



Connecting Disciplines to Inform and Develop the Emerging Field of Environmental Health Literacy



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Roadmap

- Why Environmental Health Literacy?
- Implicated Disciplines
- Examples from the Field
- Whither EHL?



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Health Literacy



- **CDC:** The capacity to **obtain, process, and understand basic health information** and services to make appropriate health **decisions**.
- **AMA:** The ability to **obtain, process and understand basic health information** and services needed to make appropriate health **decisions** and *follow instructions for treatment*.
- **HRSA:** The capacity to **obtain, process and understand basic health information** needed to make appropriate health **decisions** and services needed *to prevent* or treat illness.
- **Public Health Literacy:** The degree to which individuals and *groups* can **obtain, process, understand, evaluate, and act on information** needed to make *public health decisions* that benefit *the community*. (Freedman et al, 2009)

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Environmental Literacy



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- **Campaign for Environmental Literacy:** The capacity... **to act** successfully in daily life based on a broad **understanding** of how people and societies relate to each other and to natural systems....[and] to incorporate appropriate environmental considerations into daily **decisions** about consumption, lifestyle, career, and civics, and to engage in individual and collective **action**.

- **NAAEE:** The capacity for individuals and groups to make informed **decisions** and **to act** on these decisions [based upon] knowledge and **understanding** of a wide range of environmental concepts, problems, and issues.

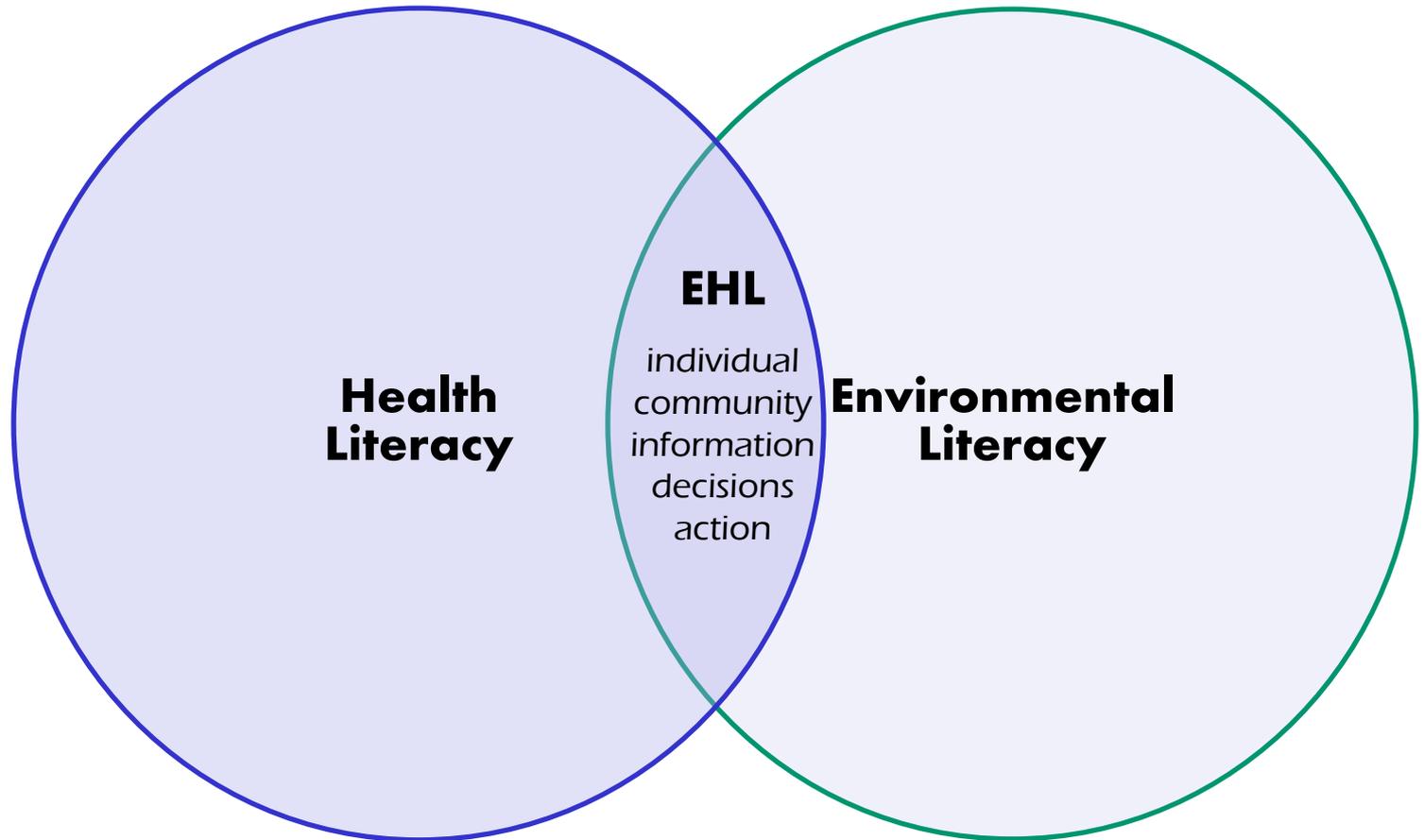
- **The Environmental Literacy Council:** A fundamental **understanding** of the systems of the natural world, the relationships and interactions between the living and the non-living environment, and the ability to deal sensibly with problems that involve scientific evidence, uncertainty, and economic, aesthetic, and ethical considerations.

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A Few Implicated Disciplines

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MEDICINE

NURSING

TOXICOLOGY

PUBLIC HEALTH



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**ENVIRONMENTAL
EDUCATION**

ENGINEERING

GEOGRAPHY

POLICY



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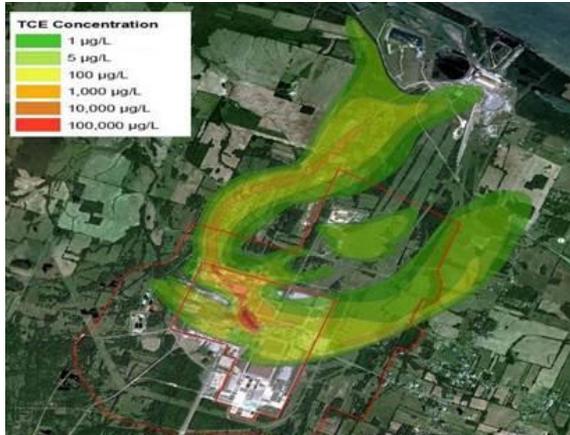


Examples from the Field: Case One

Community-Identified Knowledge Gaps from a Superfund NPL Site

Paducah Future Vision Study

- Kentucky's largest Superfund site
- Chronic risks, statutory complexity
- Stakeholder heterogeneity
- Info Needs: The Site's Future
- Visual Elicitation



Stakeholder Questions

- What chemicals are “out there”?
 - What do the chemicals do to health?
 - How much groundwater contamination?
 - How are “they” monitoring the waste?
 - Could an earthquake disturb the waste?
-
- What keeps contamination from moving further south?
 - Is a wind farm an option for the site after it's cleaned up?
 - How does the site affect my cancer risk?



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Examples from the Field: Case Two

Stakeholder-Identified Knowledge Gaps for Post-Incident Decontamination and Clearance



Post-Crisis Communication Study

- Hypothetical water terrorism scenario
- Heterogeneous audiences
- Information Needs, Preferred Channels, Credible Sources
- Audio Elicitation

Stakeholder Questions

- What are the “national drinking water standards”?
- How was the water tested, and by whom?
- If water isn’t safe for the pregnant, elderly, and children to drink, how can it be safe for me to drink?
- What symptoms should I look for?
- How do I clean my sink after I flush my pipes? My water heater?
- Why should I believe that clear-looking water is dirty?



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Whither EHL



- **Who?** Which disciplines are implicated that I didn't mention?
- **What?** What are the boundary conditions and key constructs for environmental health literacy as a field of inquiry?
- **Where?** In what ways can we privilege context while fostering a foundational set of EHL capabilities?

- **Why?** How does EHL stand apart from similar pursuits?
- **How?** How do we negotiate across implicated disciplines? Create programming and curricula? Measure success?



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What piece of the EHL puzzle do YOU have?



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*Detailed findings from the PGDP Stakeholder Future Vision Project are available at www.paducahvision.com.



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