

Environmental Health Programs Summary

Whitman County Environmental Health

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS SUMMARY

8/21/2013

www.WhitmanCounty.org/EnvironmentalHealth

Secretary of Health Visiting Whitman County

In an effort to improve communications and partnerships with local public health departments, the newly appointed Secretary of Health, Dr. John Wiesman, will be visiting Whitman County Public Health on August 21, 2013. As the former Administrator of the Public Health Department in Clark County Washington, Dr. Wiesman has built on his 22 years of experience in public health to identify ways to transform local public health. Dr. Wiesman has served and led many committees and organizations in Washington State that have benefitted all residents of the state.



Dr. John Wiesman

Appointed as Secretary of Health by Governor Jay Inslee in April of 2013, Dr. Wiesman looks to transform the way public health is delivered in Washington State. By openly sharing expectations, information, and recommendations, Dr. Wiesman hopes to prepare all public health staff for a potential leadership role in their organizations or in the overall field of public health



Highlights of Dr. Wiesman's Itinerary in Whitman County

- Whitman County Public Health Pullman office
- Meet with Washington State University Provost, Daniel Bernardo, PhD and Dean of Veterinary Medicine Brian Slinker DVM, PhD
- Tour of Paul G. Allen School for Global Animal Health
- Washington Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory (WADDL); Brian Slinker, Tim Baszler DVM, PhD
- Meet with County Commissioners/Board of Health; Michael Largent, Dean Kinzer, and Art Swannack
- Whitman County Public Health Colfax office
- Environmental Health Department-Colfax office

We thank him for this opportunity to speak with him and look forward to his visit.

What is Environmental Health?

A common expression among public health professionals is, "If you've seen one public health department, you have seen **one** public health department". This would indicate that public health departments vary as greatly as the communities they serve. This idea applies to environmental

health as well. Each community needs something a little different to meet their needs; this is especially true for rural communities who have challenges unique to their communities. The foundational services of Environmental Health include food and water protection, onsite sewage and

septic tanks, and solid waste investigation, swimming pool inspections, and educational outreach. To find out what services are offered in Whitman County, be sure to visit the Environmental health Department's website at www.whitmancounty.org/EnvironmentalHealth.

Whitman County Environmental Health

- Staff size of 4
- Environmental Health staff are Generalists, working in all EH programs
- New and energetic staff bring innovative ideas into public health (average EH staff experience of one year)
- Staff recognized for achievements by WSEHA
- PhD Director with 10 years of local public health experience
- Strong commitment to community

Inside this issue:

Meet The Staff	2
Food Protection	3
Solid Waste	3
Onsite Sewage	4
Drinking Water	4
Partnerships	5
Contact Info	6
Environmental Health Philosophy	6



Meet the Environmental Health Staff

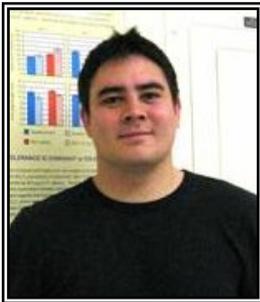
Michael K. Baker, PhD, MSPH, CEHS/RS
Director of Environmental Health



Dr. Baker joined Whitman County Public Health in June of 2003 as an entry-level health inspector. A self-proclaimed “Public Health Nerd”, a fascination with all aspects of public health led him to continue his education. Assuming the EH Director role in 2008, Dr. Baker strives to develop a department of innovation, accountability,

and one that meets the need of the community. “While much of the work of Environmental Health goes on behind the scenes, **Environmental Health is one of the rare professions that has both a direct and indirect impact on the daily lives of everyone in our community.** If you drink water, eat food, or breath air, Whitman County Environmental Health has been a part of you day.”

Phil Hagihara, HHS
EH Programs Supervisor



Phil joined Whitman County Environmental Health in January of 2011, after working with the USDA-ARS and Bureau of Reclamation. A graduate of Washington State University in Genetics, Phil brings the “research and data” approach into all aspects of the Environmental Health Department. Improvements to the Epidemiology Program and documentation of services are a direct result of his input

His accomplishments have earned him recognition as the “Rookie of the Year” with the Washington State Environmental Health Association (WSEHA). Phil’s ability to form and foster partnership within the community is an invaluable asset for the whole Public Health Department. His attention to detail and ability to get to the heart of the matter has helped shape policies and procedures within the department.

Scott Paradis, HHS
Environmental Health Specialist



Scott has been an Environmental Health Specialist with Whitman County since April of 2012. After earning his Environmental Science degree from the University of Idaho, Scott spent time assisting the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality doing waterway ecology analysis in the Boise Valley area before relocating to Whitman County. Starting as an Environmental Health Technician, Scott

and was promoted to EH Specialist. He currently coordinates the Food Protection Program and the Animal Investigation portion of the Epidemiology Program. Scott has recently been voted the Washington State Environmental Health Association (WSEHA) Regional Vice President for Eastern Washington. His education and interests allow him to be an active participant in the Drinking Water Advisory Committee.

Matthew Chertudi
Environmental Health Technician



The newest member of the Environmental Health team, Matthew has been with Whitman County for 2 months. His position is a departure from the traditional EH Specialist. In addition to assisting with the Environmental Health programs offered in the County, he is responsible for the development and management of the Environmental Health tracking database for all EH programs. Additionally, he assists the Fiscal Department

with tracking and issuing permits for the Environmental Health Department. His education in Business Administration with a focus in Entrepreneurship from Boise State University is essential in helping bridge the barriers between business and inspector. Originally hired as a seasonal employee, it is hoped his affinity for technology, background and streamlining of process will help ensure available funding for a long-term commitment.

Food Protection Program

Whitman County currently has 245 permitted food service establishments. Included in this number are full-service complex menus, simple preparations, “fast food”, fraternities and sororities, mobile/caterers, and public school kitchens. Additionally, a total of 24 establishments are inspected by the Office of Environmental Health & Safety at Washington State University through an agreement with Whitman County (see Partnerships on page 5). Increased focus and education on employee health and handwashing began with adoption of the “Working Document”. As a result, the numbers

of critical violations associated with bare hand contact has decreased significantly. Today, concerns with hot holding and final cook temperatures have become the new priority. To address these issues, the Environmental Health staff are currently working on developing a person in charge training for shift managers & supervisors. This will allow for prompt corrective or educational action to occur on site. Additionally, staff are collecting food source information for tracking of food providers that can assist in the event of an outbreak or public health emergency.



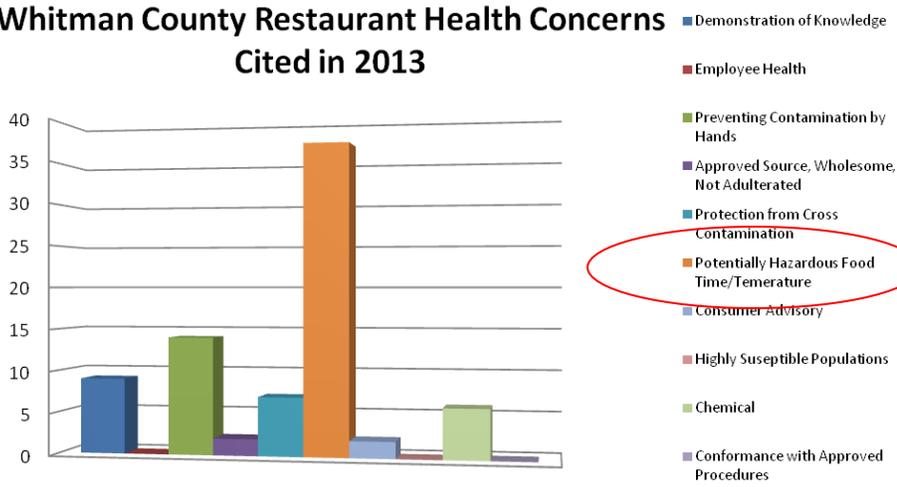
2012 Food Advisory Committee

The inaugural Food Advisory Committee has continued to meet to discuss federal, state, and local issues that impact food service establishments in Whitman County.

Food Advisory Committee

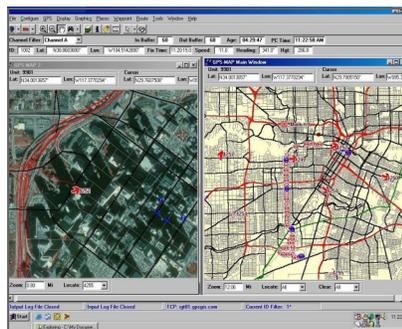
The Whitman County Food Advisory Committee was formed as part of the ongoing Voluntary Standardization process through the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The committee meets quarterly with the Environmental Health staff and discusses food issues in the county with several community stakeholders. By having an open discussion about the potential impacts, the Food Advisory Committee was a key component in the adoption of the new Washington State Retail Food (WAC 246-215).

Whitman County Restaurant Health Concerns Cited in 2013



Solid Waste Program

Historically, the Solid Waste Program in Whitman County has been complaint driven. Many potential hazards properties in the county remained unidentifiable due to their rural nature or difficulty in determining property boundary or addresses. Today, a grant from the Washington State Department of Ecology, has provided the Environmental Health Department with the tools necessary to address these limitations. By working closely with the Whitman County Public Works Department and the Landfill Transfer Station staff, the GIS mapping capability has allowed the



BEGINNING IN THE SUMMER OF 2013, WHITMAN COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH BEGAN GIS MAPPING SOLID WASTE ISSUES AND COMPLAINTS.

Environmental Health Department to accurately identify and track key features of the Whitman County’s landfill (i.e. closed cells, monitoring wells, wetlands and seasonal creeks, office space, and future expansion areas). Identifying these components allows the Environmental Health Department to monitor potential contamination sources of surrounding soils and groundwater, thereby adding an extra of protection for the residents of Whitman County. The department will soon be incorporating GIS into other programs, including food, onsite sewage, drinking water, and epidemiology.

Onsite Sewage Program

To accurately determine the impact of residential onsite treatment systems of Whitman County and in an effort to continually improve the Onsite Sewage program in Whitman County, the Environmental Health Department has simplified the application process and forms. Building on input from septic service and local residents, the new forms allow the Environmental Health Department collect, locate, and track permitted septic systems in the county. To help with this effort, Whitman County started is building a GIS database to mark all septic systems beginning in 2012. With these updates, homeowners and septic service providers will be able to locate and address concerns earlier, potentially eliminating the need for identifying issues only after the system has completely failed.

THE ONSITE SEWAGE PROGRAM HELPS TO PROTECT PERSONAL INVESTMENTS, DRINKING WATER, THE ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC HEALTH

The documentation effort is the first step in designing and implementing a successful Operations and Maintenance (O&M) program. Septic systems are designed to provide long-term, effective treatment of household waste when operated and maintained properly. However, most systems that fail prematurely are a result of improper maintenance. The O&M program is a State mandated program that educates homeowners about the best methods available to ensure their septic systems are being used and maintained in a way that allows it to operate at its maximum potential while remaining safe for public

health. Homeowners and residents can have a significant impact on the way their septic systems operate and perform. Using more water than the system was designed to handle can lead to a failure. Additionally, the disposal of chemical or excess food wastes (like from a garbage disposal) can destroy the bacteria that a septic system needs to work properly.

While homeowners are able and encouraged to have an active role in the maintenance of their conventional onsite sewage treatment systems, engineered or proprietary systems (i.e. Aerobic Treatment Units and Biofilters) will need an O&M Agreement with a licensed O&M provider. Additional information about the Operations and Maintenance program or contact information and requirements for designers is available from the Whitman County Environmental Health Department.



Updated Onsite Sewage applications and forms have made applying for an onsite sewage permit in Whitman County easier than ever.

Signs of a Failed System:

- Odors, surfacing sewage, wet spots, or lush vegetation growth
- Plumbing or septic tank backups
- Slow draining fixtures
- Gurgling sounds in the plumbing system
- If there is a well and tests show the presence of bacteria or nitrates,
- Lush green grass over the drainfield, even during dry weather

Why should you maintain your septic system?

- To protect public health from the potential of raw sewage
- To protect our drinking water
- To protect your investment; Your OSS is a critical part of your home

Water Systems/Group B Implementation



New drinking water regulations have the potential to impact small water systems

Whitman County Environmental Health is preparing for the

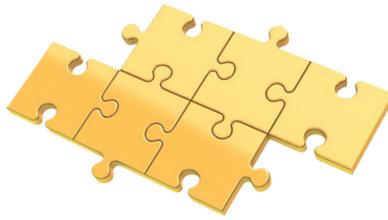
2014 implementation of new regulations that could impact small water system operators. Historically, these water systems have been regulated by the Washington State Department of Health. However, the recently approved regulations places this responsibility with local health departments.

Whitman County Environmental Health believes this change

will be a positive one. The new regulations give the local health department an increase in flexibility in approving small water systems. Guidance and requirements for treatment will now be made locally, reflecting the water quality of the county. All records for the local systems will now be retained and managed with their local health department. Additionally, a local contact will provide the subject matter experts that can assist in timely manner. Whitman County Environmental Health staff are proud to serve on the Washington State Department of Health Drinking Water Advisory Group and offer professional opinions and support for water systems within Whitman County.

Partnerships

Realistically, the amount of environmental health services needed by all residents of Whitman County cannot be met by the Whitman County Environmental Health Department. In an effort to increase productivity and limit duplicating services, the Environmental Health Department and staff work closely with other county departments (i.e. Public Works, Planning, Building Department, Landfill, Assessor, the Prosecutor, Sheriff, Emergency Management, and the Fair Board). By streamlining processes, residents of Whitman County can be assured they are receiving the attention they de-



Environmental Health partners help meet the needs of residents

serve in the most time-efficient manner. Additionally the Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response (PHEPR) Program has been in key in developing and maintaining partnerships within Whitman County.

Work within the PHEPR program helped foster relationships with area hospitals and health clinics, law enforcement, fire and EMS services, and local political jurisdictions. By working with community-based partners, the Environmental Health Department is able to provide an additional layer of services and resources to the residents of Whitman County.

“PARTNERS ARE AN ESSENTIAL PIECE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH PUZZLE”

WSU Environmental Health and Safety

The greatest partnership of the Whitman County Environmental Health Department is with the Washington State University Environmental Health & Safety Department (EH&S). The department is a non-academic service department dedicated to promoting and supporting the university's efforts to protect human health, safety and the environment on Washington State University property. As a large percentage of Whitman County residents are directly associated with the university (i.e. faculty, students, staff),

the department is able to concentrate resources in those areas. Whether acting as a team member, an un-biased third-party, a supervisor, or the regulating authority, the partnership has worked successfully in many of the foundation environmental health services (Communicable Disease Prevention, Drinking Water, Food Safety, Pest Control, Onsite Sewage, and Swimming Pools or Spas). The department provides inspections services, as well as educational outreach in public health and industrial safety.



The Washington State University Environmental Health and Safety Department (EH&S) provides consultation and services in the areas of public health, air and water quality, worker health and safety, biohazards, and chemical waste disposal and cleanup.

WSU Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life

Beginning in 2006, Whitman County Environmental Health began a partnership with the Washington State University Office of Sorority and Fraternity Life. With a goal of providing a healthy living environment for new and returning WSU students to live off campus, the program set out to identify those issues that could potentially lead to illness as a result of being

in a communal living environment. In 2011, Environmental Health staff sat down with stakeholders to develop an inspection program to accurately reflect the living arrangements. Since the work on the revisions there has been more communication within the Greek Life community resulting in healthier living environments and active participation from the community in addressing their unique health concerns.

Year	Average Number of House Violations
2011	4.8
2012	2.3
2013	2.0

Summary of health violations identified during Fraternity and Sorority House inspections.

Whitman County Environmental Health

Whitman County Environmental Health-Colfax Office
N. 310 Main Street
Public Service Building
Colfax, WA 99111

PHONE: 509-397-6280
FAX: 509-397-6239

Whitman County Environmental Health Pullman Office
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Pullman, WA 99163

PHONE: 509-332-6752
FAX: 509-334-4517

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Working For You.

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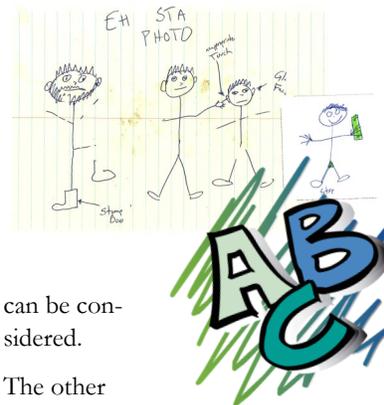
The primary function of Whitman County Environmental Health continues to be education in order to promote, maintain, and improve the health status of residents and the environment in Whitman County.

The Environmental Health Department is a division of Whitman County Public Health, and works closely with doctors, nurses, hospitals and laboratories to monitor and ensure all aspects of public health. The Environmental Health Department is proud of its commitment to both the community and environment, and continuously works to maintain these relationships .



A Focus on Education and Community

Education. It has been, and remains, the key concept in all Environmental Health programs in Whitman County. Many of the educational outreach campaigns are built of the principles of the proverb: ***Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day; show him how to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime.*** Providing information to homeowners, business owners and employees, Environmental Health partners, and residents of Whitman County empowers them to make decisions that can have positive impacts on their personal health as well as the environment around them. As Environmental Health staff cannot be everywhere at all times, this ensures that healthy decisions are made and healthy alternatives



can be considered.

The other part of this philosophy was born out of necessity. With low pay rates and uncertain grant funding, the Environmental Health Department has had difficulty in recruiting qualified staff and limitations in retaining the top

candidates. Whitman County will often be the training grounds to develop future environmental health leaders in Washington State.

Identifying the education materials needed in Whitman County is easy; we ask. Whether it is clarifying a permitting process, working with partners, or designing a campaign to address a specific health concern, the Environmental Health staff works with the community to simplify, explain, and educate on the issues they want. As a result of engaging the community, we've assisted in creating targeted educational materials for the residents of Whitman County. Whitman County Environmental Health is a key and essential component of public health.