Public Participation Summary

DTSC’s Public Participation program within the Office of Communications was created to ensure the public is engaged and involved early in DTSC’s cleanup and permitting processes and its input is fully considered in decisions.

Public participation has long been a cornerstone of DTSC’s program. Statute and policy mandate a community involvement program that creates a dialog with the public when DTSC oversees a cleanup, reviews a permit application, or begins the rule making process. Moreover, DTSC recognizes that meaningful public involvement ultimately results in better environmental risk management decisions.

DTSC’s Strategic Plan outlines several key objectives for the Public Participation program including:

1. Building public confidence in the department’s decisions by meaningful public engagement.
2. Ensuring communities know of and have opportunities to participate and engage DTSC’s decision-makers early.
3. Tailoring outreach to a community’s needs.

The role of the Public Participation program is to ensure that communities’ communication needs are met, and to advise project managers and technical staff interacting with the public. This process is well-defined in law and policy but varies in practice depending on the type of action being taken, the underlying authority used for DTSC action, and the community’s communication needs.

DTSC’s Public Participation program has developed widely used guidance documents that outline program goals, roles and responsibilities, legal mandates, processes for decisions, and optional steps. These documents contain checklists and serve as a basis for training staff. They can be found at: www.dtsc.ca.gov/LawsRegsPolicies/Policies/PPP/PublicParticipationManual.cfm

The manual also contains graphics that illustrate the relationship between technical milestones and public participation requirements.
The process for community engagement includes developing a community assessment, creating factsheets or informational materials, posting information on the DTSC website or Envirostor, holding
formal and informal meetings, issuing public notices for meetings, and receiving and responding to public comments.

Depending on a community’s communication needs, DTSC may hold additional meetings and briefings, develop additional factsheets, hold extended comment periods, and establish advisory groups.

The project manager plays a critical role in community outreach. Functioning as the team leader, the project manager requests support from within the department as well as managing the project budget and DTSC outreach staff. The project manager requests support from programs like Public Participation, develops a project schedule, manages the project budget, and ensures deadlines are met. In addition, the project manager is often the key individual communicating with the public.

Public participation begins with an assessment of community interest, issues, concerns, and key contacts. These assessments are critical to understanding the community and building an outreach program that is tailored to the public’s communications needs. In this way, community input directly impacts the allocation of resources to a project.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION STAFFING AND BUDGET
The Program consists of 22 positions. Each position is included within DTSC’s overall budget, amounting to about $1.5 million in personnel costs during the current fiscal year. In addition, the Program is allocated $46,000 for public notices, $8,500 for court reporting, $50,000 for a technical advisor on the Exide project, and $50,000 for translation services.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION METRICS
Metrics were developed for the program during the early 2000’s. These include:

1. Public Meetings.
4. Program “reach.”

Recently, social media metrics were added. The charts below illustrate these metrics.
Chart 4

Plans, Assessments, Surveys
Includes Public Participation Plans created, Community Assessments & Profiles developed, Community Surveys taken

Last Four Fiscal Years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>88</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FY 14/15 Qtr 1: 15/16 YTD
Chart 6

Twitter Followers

Facebook Likes
IMPROVING THE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROGRAM

In late 2013, DTSC began an internal effort to identify the need to modernize and update its public participation efforts. It contracted with CPS HR Consulting, a non-profit corporation established under the California Joint Powers Authority that provides human resources consulting services to government and non-profit clients, in early 2014 to perform a review of the program and identify areas needing process improvements. The review identified several key areas in need of change including:

1. Mailing lists.
2. Project scoping/budgeting.
4. Internal communications.
5. Training.

It also underscored the need for DTSC to develop a process for earlier public involvement in the technical processes within the permitting and cleanup programs.

In June 2014, the program developed a work plan as part of DTSC’s “Fixing the Foundation” effort. This work plan identified the need to establish an engagement strategy for impacted communities that aligns with program initiatives and community needs, updates guidance documents, and better integrates public participation into technical programs.

At approximately the same time, a program internal review concluded that DTSC needed to put effort into building community trust, become more responsive to communities, create more understandable outreach documents, improve internal communications, and ensure earlier public involvement in technical processes.

In the fall of 2014, DTSC met with key stakeholders to identify areas for improvement. This effort identified the following issues:

1. Lack of trust.
2. Need to change the basic model of community involvement.
3. Community must set the agenda.
4. Better understanding by DTSC of a community.
5. Need for DTSC to partner with communities.
6. Use facilitative dialogues.
8. Use of social media.
9. Bringing all agencies together to address environmental issues.
10. Ineffectiveness of public outreach to create better technical decisions.
11. Need for DTSC to listen.
12. Need for recognition of cumulative impacts from multiple sites.
13. Higher level of community involvement.
14. Institutional barriers within DTSC.
15. The perception that DTSC does not follow the law.
16. Better use of advisory groups.
17. The need for changes in statute.

Based upon all the information gathered, DTSC designed a public participation modernization effort. It contracted with UC Davis to formally reach out with stakeholders and make recommendations for change. The recommendations will enhance outreach tools, processes, methods, and guidance, and will be submitted to DTSC later this month.

UC Davis will then conduct focus groups with stakeholders to identify specific steps to enhance community outreach. The focus groups will provide input on prioritizing next steps, identifying pilot projects, creating training, identifying best practices, and recommending metrics. After the focus groups are complete, DTSC will implement the recommendations and then measure and report on progress.

The modernization effort is designed to create an outreach program that engages the public in a meaningful and useful way. Its four goals are:

1. Understanding Community Needs and Developing an Effective Outreach Plan:
   a. Ensure early outreach to impacted communities.
   b. Ensure public participation plans are developed and implemented before the process of developing preferred alternatives.
2. Ensuring early and continuous public involvement:
   a. Ensure communities have access to relevant information upon which decisions will be made.
   b. Implement clear and transparent policies for ongoing communications throughout the course of a project.
3. Utilize a community-tailored approach to communicating with stakeholders:
4. Continue and enhance support for community reporting platforms.
   a. Use social media and electronic platforms where they can be effective.
   b. Use community networks and groups to enhance understanding of process and technical issues as well as to enhance participation.

Many changes are already under way. These include:

1. Changes to DTSC’s web site:
   a. Individual sites for key projects.
b. All project documents posted online.
2. Use of e-mail lists for quick notifications.
3. Use of Independent Technical Advisors.
5. Initiation of a mailing list pilot project.
6. Training in risk communication and best practices:
   a. Staff training:
      i. Already given:
         1. Risk communication.
         2. Enviroscreen.
         3. Permitting.
         4. CEQA.
         5. Process improvement.
         6. Facilitation.
         7. Team Building.
      ii. Planned Training:
          1. Outreach Strategies for High Profile Projects.
          2. Social Media.
          3. EJ Tools and Techniques.
          5. Input and Tips from Key Stakeholders.
   b. Training for Technical Programs:
      i. Risk Communication.
      ii. Writing for Non-Technical Audiences.
      iii. Public Participation 101/Advanced.
   7. Use of community partnerships/networking.
   8. Use of Enviroscreen to identify impacted areas and tailor outreach.

In addition to the modernization project and steps already taken to enhance public participation, DTSC is exploring ways to measure the effectiveness of its communication strategies. As these metrics are developed, the Department plans to track and report on its performance.