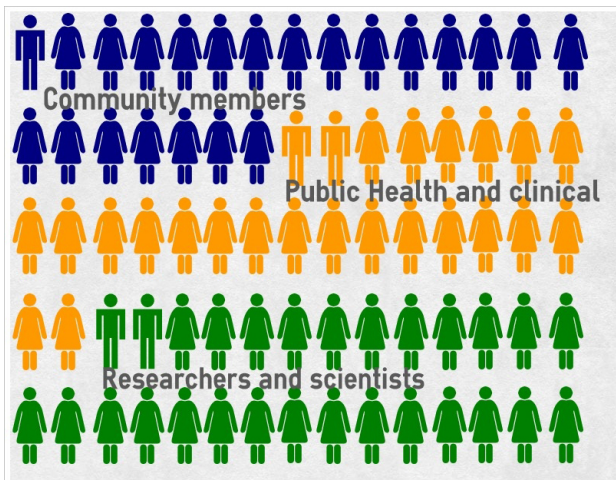


# Improving Reproductive Environmental Health Through EPA Policy

The **Reach the Decision Makers Fellowship** (Reach) trains scientists, community leaders and health care providers to effectively promote science-based health standards and public health policy at the US EPA. Fellows learn about the underlying science linking environmental contaminants to reproductive harm and build their skills to shape environmental health policy at the national level.

- Reach is a year-long, webinar and **experienced based** fellowship;
- Fellows meet in person in Washington DC and **learn** about the USEPA;
- Fellows work in teams of 4-6 to **research and develop** their project. Later, they return to the USEPA and **promote** their policy goal to decision makers;
- Reach creates a **“ripple effect”**- fellows bring their insight and guidance about the USEPA and science policy back to their communities.



**75** Reach graduates over 3 years;

**17** teams whose projects include: pesticide exposure in agricultural communities and communities in the arctic, pregnant women and the EPA risk assessment processes, superfund site clean-up, and near-road monitoring of particulate matter.

## The Impact of Reach: In their own words

- **Bring new voices to USEPA:** *“I think that **the EPA really got a lot** out of having [us bring] different [EPA] offices together”*
- **Create strong networks:** *“We became long distance friends and knew we could count on each other. We know each others interests and try to forward information to each other”*
- **Expand knowledge:** *“I learned how **complex and critical the scientific evidence is** and yet, how difficult it is to evaluate it in the public health epidemiological sense... **I learned about how policy is made**, I learned how politics affects [policy] so much, I learned how to more effectively communicate what I’m concerned about”*
- **Generate change:** *“I am definitely, definitely **inspired** to continue working and keep in contact with the EPA about our project”*



Fellows come from all over the US

## **Reach Impacts EPA Policy and Community Health- *Reach fellows achieve change to PM2.5 standard***

A Reach team in the first cohort took on the EPA rule-making on particulate matter from air pollution; They identified the need for increasing air monitoring near roadways to capture the impacts that mobile pollution can have on nearby communities- often low-income or communities of color (see: <http://bit.ly/psrpm25>).

Eighteen months later a federal court mandated that the EPA adopt a new National Ambient Air Quality Standard rule on particulate matter—and the EPA included the “ask” of the Reach team—the proposed rule will require that particulate monitors be placed near roadways with heavy traffic in large

cities and will require moving over 52 existing monitors to meet the near road requirement.

Now, a 2012 team will see the rule through-slated to be finalized in December 2012. Fellows from years one and three have already testified during the public comment periods in Philadelphia and California. The current team will advocate for early adoption of the rule so data can be collected earlier and protect communities faster. This is an example of how a committed team of community leaders, scientists and health care providers can make meaningful changes to public policy that ultimately will result in nationwide improvements to health.

### **Fellows’ Accomplishments:**

**Advising the USEPA on health policy-** Robin Johnson, MD, MPH, (Year 1) is now on the Children’s Health Advisory Committee (CHPAC), a diverse advisory panel to the EPA that provides guidance on regulations, research, and communication issues relevant to children’s environmental health. Dr. Johnson was invited because of her involvement in Reach.

**Developing fellows’ scientific capacity** - Katsi Cook Program Director of Running Strong for American Indian Youth, (Year 2) was co-author on a paper on food adulteration. Her involvement as a co-author was based on her experience and the research she did on the issue through Reach.

**Increasing fellows’ capacity in clinical policy-** Diana Ramos MD, MPH, Director of Reproductive Health at LA County Public Health Department, (Year 2) wrote an American Medical Association (AMA) resolution on reproductive environmental health that was accepted by the House of Delegates.

### **Increasing Capacity Through Dissemination:**

2011 American Public Health Association (APHA) Conference- Marj Plumb presented “Reach the Decision Makers: A program to translate science into public policy that can protect reproductive health.”

2011 American College of Nurse-Midwives Annual Meeting- Katie Huffling presented on her teams Reach project- “Reach the Decision Makers: Innovative strategies to effect policy change,”

2012 APHA- this year, in a session on policy and public health, 3 of the 4 speakers are from Reach the Decision Makers: APHA session (4298.0): Protecting reproductive and Child health: the critical role of regulation.

1. Katie Huffling, RN, MS, CNM, Katsi Cook, Carol Kwiatkowski, PhD, Alfred May, MPH and Pamela K. Miller, MEnand team 1 (Year 2) **Protecting reproductive health through comprehensive pesticide review: Science guiding public policy**
2. Rebecca Nachman, MPH, Azita Cuevas, MS, MPH, Jennifer Canvasser, MSW, Bakeyah Nelson, PhD and Pamela Schwingl, PhD (Year 2) **Advocating for reproductive health protection through chemical regulation under the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA)**
3. Marj Plumb, DrPH, Jessica Trowbridge, MPH, Annemarie Charlesworth, MA, Claire Brindis, DrPH and Tracey J. Woodruff, PhD, MPH **Protecting reproductive health through policy advocacy training**