

CCDEH Executive Director Report September 2014

Whether people realize it or not, environmental health programs impact the lives of every Californian every hour of every day. Our work protects and enhances the health and quality of life by reducing exposure to toxics, ensuring food safety, combating litter and blight, protecting water quality and so much more.

On many fronts, 2014 has been a remarkably active year for environmental health in its broadest interpretation. Dialogues over health care, social equity, our carbon-based economy and living in an arid state are spreading and intensifying. “Fracktivists” continue to protest hydraulic fracking and chemical oil and gas well stimulation. Our residents are demanding living wages and livable communities, free from excessive environmental stressors. The stark realization of climate change impacts fuel a drive to alternative renewable energy. The “foodie” movement has become mainstream and its health, environmental, social and economic benefits are being much more widely recognized. The driest year in 500 seasons has focused urgent attention on where we get and how we use our precious water resources.

Our work is sometimes in the epicenter, sometimes on the periphery of these discussions, but environmental health protection is always the goal.

Before the 120 Legislators wrapped up the 2013/2014 session they had sent a \$7.1 billion water bond to the ballot and several other important environmental bills to the Governor for his signature. If enacted, SB 270 will finally put in place a state-wide plastic grocery bag ban; SB 1168 and AB 1739 will establish California’s first statewide groundwater management requirements; AB 1826 and AB 1594 will expand organic material recycling; AB 2282 will require dual plumbing to be installed, where feasible, in new buildings; SB 835 will codify in California the new FDA guidelines on use of antimicrobial drugs in food animals; and SB 1019 will require labeling for products that contain carcinogenic flame retardants. In June the approved budget had allocated \$850 million to programs and projects across State government to combat GHG emissions.

2014 has been a good year for us in the Legislature. Though CAEHA, CCDEH sponsored two measures, tracked 98 bills since early March and was fully engaged in supporting, opposing and/or amending a record number of 26 bills. As usual, food safety and water dominated the field, but we were active in all five policy areas. Following custom, our policy committees analyzed about 120 bills early in the session, but as the pace stepped up, I relied heavily of the Executive Committee, policy committee chairs and TACs to provide the expert input needed to formulate our positions and recommend language to improve the legislation. The most recent full legislative report indicating which bills passed the Legislature and CCDEH’s positions has been posted on the CCDEH. At the time of writing this report, the Governor had only signed a handful of our priority bills.

Our sponsored bills were AB 1990 (Gordon) and SB 1261 (Jackson). AB 1990 follows up on our bill from 2013 which established a “default” approved source process for Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs). This measure deems urban or community production of fruit and vegetables to be from an approved source if certain Best Management Practices (BMPs) are followed. The measure maintains local enforcement authority for recalls and complaints as well as for land use and zoning. SB 1261 also represents the second phase of a longer effort by the CUPA Forum Board and the regulated community to clarify and simplify requirements under H&S Code Chapter 6.95 – the business plan law. It too has been a collaborative effort that has demonstrated that compliance is enhanced when requirements are clear and fair!

We were closely involved in six other retail food bills ranging from certified farmers markets (AB 1871 and AB 2539) to dogs in restaurant patios (AB 1965) and prepackaged foods (AB 1235). In all of these bills, the amendments that we sought were adopted and we have been able to support all but one of these bills that have been sent to the Governor. AB 2130 by Dr. Pan, Chair of the Assembly Health Committee, repealed the glove requirements for ready-to-eat foods that had only just been mandated by AB 1252, the CRFSC 2013 CalCode legislation. After extensive internal debate and consultation with CRFSC, CCDEH agreed to request that the bare-hand contact provisions be reformed, not completely repealed. However, when it became clear that the Legislature wanted to reverse itself on this provision, CCDEH did not actively oppose the bill.

Other notable legislation this year which CCDEH engaged in and ultimately supported includes AB 333 (Wieckowski) on medical waste management; SB 445 (Hill) extending funding for the UST clean-up program; AB 2748 (ES&TM Committee) eliminating duplicative regulation of paint take-back; SB 1395 (Block) providing a pathway to use rapid indicator test for beach water quality monitoring. In the case of SB 443 (Walters) third time was *not* a charm, and despite CCDEH's efforts, we have still been unable to pass clarifying legislation on organized camp oversight.

In representing our 62 local environmental health department members, CCDEH and CAEHA have always ensured that our positions are not directly at odds with CSAC and the health officers and/or health administrators. The transfer of the Drinking Water Program from CDPH to SWRCB and a legislative proposal (SB 1262) to establish a local medical marijuana regulatory program were two examples of where our interests did not initially align with CSAC or HOAC. It is clear that continued communication by all parties is essential for all interests to be properly represented. CCDEH should continue to participate in the CCLHO-EH Committee and other local government forums that deal with public environmental health issues, especially considering that 29 of the 72 bills that HOAC tracked this year were identified as environmental health measures.

In contrast to our legislative involvement, the regulatory front was uncharacteristically quiet this year. We did not work on any major regulations, although there is an endless process of creating or revising rules and guidelines for local implementation of statewide programs from the Unified Program under CalEPA, LEA program under CalRecycle,

AB 885 and Local Oversight Program under SWRCB or medical waste, pool and others under CDPH. CCDEH's policy committees and their technical advisory committees play an important role in reviewing and commenting on agency rulemaking. Details on this engagement can be found in the individual policy committee reports.

As we reflect back on another successful year and look forward to our 60th anniversary, we must acknowledge the leadership and commitment of our Executive Committee, our policy committee chairs and our regional committee chairs. Our reputation as a professional and dedicated body of public servants has been earned over many years through the demonstration of our expertise and integrity.

As I complete my 20th year with CCDEH I must urge all of the Directors to embrace the global, regional and local opportunities that our positions offer us. As Becky Ng takes over the helm from Curt Batson she and her Executive Committee will need help in navigating some new – perhaps even turbulent - waters. We will have to work hard to retain excellence in many core programs and work even harder to improve our performance in others. Our biggest test will be embarking on the new journeys in water stewardship, food security and sustainability, pollution prevention, and enhancing environmental equity for all of our residents.

Fortunately there is no doubt that we are up to the challenge.