli
(505) 452-9208

South Valley Academy
(505) 452-3132

Mountain View Neighborhood
Association
(505) 452-9159

Southwest Network for Economic and Environmental
Justice
(505) 242-0416

New Mexico Dept. of Health,
Public Health Division, District 1
(505) 873-7400

Southwest Organizing Project
(505) 247-8832

New Mexico Environment Department
(505) 827-2855

Southwest Research and Information Center
(505) 262-1862

New Mexico Environmental Law Center
(505) 989-9022

University of New Mexico, Community Outreach and
Education Program (COEP)
(505) 272-4087

Community Narratives

“Health is the one thing that ties us together.”

Marla Painter
Mountain View Resident
March 2005

“The South Valley Partners are amazing. An unbelievable example of commitment and long term involvement from academic researchers in community improvement.”

Public Health Staff Person
New Mexico Dept. of Health
March 2005

“The developer can get to the bank so much faster than anyone of us from the community.”

Gloria Castillo
Promotora for Los Padillas (SVPEJ)
June 30, 2005

“I found the video to be extremely professional, highly informative, and very motivational. I intend to use it in future illegal dumping meetings, conferences, workshops...I also offered congratulations to the South Valley students for creating such an excellent, useful project.”

E. Gifford Stack
Solid Waste Bureau
NM Environment Department

“Staff in governmental agencies think that minority communities don't like to get involved in the community planning process because of language, education and time barriers, but the truth is, some agencies never ask community people.”

Julio Dominguez
Promotor for Mountain View (SVPEJ)
July 2005

“We cannot pollute the very resources necessary for a healthy community including economic development.”

Julie Stephens
RGCDC Director
July 2005

“Social Justice is about acknowledging expertise of community, our communities have their own in-house expertise and they are the best for making changes among themselves, but not to surrender our sense of identity, values and empowerment.”

Dr. Magdalena Avila
Mountain View Resident
July 2005



The South Valley Partners for Environmental Justice

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Phone: (505) 452-8525

University of New Mexico
Community Outreach and Education Program
MSC 09 5360
Albuquerque, NM 87131
Phone: (505) 272-4087

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Los Padillas	Gloria Castillo (btggc@hotmail.com)
Mountain View	Julio Dominguez (julio_dominguez1@yahoo.com)
Pajarito Mesa	Sandra Montes (sandra@swop.net)
Pajarito Village	Tomasita Gonzales (tomasita@swop.net)

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