

Community-Focused Exposure and Risk Screening Tool (C-FERST) 2017 Accomplishments Report and 2018 Update

In April 2016 ECOS, ASTHO and the US EPA signed a memorandum of agreement (MOA) to advance cooperative initiatives pertaining to environmental health. Through the MOA, these parties are seeking to collaborate in developing tools, reports, workshops, meetings, communication pathways, and other tangible outcomes and initiatives that will leverage resources and advance their mutually shared mission of protecting the public's health from environmental threats and hazards and advancing health and environmental equity for all citizens.

Under the MOA, EPA, ECOS and ASTHO planned to identify a few early specific cases to apply the Community Focused Exposure Risk Screening tool (C-FERST), with the aim of illustrating potential uses of the tool that can be repeated in other places to improve environmental and health outcomes. In 2017 the MOA parties worked together to identify potential additional local government collaborators and communities to pilot the tool.

However, due to anticipated budget reductions, and in response to the Agency's newly released strategic plan, past EPA Science Advisory Board and ORD Board of Scientific Counselors recommendations, and recent EPA Office of the Inspector General findings, EPA has decided to discontinue C-FERST as a stand-alone tool. To ensure that valuable information is preserved, an assessment of C-FERST datasets, maps, and functionality is being conducted for potential incorporation into other EPA tools such as EnviroAtlas. ORD expects that the current C-FERST site will remain in place throughout the end of FY18 and will make certain that information about how to access maps, functionality, and datasets transferred to other tools is made available to interested parties.

EPA discussed this new C-FERST direction with the ECOS members involved in the pilot, and it was agreed to look to other opportunities to engage on developing case studies of how ORD's tools can be used in advance efforts of the MOA.

Given the explicit guidance in EPA's FY 2018-2022 Strategic Plan (February 2018) to "work with ECOS/Environmental Council of the States (ERIS) to evaluate the causal relationships between ecosystem goods and services and human health, and to document these relations using EnviroAtlas," an effective alternative to the C-FERST pilot with the states would be active dialogue to define and prioritize the relationships of most interest. Active stakeholder engagement during FY18 will help inform the transition plan, positioning ECOS, ASTHO, and ORD to produce impactful case studies in FY19 and beyond. EPA will confer with ECOS and ASTHO to chart a path forward.

Accomplishments:

- EPA developed training materials and held a webinar as training for the states July 26, 2017.
- Began transition to incorporate relevant datasets to EnviroAtlas in response to the Agency's newly released strategic plan.

Next steps:

- Active dialogue with the states to identify and prioritize the causal relationships between ecosystem goods and services and human health of most interest, to identify specific relationships that need further research, and to analyze these relationships for potential inclusion in the EnviroAtlas. After consultation with ECOS, ORD is currently reviewing Health Impact Assessments that have been conducted in the United States and compiled by the Pew Charitable Trusts. Since Health Impact Assessments provide insight into real decisions made at county, state, regional and federal levels, mining them provides evidence of linkages between ecosystem services & health considered in those decisions, data gaps, and research needs. ORD will provide the results of this analysis to ECOS and ASTHO as background information to inform the next steps in this collaboration.