

Environmental Health Action Plan

for

Fillmore, Gage, Jefferson, Saline and Thayer Counties

- ❖ BASIS project overview
- ❖ Priority Issues
- ❖ Mini-Projects
- ❖ Objectives and Strategies
- ❖ Appendix A: Values for Healthy Communities

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BASIS of a Healthy Environment
Community Environmental Health Action Plan

BASIS Background

Starting in April 2007, PHSDHD conducted basic community health assessments in each of our 5 counties. More than 20 meetings were held across the district over the next 12 months to gather baseline information about residents' thoughts and feelings about community, individual and environmental health.

The environmental insights and contacts that came out of these meetings were isolated from the other issues to be given special attention in separate environmental health assessments in 2008-2009. These workgroups, one from each county, met 4-6 times to discuss:

- environmental health data
- results from previous assessment efforts
- locally relevant indicators of environmental health
- potential environmental health priorities
- priority selection criteria
- priority environmental health issues
- strategies for address priority environmental health issues
- mini-projects to address 'low-hanging fruit' or establish momentum for improvement

BASIS Priorities

District-wide priority areas as a result of the BASIS process:

Issue:	Additional Description:	Counties that singled this issue out:
Children's Health	Healthy Housing	Fillmore, Gage, Jefferson, Thayer
Dilapidated Properties	Buildings that have been abandoned, are un- or underutilized, falling into disrepair	All 5
Exposure to toxics	Air Quality	Saline
	Pesticides	Saline
Outdoor Recreation	Loss of Greenspace, Habitat	Fillmore
	Infrastructure and support for walking/biking	Saline
Public Awareness and Investment in Environmental Health	Lack of prioritization of EH in planning, programs, spending	Fillmore, Gage, Jefferson, Thayer
Waste Management	Trash/Waste	All 5
	Recycling	All 5
	Hazardous Waste Storage	Fillmore
Water Quality/Quantity	[includes pharmawaste contamination]	Fillmore, Gage, Jefferson, Saline

BASIS Mini-Projects

Each county workgroup was provided with approximately \$2,000 to conduct a mini-project to get started right away on addressing priority environmental health issues. The following is what was accomplished with these funds:

❖ *Dilapidated Property Tour (related issue: dilapidated buildings)*

Local stakeholders were invited to tour several communities in one county to get a better feel for this issue and the challenges small, rural communities face in addressing it on their own with very few resources. 11 stakeholders attended the tour, including our two state senators. Information packets were provided to those who attended the tour, which included expanded focus on the larger issue of aging rural infrastructure. Discussions that followed the tour produced some of the strategies outlined below on how to best address the problem of aging, decaying, and abandoned rural infrastructure.

❖ *Environmental Volksmarch (related issue: public awareness)*

Residents were invited to participate in an environmental education event that took them to a variety of booths and displays where information was provided and knowledge was tested and expanded. Booth topics included lead exposure, water pollution prevention, waste reduction, dilapidated properties, loss of greenspace/habitat, and hazmat storage. There were 43 participants who received, in addition to enhanced knowledge of environmental health issues, free reusable tote bags to help them get started reducing their waste footprint.

❖ *Large Appliance Recycling Collection (related issue: waste management)*

In collaboration with the Dewitt Fire and Rescue and Wilber Heating and Plumbing, a large appliance recycling collection was conducted that collected 103 appliances (53 of which were drained of coolant) from 46 residents from the PHS district.

❖ *E-Waste Recycling Collection (related issue: waste management)*

Mini-project funds were added to a struggling e-waste collection effort being facilitated by Trailblazers Resource Conservation and Development District. As a result of this support, along with assistance promoting the event, 100 residents from the least-populated county in the PHS district were able to divert 12,000 pounds of their e-waste from the landfill.

❖ *Public Awareness Campaign (related issue: public awareness)*

PHS designed a billboard, PSAs, and an electronic marquee for community signs, schools, chambers and banks to be displayed throughout the county. The messages were aimed at raising general awareness of the linkage between human and environmental health, setting the stage for implementing strategies that depend on a basic knowledge level in this area.



Strategies to Address:

- ❖ Children's Health
- ❖ Dilapidated Properties
- ❖ Exposure to toxics
- ❖ Outdoor Recreation
- ❖ Public Awareness, Investment
- ❖ Waste Management
- ❖ Water Quality/Quantity





Issue: Children’s Health

Goal: Improve community environmental health in the PHS District

Objective / Outcome	Strategies
Improve public awareness and understanding of the importance of childhood exposure to toxins	Publish report on local risks for childhood exposure to toxics
	Increase blood lead testing
	Create or purchase traveling house display highlighting potential home-based toxics
	Prepare targeted local interest stories to run in traditional media outlets to raise awareness of childhood toxics exposure risks, prevention
Reduce childhood exposure to lead and other home-based toxics	Build voluntary collaboration and capacity among rental property owners to ID and correct potential hazards
	Increase utilization of existing housing rehab funding programs
	ID and train home visitation case managers on “healthy housing” and the importance of referrals
	Provide new parents with ‘environmental education’ packets
	Provide health care staff with ‘environmental assessment’ toolkits



Issue: Dilapidated Buildings

Goal: Improve community environmental health in the PHS District

Objective / Outcome	Strategies
Establish a self-sustaining district-wide workgroup or task force to carry out strategies	Combine interested stakeholders from county workgroups and establish meeting schedule/format
	Invite additional stakeholders to fill perspective gaps
Increase knowledge of the issue and best practices among local officials (codes, code enforcement, development/rehab funding programs)	Survey village/city clerks and boards on existing capacity, problems
	Research best practices for dilapidated buildings
	Explore cost benefits of county or district-wide efforts versus individual community efforts
	Invite existing success stories to share information with other communities in the district (e.g. Hebron Mayor, incentives program)
Increase capacity of local officials to address the problem	Initiate incentives program to facilitate owner responsibility (modeled after other local incentives programs)
	Leverage partnership from Fillmore County Economic Development Corporation, NDEQ, and State Fire Marshalls office
	Provide information about the issue to state executive and legislative branches, county commissioners, county attorneys, and county judges
	Facilitate preparation and submission of applications to federal and state funding programs (e.g. NDEQ’s Deconstruction, state and federal Brownfields)
Decrease the number of dilapidated or abandoned properties	Market rehab and other applicable programs to target populations



Issue: Exposure to toxics (air quality, pesticides)*

Goal: Improve community environmental health in the PHS District

Objective / Outcome	Strategies
Reduce the number of communities that spray pesticide to control adult mosquito populations	Prepare a cost analysis for village/city board to review, comparing larvacide/habitat control programs versus adulticide 'fogging' programs
Reduce auto emissions	Establish a commuter website or message board enabling ride shares and carpooling
	Increase walking and biking trails
	Prepare public information materials highlighting alternatives to driving
	Investigate the possibility of stretching stimulus funding for Highway 33 bridge work to include walking/biking trails
	Investigate zoning actions that can be used to require businesses to support safer paths/trails where applicable

*Saline County only



Issue: Outdoor Recreation (loss of greenspace, walking/biking infrastructure)

Goal: Improve community environmental health in the PHS District

Objective / Outcome	Strategies
Increase number of acres in the county that are set aside from agricultural and developed use*	ID current acres for habitat
	Cultivate partnership with groups such as Pheasants Forever and funding agencies to increase acreage under protection
Identify communities that lack neighborhood green space/parks†	Survey and map community's greenspace, and accessibility by walking/biking

*Fillmore County only

†Saline County only



Issue: Public Awareness and Investment in Environmental Health

Goal: Improve community environmental health in the PHS District

Objective / Outcome	Strategies
Increase public awareness of linkage between human and environmental health	Conduct education/outreach campaign linking personal/family health and environmental health
Increase public awareness of linkage between environmentally conscious choices and cost-savings	Create or adapt a toolkit for personal and business use (ID specific cost-savings scenarios)
Establish FFA chapters in Thayer Central and Bruning-Davenport schools*	Work with state FFA Coordinator, local Board of Health members and county commissioners, and other vested individuals to explore resources and barriers to establishing a program

*Thayer County only



Issue: Waste Management (including trash/waste, recycling, dumping)

Goal: Improve community environmental health in the PHS District

Objective / Outcome	Strategies
Relocate hazardous materials storage away from communities*	Increase awareness of current locations (and associated risks) among decision makers: map locations in relation to communities and waterways
	Investigate potential zoning options to ensure safer locations
	Include and address all hazmat locations in Risk Management and Emergency Response plans
	Investigate insurance cost-benefits for relocating the materials
Increase public awareness about the local waste and recycling cycle, promote waste reduction	Conduct a public awareness campaign on the costs of illegal dumping (get info from/to county commissioners and sheriff's offices, include reusable tote giveaway)
	Conduct a public awareness campaign on waste reduction tips and techniques (including buy local, community composting, recycling promotion)
	Coordinate with local refuse companies to complete (and/or publicize) waste and recycling tracking studies
	Coordinate with local media to provide data and additional information about waste and recycling
Increase and improve refuse services	Organize a student-run project to evaluate waste management practices in the district; map and ID services (waste and recycling) district-wide
Decrease waste, increase recycling throughout communities and among businesses	Investigate the value of county-wide recycling coordination versus community-wide
	Conduct a cost comparison of mandatory refuse/recycling programs (for communities lacking them) versus illegal dumping response and cleanup
	Initiate community/county recycling competitions
	Provide grantwriting assistance for reestablishment and/or expansion of recycling services (trailers, types of materials accepted)
Increase the number and type of clean-up events	Facilitate broader grant-seeking efforts to enable cleanup events across the district
	Establish a policy or program to utilize community service hours for cleanup events
	Formally expand the Crimestopper line to include illegal dumping calls (include reward for conviction)

* Fillmore County only



Issue: Water Quality/Quantity

Goal: Improve community environmental health in the PHS District

Objective / Outcome	Strategies
Increase public awareness of water quality/quantity issues and conservation techniques	Develop a 'water challenge' event for school-aged students
	Develop a marketing plan for water pollution prevention district-wide (for general public, political leaders, students): water bill stuffers, UNL Extension newsletter, tours, Homestead education sessions, riverfront and stream cleanup projects
	Approach SCC's Ag program to incorporate water monitoring/testing projects into curriculum for ag students
	Prepare a water resource guide outlining "Who's Who" in water regulation, protection, monitoring, outreach/education, water use, etc. (to maximize positive results, coordinate efforts)
	Encourage village/city and county boards to support water quality protection efforts (e.g. through a 'Lobby Day' style event for water quality improvement/protection)
	Add water pollution prevention resources to existing Chamber Speaker's Lists
Improve water quality, reduce illicit discharges	Expand Beatrice's watershed monitoring for stormwater releases to other communities
	Recruit volunteers to survey, cleanup, and monitor water bodies
	Investigate how to better utilize Supplemental Enforcement Projects after a release notification to fund community projects
	Ensure releases are reported and followed up on (ensure responsible party has and is following risk management plan)

Next Steps:

1. Accept and integrate public comments on action plan
2. Match strategies with existing resources
3. Rank strategies for 'doability' and effect
4. Identify tasks for each top-tier strategy
5. Implement strategies
6. Reevaluate strategy effectiveness and priority issues
7. Repeat action cycle

APPENDIX A: Values for a Healthy Community

This was developed as part of the MAPP for a Healthy Future project, a community health assessment conducted in 2007-8 that invited residents to identify assets, vulnerabilities, priority issues, and strategies for improving community health.

Appendix A: Values for Healthy Communities

Values Discussion Format:

1. Residents were provided with examples of values statements drawn up by organizations in their county.
2. Residents were asked to list values statements describing what they viewed as important components of a healthy community.
3. Residents were asked to approve a final compilation of values statements (environmentally-related statements shown in green).

Values statements for each county:

Fillmore County	Gage County	Jefferson County	Saline County	Thayer County
Is a community where....				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The small town feel is valued and preserved. ▪ There is strong leadership. ▪ Citizens are involved in the local government and legislative process. ▪ There is trust in local government, resources (health, business, etc.). ▪ There are high standards for professionals and community projects. ▪ There is awareness of resources available (health, business, etc.). ▪ There is recognition for and pride in assets. ▪ Youth and schools are valued. ▪ Wealth and land transition planning is a priority. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The environment is clean, healthy, and beautiful. ▪ Housing is clean, safe and affordable. ▪ Residents are active and safe. ▪ The residents are empowered to be healthy, physically, mentally and emotionally. ▪ Residents actively participate in government at all levels. ▪ Residents and leadership are proactive in preventing and addressing community issues. ▪ Families are valued and strong, and supported in the workplace. ▪ Child care is high-quality and affordable. ▪ There are willing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There are adequate support services exist for those who need it (elders, families, minorities, etc.). ▪ Growth is a reality (population, jobs, businesses, etc.). ▪ Strong mutual aid relationships are sustained. ▪ Residents and agencies work together, within the county and with adjacent communities. ▪ Quality of life is high. ▪ Quality of the environment is high. ▪ Residents have access to high quality housing choices. ▪ First response system is reliable, serves entire population. ▪ Families are strong. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cultures are integrated ▪ There is 24-hr urgent care ▪ There is a central location for public health information and communication (preventative health services) ▪ There is a multi-purpose community center ▪ Elected officials are engaged in community vision ▪ There is a plan for downtown ▪ Individuals take personal responsibility for community health ▪ There is community spirit ▪ Youth are involved and active ▪ There is community growth (business, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Community pride shows through the residents and street-fronts. ▪ The residents care, about each other and the community. ▪ There is safety and security. ▪ Residents are supported by a strong faith network. ▪ Community/civic groups are strongly supported by – and supportive to – local residents. ▪ Families are strong, supported. ▪ Local leadership – town, county, and faith-based – is strong, receptive. ▪ Environment is clean. ▪ There is cooperation

Appendix A: Values for Healthy Communities

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agriculture is valued as a profession. ▪ Opportunities for economic expansion, youth attractors are seized. ▪ Cost of living is affordable. ▪ There is communication between communities, particularly for emergency services. ▪ There is partnership, cooperation between cities/villages and the county, particularly for law enforcement. ▪ Each citizen has access to prompt emergency care by trained EMTs. ▪ There is adequate transportation (medical). ▪ Preventive health is valued. ▪ There is affordable health care for all. ▪ There are adequate mental health resources. ▪ Veterans receive quality health care. ▪ The cities, towns and villages are a viable size. 	<p>volunteers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Veterans and their families are valued, cared for. ▪ Schools are modern, equipped with valued teachers and the latest technology. ▪ Law enforcement is adequately supported and funded. ▪ Mental Health services are adequately supported and funded. ▪ There is economic support for non-profit service providers. ▪ There are ample transportation alternatives that are accessible to all, particularly those with limited mobility. ▪ There is a strong, diverse economy. ▪ Public health and wellness are valued. ▪ Health care is affordable and accessible for all. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Medical care, including mental health, is accessible to all. ▪ Healthy living is valued (exercise, nutrition, etc.). ▪ There are safe, high quality roads and sidewalks. ▪ Residents are active in all levels of government to ensure that rural issues are addressed. ▪ There is sustained growth for the Jefferson Community Health Center in its service to the residents. 	<p>population, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Health care education is valued and provided ▪ Elder care is valued and provided ▪ There is supplemental funding for health care ▪ Transportation is adequate ▪ Immigrants are integrated into the community ▪ There is economic development ▪ There is adequate health care for all ▪ There is a central “brain trust” for community health (e.g. Saline County Improvement Association) ▪ There is strong spiritual leadership 	<p>county-wide.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Housing is safe, healthy, and affordable. ▪ Long-term care services are available for all who need them. ▪ Transportation services are available for all those who need them. ▪ The school system is valued. ▪ Residents are aware of and active in government at all levels. ▪ Thayer County Health Services is thriving, supported. ▪ Recreation services and programs are available.
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