

ANNUAL REPORT 2022

MONTANA HEALTH PROFESSIONALS FOR A HEALTHY CLIMATE



As Montana health professionals, we address the causes and impacts of climate change to protect and enhance the health of all Montanans through education, advocacy and leadership.

Introduction

Dear Supporters and Friends of MTHPHC,

We are pleased to present our annual report for the year 2022, detailing progress towards our mission to address the health impacts of climate change in Montana.

Education was a major focus for us this year. We worked with the Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit (PEHSU) and the CO2 Foundation to begin our new Multifaceted Educational campaign, developing six banners for display in hospital waiting rooms to empower Montanans to speak with their providers about the health impacts of climate change. In addition to launching our educational campaign, we continued our Climate Change and Human Health course in collaboration with the Montana Public Health Training Center and gave nearly fifty climate and health presentations to diverse groups of Montanans. These events helped us to engage with a broad range of stakeholders and build relationships across Montana's communities. We also wrapped up our EPA Air Quality Flag program, which provided flags to 51 organizations across Montana as well as new air monitoring stations.

As always, we were engaged in the legislative process by providing expert testimony at the state and federal level and by supporting petitions and professional letters. We also collaborated with a wide variety of fantastic organizations to build community through events, seminars, and workshops.

Finally, we continued to build our capacity as an organization, contracting a new Program Coordinator and a new graduate researcher. We are expanding our outreach efforts through social media, our website, tabling, and in editorials written by members and published in 26 newspapers across the state. These efforts helped us to reach a wider audience and build support for our work across Montana.

As we look ahead to 2023, we will continue to engage in advocacy, education, and collaboration with stakeholders across the state, and work towards a more resilient and sustainable healthcare system for all Montanans – now **twice as strong**, having doubled our membership this year. Welcome, new members!

Thank you for your continued support of MTHPHC.

Sincerely,

Lori Byron

Executive Director, Montana Health Professionals for a Healthy Climate (MTHPHC)

Highlights

Membership doubled! **680** Montanans strong in 2022

Launched new **Multifaceted Educational program**

240 Montanans took the Climate & Health course

49 presentations to a wide variety of stakeholders

Editorials published in **26** papers across the state

New **Program Coordinator** and **Graduate Researcher**

Board Members

Lori Byron
Robert Byron
Marian Kummer
Beth Schenk
Anita Lowe Taylor

Jennifer Robohm
Rebecca Elderkin
Hayley Blackburn
Allison Young
Nick Silverman
Chelsea Kuiper



Board members at our October 2022 planning retreat.

Climate & Health Education

Multifaceted Education Campaign

WHEN THE SMOKE RISES, SO DO MONTANA COMMUNITIES.

"Wildfires impact all aspects of our health. It is important we work to identify sustainable ways to protect our communities as wildfires continue to get worse."
-Dr. Ethan Walker, Assistant Professor and Air Quality Researcher



Wildfires and Health:

- Wildfires in the West are increasing in season duration, size, frequency and intensity.
- Wildfire smoke has negative health impacts from itchy eyes, fatigue, and difficulty breathing to increased risk of developing severe cardiovascular and respiratory illnesses.
- Children, the elderly, people who are immunocompromised, pregnant, disabled, and socioeconomically disadvantaged are more at risk of wildfire smoke exposure.

Steps to take based on Air Quality Index (AQI)

How to reduce health risks from wildfire smoke:

Indoors	Outdoors
-Stay inside with windows closed. Use a portable air cleaner or a box fan filter if you have one.	-Reduce physical activity during smoky times.
-Seek shelter elsewhere if you do not have a well insulated house or air conditioner and it is too warm to stay inside with the windows closed.	-Check your air quality on airnow.gov or download the air now app.
-Do not add to air pollution. Avoid burning candles, cooking and vacuuming when air quality is bad.	-Use an N95 respirator as protection from smoke.

Our new Multifaceted Education campaign is off to a fantastic start! Thanks to the generosity of the Region VIII Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit (PEHSU), we were delighted to welcome a new graduate student researcher to our team. Taylor Stewart designed a series of **six informative and engaging floor banners** to be displayed in hospital and clinic waiting rooms, where they will empower Montanans to protect themselves from the effects of climate change and spark conversations with their providers. The banners can also be viewed online at our website.

We also began planning our first annual 2023 Climate & Health in the 406 Conference with the help of our newly contracted Program Coordinator through this grant.

Left: One of six banners created by graduate researcher Taylor Stewart. Right: Taylor Stewart.



Presentations

Members gave **49 presentations** to diverse stakeholders, including clinics, hospitals, k-12 schools, universities, and professional organizations. Presentations were tailored to the needs of groups, and included everything from highly technical presentations on the findings of our *Climate Change and Human Health* report to emotionally charged presentations on climate change and mental health. We are energized and honored to see so many brilliant Montanans coming together to tackle climate change.

240 Montanans signed up for the Climate Change and Human Health course produced with Montana Public Health Training Center, arranged by board members Dr. Jen Robohn and Dr. Hayley Blackburn.



Montana
Public Health
Training Center

EPA Air Quality Flag Program



Orange air-quality flag flying above the Red Lodge Fire Department

Members hoist the flags for the Montana Science Center in Bozeman

Our expansion of the EPA Air Quality Flag Program, done in coordination with the Montana Chapter of the Academy of Pediatrics and the Region VIII Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit, wrapped up with **51 new organizations in Montana now flying the EPA Air Quality flags**. These include schools, clinics, nonprofits, a library, and a fire department. 22 purple air quality monitors greatly expanded the amount of air quality monitoring stations in Montana, in addition to the flags, flagpoles, and education provided. Participants reported they've used the flags to guide their outdoor activity, decreasing their exposure to harmful particulates.



Outreach & Advocacy



Tabling

Members tabled at **14 locations and events** this year. For a little sampling, these included: the Gallatin Valley Earth Day, the Dillion Patagonia store, the Butte Energy Fair, MSU and UMT, and the Montana Healthcare Conference.



Tabling allows us to get out information about health and climate, and also allows tablers to make personal connections and exchange climate experiences with Montanans. A large portion of our members first hear about us through tabling!

News

Members were prolific in their writing this year, with ten op-eds published in 26 papers in support of Montana's climate and health needs. Allison Young and Hillery Daily are the Communications Committee co-chairs of our five-person committee, which writes multiple op-eds every year to encourage Montanans to act on climate change and keep themselves healthy.

Testimony and Action

We testified at the following hearings:

- United States House Committee on Ways and Means hearing entitled "Preparing America's Health Care Infrastructure for the Climate Crisis"
- State Department of Labor's series of hearings on adopting the new Energy Efficiency Building Codes
- Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services hearing on preparing for the harmful impacts of climate change on their enrollees
- Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) hearing on protecting indoor and outdoor workers from heat
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) hearings on mercury regulation



Dr. Beth Schenk testifies to the House Ways and Means Committee on hospital sustainability.

We also rallied against NorthWest Energy's proposed methane pipeline beneath the Yellowstone River. Finally, we signed on to **13 letters and petitions** this year, supporting causes both national and local as health professionals. Pipelines and pollution regulation were a major focus this year.



Collaborative Leadership

Webinars, Seminars, and Workshops

- Co-sponsored a free public webinar, “**Climate Extremes in Montana: Stories of Change and Resilience,**” with the Montana League of Women Voters. This webinar explored the extreme weather events that occurred in Montana over the past year, what we can expect in the future, and how people are responding to these changes, with particular reference to Missoula, Helena, Bozeman, and Billings, and on the tribal reservations across the state.
- Partnered with National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAAO), University of Nebraska Medical Center, and the Montana Institute on Ecosystems to put on the **Upper Missouri River Basin Drought and Human Health Workshop**. identified gaps and needs, collaborative opportunities, and ways to integrate the health sector into existing drought activities. Dr. Rob Byron presented on Air Quality and Wildfires. All presentations are available via the University of Nebraska Medical Center website.
- Co-sponsored the seminar “**Climate Psychology, Climate Anxiety, and Breaking the Climate Silence for a Just Future**” by Rebecca Weston, JD, LCSW, part of the UM Department of Society and Conservation Seminar Series.
- Member Dr. Hayley Blackburn designed and co-taught the **first Planetary Health course** at the University of Montana School of Pharmacy, an interprofessional course paired with a collaborative online international learning/virtual exchange program focused on planetary health education with pharmacy students and a faculty colleague in Australia.

Community-Building Events

- Our UM Student group organized a **Ride for their Lives** event, inspiring action on air pollution for the health of children and support for the Healthy Climate Prescription Letter, which was signed by over 300 medical organizations across the globe and delivered to the COP26 and COP27 presidencies. Group leader Chelsea Kuiper was subsequently invited to speak at the 2022 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27).



- We co-sponsored the third annual **Faith, Science, and Climate Conference**. The series of seven virtual events engaged and equipped communities of faith and non-faith with tools for intergenerational advocacy for a healthy climate, inspired by the Held vs. State of Montana case involving 16 youth plaintiffs.
- Our members provided training and technical assistance for the **HEPA filter distribution / air quality survey project** at the Missoula All Nations Clinic.
- We attended and assisted the organization of **monthly Climate Smart MT meetings** with 30+ stakeholder groups.
- We attended the MT Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) Montana **Drought Task Force meetings** with seven regional stakeholder groups.

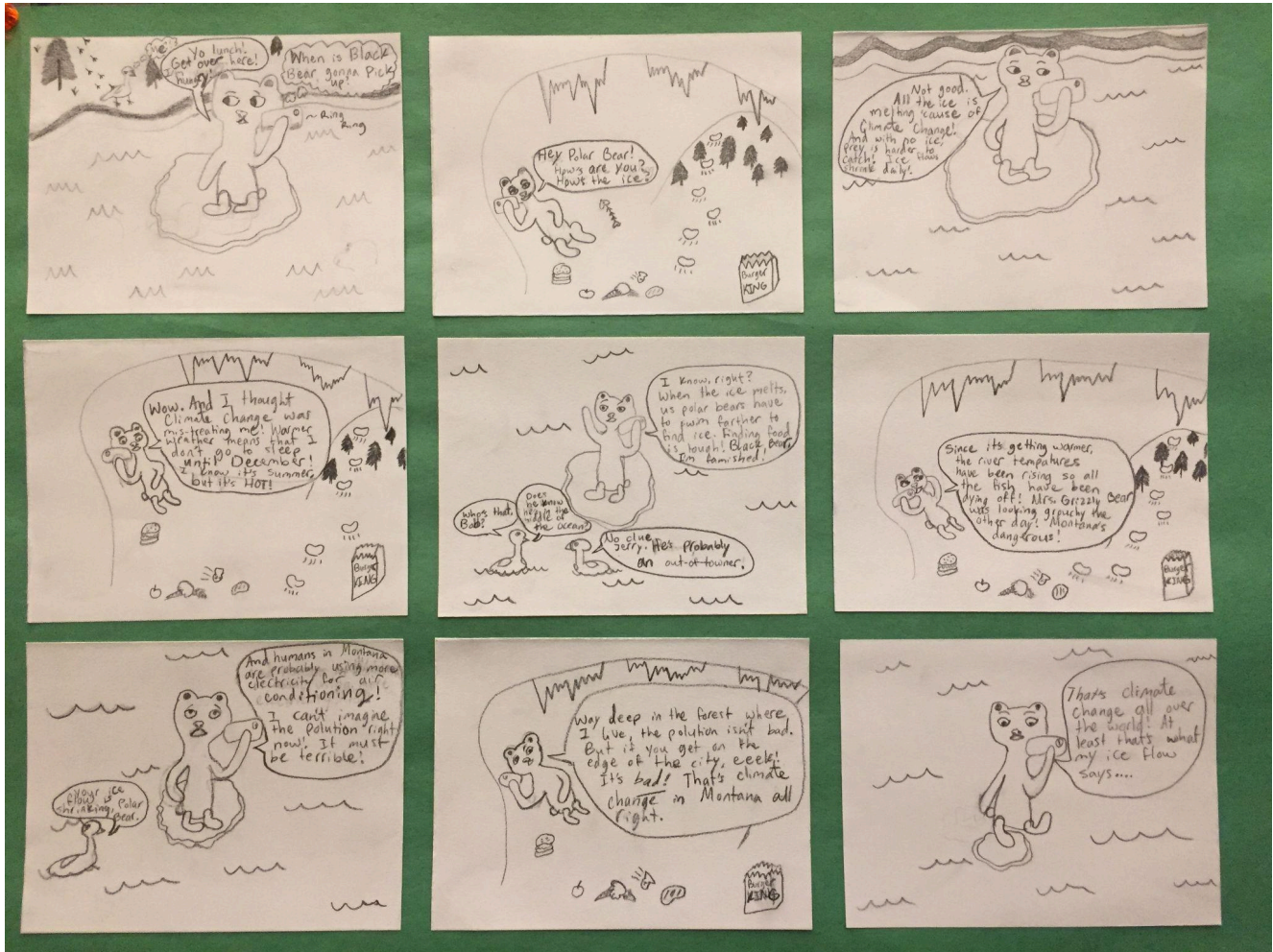
Media Collaborations

- We worked with the Center for American Indian and Rural Health Equity (CAIRHE) and MSU Film Department to produce a **series of mini-documentaries** on the landmark report, “Climate Change and Human Health in Montana” (C2H2). Topics included mental health, indigenous cultural resources, wildfire safety, and the health impacts of climate change. Videos are available on CAIRHE’s website and Youtube channel.
- We co-sponsored the **Montana Climate Stories**, a project created by Families for a Livable Climate and Stories for Action. The personal stories showcased on the site demonstrate the shared needs of Montanans during climate change. Members created a recording of our own stories, entitled “Wildfire and Health,” which can be seen at mtclimatestories.org.
- Members were guest speakers on multiple **podcasts**, including the Citizens Climate Radio podcast, the Cool Solutions podcast, and the Nurses for Healthy Environments podcast.
- We put on an art contest for K-12 students, asking them what climate change looks like in Montana. Here are our winners!



An eight-year-old winner illustrates the path

forward.



This winner wrote an entire panel, proving it's possible to keep your humor in the face of the climate crisis.

Montana Health Society Allies



Fundraising

This year, we received **\$4890 from the generosity of individuals**, including through our Giving Days and Giving Tuesday drives. Thank you! Your donations make our work possible.

We are so thankful for the generosity of the Mona Sarfaty and Jay Siegel Foundation for the Future, who gifted us \$25,000 to help support a Program Coordinator.

Grants

We received a critical grant of \$18,000 from the Region VIII Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit (PEHSU) to begin our Multifaceted Education campaign, in addition to finishing up our Air Quality Flag program with PEHSU. This new grant funds our Program Coordinator, a graduate student researcher, physical floor banners, on-line educational materials, and our Climate & Health in the 406 conference, to be held in 2023.



The CO2 Foundation also honored us with a munificent \$10,000 in general funds to support this effort, and the Foundation for Community Health generously gave \$400 for educational materials and \$600 for air filters for at-risk populations. We also received a \$500 grant from the Montana branch of the American Academy of Pediatrics to trial box fan filters in an eastern Montana pediatric practice.

Foundation
for
Community
Health



In-Kind

We received a grant from Patagonia in 2023, and this year we received \$1,700 worth of promotional Patagonia merchandise. They also opened their doors to us in Dillon for tabling and advertised events for us.

Our Board members gave 2500 cumulative hours of their time this year, worth approximately \$87,500. Board members also paid for travel across Montana. We believe in putting our money where our mouth is!



We received HEPA air filters from the American Lung Association for Montanans most at risk from wildfire smoke. Filters will find their homes in 2023, and we hope to expand this program in the future.

This has been a productive year, and we look forward to continuing our partnerships and growing as a community.

From all of us at MTHPHC, thank you for your support!



Happy Air Quality Flag program participants in Bozeman.