

TRACKING IN ACTION

The Role of Tracking in Assessing Health Outcomes of Wisconsin Industrial Sand Mining

How can Tracking data be used in assessing health outcomes?

The Problem

The mining of sand for use in glass manufacturing, water treatment, and hydraulic fracturing is a rapidly growing industry in western Wisconsin. As of 2014, nearly half of the industrial sand used in the United States came from Wisconsin. Sand mining activities have grown rapidly in western Wisconsin in recent years and understanding of the health and environmental impact of these activities remains limited.

What Communities Did

In collaboration with 15 local and tribal health departments, the Institute for Wisconsin's Health embarked on a project to better understand the environmental and health effects of industrial sand mining in their communities. To help assess potential air quality impacts, the team requested resources and technical assistance from the Tracking Program, which provided data on emergency department visits for asthma from 2002-2013. In addition to examining the Tracking data, the team reviewed literature and consulted with local subject matter experts.

The Public Health Impact

Based in part on the Tracking Program's data, the team concluded health effects related to particulate matter exposure were unlikely and that impacts to groundwater quantity, land value, and quality of life merited further study. Longer term outcomes, such as silicosis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and lung infections, were not included in the analysis. The analysis will be used as a resource for stakeholders and policymakers at the local level as they assess the future of industrial sand mining in their communities. The team's recommendations can be found in the full report, available at bit.ly/sandminingreport.



The EPHT team was very helpful for our project and enthusiastic to provide data.

They guided us in understanding the significance and relevance of the data, which was very meaningful for our work.

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