



Paper #159676

Results of semi-subsistence and recreational angler focus groups: Reports of combined sewer overflows, chemical releases and associated water-related illnesses in the Three Rivers area of Pittsburgh

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The initial study objective employed community based participatory research techniques to understand the quantities and types of fish eaten by semi-subsistence fishers and recreational anglers in the Three Rivers Area (TRA) of Pittsburgh for risk assessment and hazard communication purposes related to heavy metal ingestion. We used accepted qualitative methods to recruit, collect and analyze data with three distinct focus groups. Recruitment for the first two focus groups utilized partner organizations and observation of fishers at popular fishing sites on the Monongahela, Allegheny and Ohio Rivers. The initial group were anglers who fished the TRA of Pittsburgh. The second group were anglers who primarily fish the lakes and streams of Southwestern Pennsylvania. The third group were those who consume only market fish. Each session was transcribed on site for verbal and non verbal comments and tape recorded. Each tape was transcribed and analyzed according to primary proposal objectives. An iterative process with three different researchers was employed for consistency of interpretation and integrity of response domains and sub-domains. This analysis revealed unexpected information on the locations, contents and scale of combined sewage overflows into the TRA and reports of illnesses after recreational water contact. We conclude that anglers are frequent observers of

area waterways, making them excellent river inspectors; they could assist regulators and regional policymakers in efforts to comply with the Clean Water Act. Additionally the focus group method shows merit in reporting, often under-reported, gastrointestinal illnesses associated with recreational river water contact.

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Program Selection: Environment

Topic: Clean Air and Water (ex: pollution, waterborne disease, water scarcity)

Keywords: Water, Environmental Health

Learning Objectives:

- List the steps for creation and facilitation of focus groups addressing environmental issues in relationship to a community based participatory research study.
- Articulate how community based participatory research unites both qualitative and quantitative environmental research techniques to achieve program goals
- Apply focus group data to the existing environmental research initiative as well as developing new initiatives from new information unrelated to existing study goals-such as using anglers to report on river conditions as part of a regional program to comply with the Clean Water Act and install a regional approach to water management.
- Show how qualitative focus group methods can help facilitate reporting of (generally under-reported) water-borne illnesses.