**Environmental Issues Committee**
**Minutes**
**June 20, 2002**
**2-4 pm**
**MD Department of the Environment**

The purpose of this meeting was to review previous discussions and develop a list of recommendations regarding the identification of susceptible populations, data needs for evaluating environmental exposures to carcinogens, and approaches for developing policies and programs to control these exposures.

Discussion on ways to identify susceptible populations within Maryland communities led to the following approaches:

- Make better use of Maryland Cancer Registry.
  a) The MCR needs to be more accessible to researchers. Currently there are barriers to using information in the database due to confidentiality issues. Public use data sets should be made available that protect confidential information but allow access to the data.
  b) Environmental issues are not currently considered by the Surveillance Committee in their annual review of the registry, but should be on their agenda.
  c) Currently, information on race in the MCR is not complete because it is not indicated on lab reports and often is listed incorrectly on hospital admissions and death certificates because people filling out the forms often guess. We need better collection of this information.
  d) MCR and census data should be combined to examine the impact of socio-economic factors on cancer incidence.

- Identify communities with the highest exposures to environmental chemicals and develop mechanisms by which the state can decrease and control these exposures.
  To accomplish this, there needs to be better coordination between agencies. For example, decisions on city zoning should be influenced by information on chemical use and release data from local industries. Both point source and non-point sources should be considered. For example, residential areas shouldn't be located along major roadways. Coordination with other states is also needed, particularly for air toxics. Maryland should devise a way of interacting with neighboring states to encourage them to reduce air emissions that influence the health of Maryland populations.

- Conduct cumulative impact assessment modeling.
  To accomplish this, Maryland needs to collect good data on exposure for local areas. Calculated indices of cumulative cancer risk could then be used for decision-making regarding zoning and permitting.

- Develop more comprehensive plans for collection of exposure data.
  This includes better identification and characterization of hazardous waste sites. Unknown sites can be identified based on review of historical records on land use and spill reports. Maryland is weak in this area compared to some other states (e.g.

Pennsylvania and New Jersey). These states could be used as a model for developing a better plan for Maryland. Perhaps a recommendation could be made that past land use assessment should be required on each redevelopment site and that the information has to be reported so that it becomes available to the public.

- Develop better means of identifying at-risk populations

  Many different characteristics can place groups of people at greater risk of health problems, including cancers. Geography plays an important, well-known role, as a person's place of residence can increase his/her exposure to environmental chemicals. Baltimore City, for example, has the highest cancer rate in Maryland. Exposure to radon is also regional, due to geological differences around the state. Other factors can also play a role, however. People with limited education and recent immigrants for whom English is a second language often work in the more hazardous jobs and do not understand the protective measures they should be taking.