



Udall Center for Studies in Public Policy

Established in 1987, the Udall Center for Studies in Public Policy at the University of Arizona in Tucson specializes in several important program areas relating to the environment and public health, including environmental conflict resolution, environmental policy in the Southwest, the U.S.–Mexican border environment, and American Indian policy. To promote its mission in these areas, the Udall Center maintains a Web site at <http://udallcenter.arizona.edu/> that informs the public about its policy-related research and outreach activities.

The Publications link on each program area page leads the visitor to numerous citations for Udall Center working papers, scholarly articles (including some that have appeared in *EHP*), reports, issue papers, and other publications. A click on Related Links gives access to more than 300 environmental organizations in the Southwest. The Udall Center Library Online link allows the visitor to search the center's library collection, which houses more than 4,000 books, reports, and periodicals related to its mission.

Since the spring of 1996, the Udall Center has undertaken several activities that have furthered its objective of establishing a national program in environmental conflict resolution. These activities, described on the Environmental Conflict Resolution page, include the funding of interdisciplinary research projects at the University of Arizona, designing and implementing two simulated conflict exercises, and the development of a database of graduate programs in environmental conflict resolution. Projects include the Upper San Pedro River Initiative, which focuses on water resource management in the river basin, and the Arizona Common Ground Roundtable, a statewide policy dialogue among ranchers, environmentalists, government officials, and others.

The Environmental Policy in the Southwest page includes information about projects and events pertaining to climate change, environmental health, and water policy.

According to the U.S.–Mexico Border Environment page, the center has, during the past decade, "established a presence as a neutral, respected observer and commentator on border environmental policy." As the page shows, the center's research agenda in this area has been full and has included studies of transboundary urban water management and the evolution and functioning of environmental institutions such as the Border Environment Cooperation Commission and the North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation, created to address issues related to trade and the environment.

The American Indian Policy page reveals that the center spends much time analyzing and researching Indian health and environmental and natural resource issues. The program emphasizes providing tribal, state, and federal policy makers with education and policy analysis in areas including the tribal management of natural resources and environmental issues.

Environmental health specialists can keep up with the work of the Udall Center by periodically checking out the Newsletter: *Update* link. Although irregularly published, the Udall Center *Update* contains a wealth of information about events and activities at the center and the acquisitions by the center library. —Ron Chepesiuk

Baking the Bugs Out

University of South Florida scientists sampled 19 store-purchased wheat flours, processed wheat mixes, and corn meals, and found that the cockroach allergen Bla g2 is prevalent in these products and could cause episodes of baker's asthma. The scientists say exposure to the allergen could also possibly result in sensitization to it. Baker's asthma, a common occupational disease that is also one of the oldest, is also known to be brought on by exposure to flour beetle allergens.

The study, presented last March at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology, determined that heating the baking products for 30 minutes at 350°F (standard baking temperature and time) greatly reduces the allergen levels. They also stated that the products are most likely not contaminated at the grocery store, as allergen levels in all of the samples, which were purchased from four different retailers, were comparable.

Tobacco Dangers Start on the Farm

A study in the March 2000 issue of the *American Journal of Industrial Medicine* finds that commercialization and consolidation of tobacco farms may be causing a rise in green tobacco sickness, a form of acute nicotine poisoning that occurs after brushing against wet tobacco leaves. Wake Forest University School of Medicine epidemiologist Sara A. Quandt and colleagues found that 41% of the tobacco workers in the study—mostly Hispanic seasonal and migrant workers—reported symptoms of the illness at least once during the summer.

According to Quandt, Hispanic migrant workers are much shorter than the white and African-American workers who formerly worked family farms. This brings them in closer physical contact with tobacco plants, as does the closer planting of tobacco rows to increase output. "These workers are exposed to the risks of tobacco work for longer, more intensive periods of time than was ever the case for farming families," says Quandt.

The researchers state that green tobacco sickness is an environmental justice issue and call for studies of the economic impact of the disease and of the long-term effects of prolonged dermal exposure to tobacco plants, as well as for development of interventions to prevent or treat the illness.

The Color of Cancer

A genetic test has been developed that helps detect the skin cancer malignant melanoma before the cancer can spread to other areas of the body. The test, presented at the March 2000 meeting of the International Society of Dermatopathology, was developed by staining normal and cancerous skin cells with fluorescent dye to identify a common set of chromosomal abnormalities to which pathologists can refer.

The test allows dermatologists to make more certain diagnoses and, by showing where cancer cells stop and healthy cell growth begins, will help them remove only the cells that are cancerous. A simplified version of the test is expected to be available to pathology laboratories within a year.

