



# Collaborative on Health and the Environment

## February 2016



### Upcoming Partnership Events

CHE Partnership call: [Wireless Technology and Public Health: Health and Environmental Hazards in a Wireless World](#)



Tues, Feb 16  
*Hosted by the CHE EMF Working Group*

CHE Partnership call:  
[Toxic Chemicals in Our](#)



### Lead, Methane and Monetizing Natural Capital

*Elise Miller, EdM  
Director*

Widespread water contamination from lead in Flint, Michigan, and the huge methane leak in Aliso Canyon, California, have dominated media headlines in recent weeks. The oft-repeated response given to questions of why these situations weren't addressed earlier has been: It would have been too costly. With this mindset,

[Toxic Chemicals in Our Homes: Sources, Health Effects, and How You Can Support Safer Chemicals Policy](#)

Wed, Feb 24

*Hosted by the CHE Alaska Working Group*

CHE Partnership call: [Lead's](#)

[Long Shadow: What the Story of Flint, MI](#)

[Means for All of Us](#)

Tues, Mar 8

CHE Partnership call: [Little Things Matter: Children's Health and the Impact of Low-level Exposures to Toxins on the Developing Brain](#)

Wed, Mar 9

*Hosted by the CHE Alaska Working Group*



the government agencies and others responsible did not do anything, and even covered up how bad the situations were, until major health crises erupted. Of course these events are not anomalies. Sadly this is true for thousands of communities around the US and elsewhere because there is little economic incentive to invest in prevention-oriented actions.

What if protecting natural capital (water, air, soil, etc.), however, were included in profit/loss assessments so that ensuring access to healthy water, for example, was seen as a positive investment in the future, rather than simply as a cost? How to do this has been a complicated question economists have wrestled with for years. On Monday, in a paper published in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* [see [What's nature's worth: study helps put a price on groundwater and other natural capital](#) and [Economists keep saying we should put a price on nature. now they've finally done it](#)], a team of economists led by the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies describe a formula they have at last developed to do just that.

## Little Things Matter

Visit the [CHE Partnership call archives](#) and [CHE Working Group call archives](#) to listen to MP3 recordings of past calls.

### A Story of Health Wins CDC Communications Award

The National Center for Environmental Health (NCEH) and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) have honored

[A Story of Health](#) multimedia eBook and continuing education course with an "Excellence in Communications" award.



NCEH and ATSDR are agencies of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The award was given at the annual NCEH/ATSDR

Honor Awards on February 2



Usually investments in conservation (or what might be considered health-protective) practices are only tallied as "expenditures." By contrast, this new asset valuation approach, which includes measurements of ecosystem services combined with models of human behavior, redefines what have been considered "costs" as "investments." Further, this paper demonstrates that investments in maintaining clean groundwater, healthy forests, and other natural assets can in fact be compared directly with more traditional investments, such as in improving transportation infrastructures.

The economists used the High Plains Aquifer of western Kansas as a case study. Applying their new formula, they found that the value of the groundwater from this aquifer (primarily used for agricultural purposes) decreased approximately \$110 million annually. Because the loss of this natural asset, however, was not quantified in this way and was offset with

Honor Awards on February 3, 2016, to *A Story of Health* Team for excellence in communication for the development of a medical education product that highlights the importance of environmental health.

Read the full story on [CHE's blog](#).

### Resources

CHE explores the issue of complexity on our new webpage: [Ecologic Models of Health and Disease](#)

[CHE's blog](#) promotes dialogue on issues at the intersection of human health and environment.

[CHE's searchable calendar](#) of events related to environmental health.

[CHE's podcast](#) of teleconference call recordings.

[CHE's news feed](#) of news

increases in other non-natural capital assets, those reviewing the budget weren't aware how much the aquifer was being drained. In other words, the traditional profit/loss calculations didn't make clear that the overall wealth (as opposed to simply income) in that region was declining dramatically.

Assuming this new formula is applicable in measuring natural capital in many other situations nationally and globally, as these economists say it is, then government agencies and business will have a critical new tool for determining whether activities are truly sustainable. If policymakers start incorporating this approach, then it is less likely that they'll be able to dismiss taking preventive action based solely on cost. And that bodes well for the health of families of Flint and Aliso Canyon and all of us in the US and around the world now and in the future.



P.S. Join CHE's partnership call on [Tuesday March 8, 2016](#), which will feature two of the remarkable people who helped bring the dire situation in Flint to national attention: Dr. Mona Hanna-

articles, studies, reports, calls for proposals, job openings and other announcements. Relevant items are sent to CHE's listservs several times each week, or visitors can subscribe via RSS.

Attisha, a pediatrician in Michigan, and Dr. Marc Edwards, a nationally renowned expert on municipal water quality and an engineering professor at Virginia Tech. Additionally, Dr. Bruce Lanphear, a professor at Simon Fraser University and expert on the health impacts of lead exposure on children, and Tracy Swinburn, MSc, will speak to the economic impacts of lead exposure.

## Working Groups and Initiatives

Visit the webpages of CHE's groups for **monthly highlights** featuring the the latest environmental health news, research, and announcements important to each topic:

### Topic-based Working Groups

[Asthma](#)

[Autism](#)

[Breast Cancer](#)

[Cancer](#)

[Children's Health](#)

[Climate Change](#)

[Cumulative Impacts](#)

[Database](#)

[Diabetes/Obesity](#)

[Electromagnetic Fields \(EMF\)](#)

[Fertility/Reproductive Health](#)

[Healthy Aging](#)

[Integrative Health](#)

[Learning and Developmental Disabilities](#)

[Mental Health](#)

[Pet](#)

[Neurodegenerative Disease](#)

[Science](#)

### State-based and International Groups

[Alaska](#)

[Oregon](#)

[Washington](#)

[Europe/HEAL](#)