**In-person site visits as a way to strengthen collaboration between Coordinators**

Promoting local cooperation and understanding between the tribes and counties and forging good working relations between TPEP and HC Coordinators is very important for the success of the work we do.

HPCDP encourages working site visits, within the resources available (budget, time, etc.), as a way to strengthen ties and collaboration between Coordinators. When planning a site visit, Coordinators will share the agenda with their Liaison prior to the visit. After the visit, Coordinators will share their experience with their RSN and Liaison. The agenda for the visit can include tour of the local health department and local success sites & challenging areas, workplan review and discussion, and discussion of lessons learned and opportunities for collaboration.

The purpose of having in-person site visits is to address three major areas that have been identified by the Valley RSN and state Liaisons:

* Sharing knowledge about successful techniques used to forward policy and surmount challenges. An in-person visit has the benefit of clear communication and physical experience which set it apart from meetings relying on modern communications.
* Finding shared elements in work plans in order to coordinate efforts. County and tribal boundaries are artificial, people live their lives moving through multiple jurisdictions, and there are opportunities for each tribe and county to work together on projects that affect the bottom line for all of Oregon.
* Increasing personal interaction. It can be difficult to feel comfortable speaking out in a large group. In-person visits create rapport between individual members of the group which makes it easier to express individual challenges and successes.

Patti McKinney of Confederated Tribes of Siletz and Matthew Stevenson, TPEP Coordinator of Polk County, suggested site visits as a way to create bonds to place and people, exchange experience, talk about challenges and how to overcome them. Patti graciously offered to host her colleagues from Polk County, TPEP Coordinator Matthew Stevenson and HC Coordinator Misha Peel, and the site visit took place at the end of July. During the Sep. 2nd Valley RSN call, Patti, Matthew and Misha shared the experience with their county and tribal counterparts.

In a pilot in-person visit from Polk County to Siletz Tribe, Patti, Matthew and Misha appreciated the outcome. While there were many successful results, some stood out as especially important. Tribal and County organizations are fundamentally different, and greater understanding of the structure of the two will make partnering between two such agencies more feasible in the future. Coordinators were able to share examples how carefully building support within the organization had been successful, or not successful. Both of jurisdictions, Polk County and Siletz Tribe, are relatively small and building allies is very important. In the opinion of Coordinators, the most important result was the comfort and understanding that was generated. It became easier to ask questions and to be supportive once a relationship with person and place had been established.