

Environment in Health Snap Shot

We have the power to build healthy communities for the next generation.



Health Happens With A Clean and Safe Environment

Environment and Health are TOP priorities for Building Healthy Communities South Kern. Health doesn't only happen in the doctor's office. It also happens in the places where we live, work, and play. How we plan and build our communities, our air quality, drinking water quality, and risk of hazardous exposure are just a few of the environmental concerns facing South Kern communities and families.



**BUILDING HEALTHY
COMMUNITIES**
CONSTRUYENDO COMUNIDADES SALUDABLES
SOUTH KERN · SUR DE KERN





We have the power to build healthy communities for the next generation. Let's work together to improve our communities and create a brighter future for our children. Join the **BHC-SK** initiative and help us build healthy communities.



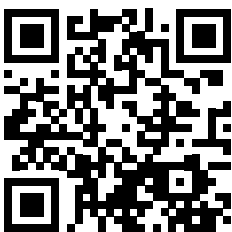
health happens here
An initiative of The California Endowment.



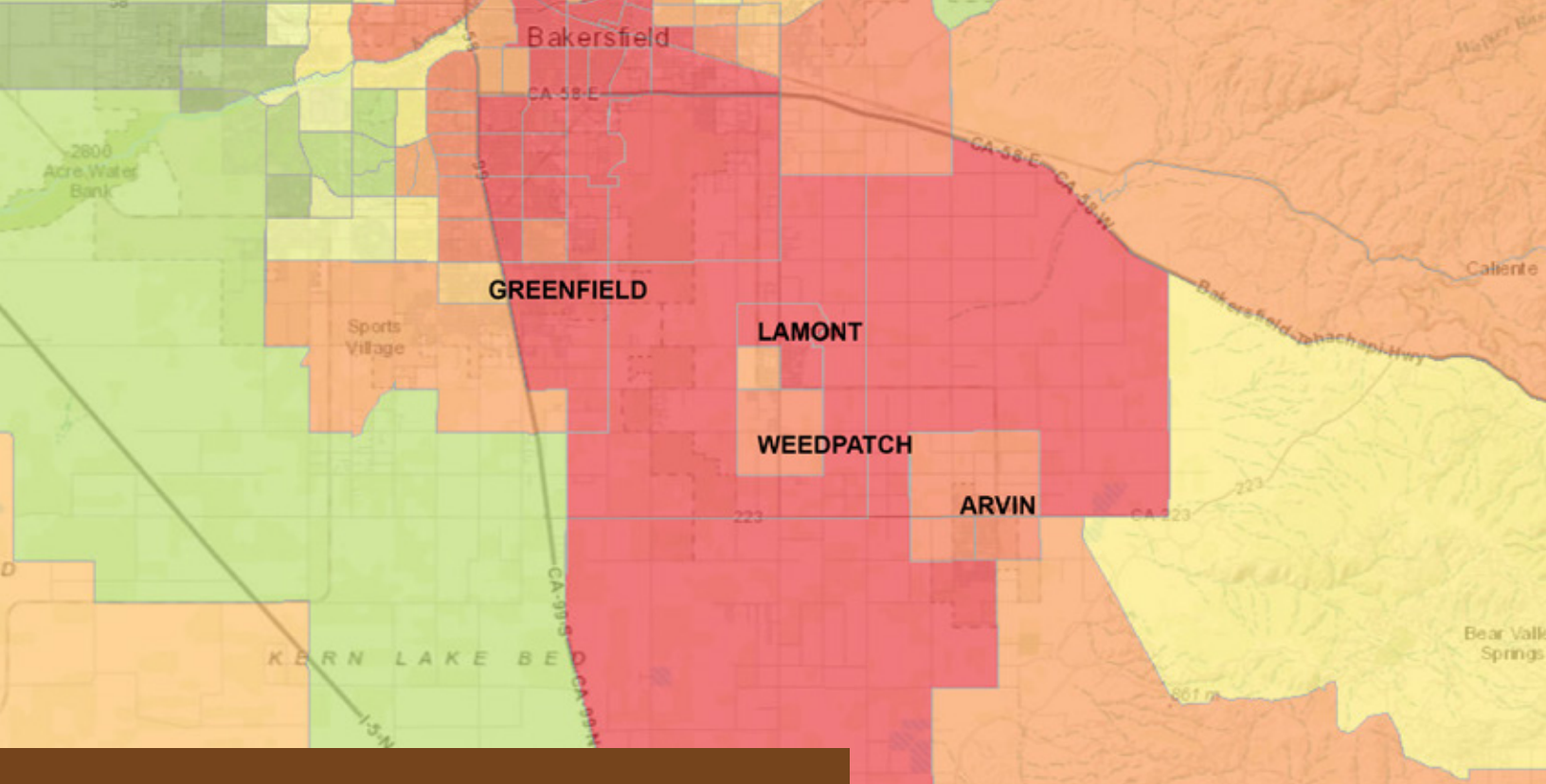
BUILDING HEALTHY
COMMUNITIES
CONSTRUYENDO COMUNIDADES SALUDABLES
SOUTH KERN · SUR DE KERN

Environment in Health Snap Shot

- 4 Why Focus On The Environment?
- 6 Building Community Power: Advocating for Change
- 8 From Advocacy to Implementation
- 9 Water: A Human Right
- 10 What Have We Accomplished?
- 11 What We Are Working To Achieve
- 12 How Do I Get Involved In BHC-SK?



To learn more about Building Health Communities South Kern use your smart phone qr code reader app.



Why Focus On The Environment?

South Kern consistently has one of the unhealthiest environments in the State. The CalEnviroScreen map above shows the dire state of South Kern's environmental quality. Red indicates geographic areas most severely and negatively affected by their environment. We are working to ensure that future editions of the CalEnviroScreen map are more green than red, indicating a cleaner, healthier environment.

CalEnviroScreen Map is made up of many indicators including: air quality (ozone and diesel particulates PM 2.5), diesel particulate emissions, drinking water contaminants, pesticide use, toxic release from facilities, traffic density, cleanup sites, groundwater threats, hazardous waste sites and facilities, impaired water bodies, solid waste site and facilities, age (children and elderly), asthma emergency department visits, low birth weight, low educational attainment, poverty, and unemployment.

Who lives in South Kern?

Residents in South Kern are very young, have little education and are likely to live in poverty.

- Roughly **40%** of the population is 19 years old or younger.
- More than one out of three residents under 18 (**37%**) live below the federal poverty line.
- Nearly half of all residents (**47.6%**), regardless of age, live below **150%** of the federal poverty line.
- Half of South Kern households earn less than \$37,000 per year, and individuals earn an average of \$11,556 per year.
- Most South Kern residents are Latino (**79%**), a population that has been growing in the area over the past several decades; just 15 years before that, the area's population was **53%** Latino.
- More than one in three residents (**39%**) were born outside of the United States.
- More than one in four (**27%**) live in a household where English is not spoken at all, or is not spoken by anyone over the age of 13.
- Approximately one in three residents is undocumented.

Local Air Quality Impacts Our Health

If ozone levels in South Kern were reduced to federal standards, rather than remaining at 2009 levels, the population of South Kern would have:

- 13,950 fewer school absence days each year
- 22 additional years of life
- 10 fewer ER admissions due to asthma each year
- 3 fewer ER admissions for children and adolescents due to asthma each year
- 2 fewer hospitalizations due to chronic lung disease each year for people over age 65
- 2 fewer deaths each year

[source: 2013 UCLA Health Forecasting Project]

The projected health benefits of reduced ozone translate into:

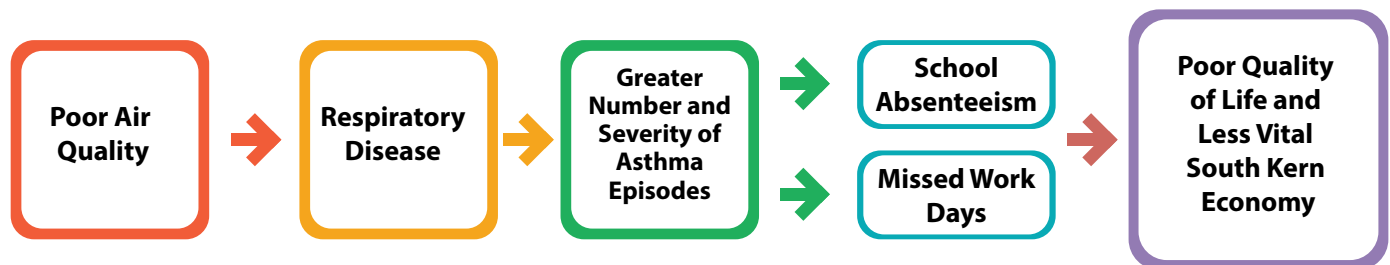
- Fewer sick days resulting in greater economic productivity
- Improved quality of life
- Lower medical costs for individuals and clinics
- Better school attendance which means schools have more money.

Did You Know?

- Kern County ranks 3rd in the State for having the most public schools with unsafe drinking water.
- All wells in Arvin have arsenic levels over the legal Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) set by the Safe Drinking Water Act.
- One Lamont well has arsenic over the MCL and many have 1,2,3,-TCP (a toxic pollutant) over the notification limit.

What is 1,2,3-TCP?

1,2,3-TCP is an extremely toxic contaminant that is common in many agricultural area. The California Department of Public Health has not yet adopted a legal Maximum Contaminant Level under the Safe Drinking Water Act due to delays in the regulatory process; however, a public health goal and notification limit based on risk to public health has been established and drinking water systems are recommended to take any source off-line that does not meet notification limits because it is considered a serious risk to human health.



- Before the air station was moved out of South Kern, the City of Arvin consistently ranked #1 in the country for worst air quality.
- For every 20 parts per billion increase in ground-level ozone, children experienced an increased likelihood of **63%** for being absent from school for a general illness and **83%** increase for respiratory illness. (UCLA Health Forecasting Project, 2013)
- Central Valley residents bear an annual cost of \$5.7 billion, more than \$1,700 per person, in health costs because of the impacts of smog and fine particulate matter. (2008 California State University, Fullerton)

Building Community Power:

Community power building and advocacy has heightened awareness of the relationship between environmental hazards and health outcomes. Residents, youth, community groups, and local agencies are mobilizing for an improved South Kern. Working in partnership with local school districts, organizations, and community partners South Kern residents are: developing community capacity, leadership and engagement; increasing accountability of local, regional and State decision-making bodies to respond to the needs of South Kern; and implementing interim strategies to provide the safest and cleanest environments for South Kern residents. **There is a lot of overlap between these areas of work, because just as the environment, they are all interconnected.**



AIR



Air

- Advocated for the compliance or closure of the Community Recycling Center, a chronic polluter and occupationally hazardous business in the Arvin-Lamont area. In 2015, San Francisco-based Recology took ownership of the recycling center and are demonstrating how to be both a good neighbor and a socially responsible corporate partner.
- Advocated for meaningful Greenhouse Gas Reduction targets as the State Air Resources Board developed their final guidelines.
- Instituted the Bucket Brigade to improve reporting, monitoring, enforcement and accountability among community and regulators.
- **Created and enforced ¼ mile pesticide buffer zones around Kern County schools (2010) protecting children with asthma and other respiratory diseases.**
- Launched a regional climate change program to work with communities to identify policy goals and strategies for resiliency.
- **Launched KEEN (Kern Environmental Enforcement Network) to provide residents an avenue for reporting local hazards and working with the appropriate agencies to ensure enforcement.**

Advocating for Change

LAND USE

Land Use

- Advocated for Sustainable Communities Program to include rural areas like South Kern when allocating State dollars for improving safety and mobility.
- **Advocated with the City of Arvin to develop the first Bike Master Plan for the City of Arvin.**
- Ensured that Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund dollars are designated for rural communities.
- Secured funding through Kern COG that will provide an additional 1,200 jobs in South Kern and more funding for active transportation.
- **Secured over \$3 million in public resources to improve sidewalks, curbs, and gutters in South Kern.**
- Updated General Plan for the City of Arvin, marking the first time it has included a health element in all policy framework becoming one of a few cities in the State to do so.

To learn more about the Center on Race, Poverty and the Environment-Resident Power, use your smart phone qr code reader app.



Water

- Advocated with the Lamont Public Utility District for an improved alternate plan for waste water.
- **Installing 88 certified water filters in Arvin schools and Head Start programs providing clean drinking water to more than 3,000 children.**
- Secured an additional \$4 million for a total of \$8 million in emergency funding for interim water solutions from the State Water Control Resources Board.
- **Launched the Agua4All campaign bringing 70 refillable water stations to South Kern local parks, clinics, libraries, family resource centers, and other community settings impacting nearly 76,000 people.**
- Secured nearly \$500,000 from the State Water Resources Board for safe clean drinking water in Arvin.
- Secured stronger tools to facilitate consolidation, public access to well logs, and improved agency financing system in the 2015 State budget.

From Advocacy to

Creating “Civic Scientists” to Give Residents A Voice

What Is It?

The Kern Environmental Enforcement Network (KEEN) is a community-based website for reporting hazardous conditions and/or waste, and a tool for environmental monitoring, reporting, and enforcement in Kern County. KEEN is real time data that increases visibility of environmental problems particularly in disadvantaged communities, such as South Kern, that are disproportionately affected by environmental pollutants and promotes transparency and accountability.

How Does It Work?

Both on-line and telephone reporting tools are accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Once a report is made, KEEN passes the violation to the appropriate enforcer. Reported violations have included pesticide drift, flooding, agricultural burning, damaged roadways, and illegal dumping. After KEEN has reported a violation, there is follow-up with the enforcement agency to ensure compliance. Community members can check on the status of a report on the website.

Who Is Involved?

Residents (who become “civic scientists” trained and skilled in reporting hazards and recognizing toxins in their neighborhoods), community-based organizations, environmental justice advocates, and local, regional and state regulators.

Impact?

When Lamont residents were concerned about the dairies in and near their community, they turned to KEEN. Specifically they were concerned that the high concentration of dairies were contaminating their groundwater and air. KEEN investigated several dairy-related complaints which resulted in three Notices of Violation and compliance actions.

In Arvin, residents were concerned about the negative consequences of oil and gas production. Reporting concerns to KEEN resulted in five findings of illegal air emissions, groundwater contamination, and soil contamination. Visit the **KEEN** website www.kernreport.org



KEEN implemented the Bucket Brigade,

a group of concerned citizens who monitor air quality by taking air samples that serve to develop a toxic fingerprint for polluting facilities and to gather air samples for monitoring emissions on both a day-to-day basis and following industrial accidents. The Bucket Brigade was responsible for calling attention to chronic polluting by the Lamont/Arvin Community Recycling Center that ultimately resulted in the sale of the company.

Implementation



Water: A Human Right

In order to have safe drinking water many South Kern low income families are paying up to **10%** of their income just to have clean drinking water because the water coming out the tap is not safe to drink. Without access to safe, clean and affordable drinking water, South Kern communities face significant health disparities. Contaminated drinking water causes many adverse human health effects, including gastrointestinal illnesses, nervous or reproductive system impacts, and chronic diseases such as cancer.

Without access to safe drinking water in homes and schools, families are not only regularly exposed to contaminated water, but they end up:

- **Spending a large percentage of limited household income on bottled water**
- **Not drinking water resulting in inadequate hydration**
- **Turning to unhealthy alternatives, such as sugar sweetened beverages, which can lead to obesity and diabetes.**

What is a tap?

A water tap is a bottle filling station that provides safe water by allowing residents to drink directly from the fountain and/or provide a place for residents to fill their larger reusable water bottles.

In response, the **Agua4All** campaign was launched in 2014 bringing 70 community water tap stations to South Kern locations including schools, parks, clinics, libraries, and the Boys & Girls Clubs. These stations provide free safe drinking water to nearly 76,000 people in rural South Kern. The campaign also brought certified water filters to schools and day care centers in Arvin, filtering arsenic from the water. A total of 88 filters were installed in the school district providing safe and clean water to more than 4,000 students and staff including all four school sites, five day care sites and one community that did not have a centralized water system. These filters help local schools be in compliance with SB1413 and the Federal Healthy Hunger Free Act which requires access to free safe drinking water during meal times.



If you're interested in more information about this campaign, please watch our video.



What Have We Accomplished?

There is no single solution that will improve South Kern's environment. The current environmental quality is a result of not only local factors, but also regional and State influences. To address the current issues, community residents and partners are advocating and actively engaging with local and regional agencies to address policies related to air quality, land-use, and drinking water.

In addition to many successes illustrated on pages 6 and 7, we also celebrate the following:

Air

- Enhanced air monitoring by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District at the controversial Lamont/Arvin recycling center.
- Implemented Flag Program to monitor air quality days at Greenfield School District schools.
- Implemented low cost, user friendly tool—Bucket Brigade—for community-based environmental monitoring for taking air samples to develop toxic fingerprint for polluting facilities and to gather scientific data on what is in the air during accidents and ongoing emissions.

In South Kern, we have increased advocacy to implement components of Kern County's Sustainable Communities Strategy and the Regional Transportation Plan. These plans aim to reduce greenhouse emissions generated by automobiles and light trucks to achieve greenhouse gas emission reduction targets approved by the California Air Resources Board. BHC-SK partners have successfully advocated for rural communities that are otherwise overlooked, resulting in a plan that anticipates bringing 1,200 new jobs to South Kern.

Land Use

- Arvin, Greenfield, Lamont, and Vineland School Districts have nutritional policies that meet or exceed federal standards. This benefits over 15,000 students.
- Arvin School District parents worked with law enforcement to ensure street vendors selling unhealthy snacks near the schools complied with a local ordinance that prohibits vendors so close to schools.
- Arvin, Lamont and Vineland School Districts are offering "Breakfast in the Classroom" and fresh fruits and vegetables throughout the day.
- Five Head Start programs have installed filtration systems to offer quality drinking water to nearly 400 preschoolers and staff.
- Arvin Union School District board approved installation of filtration systems in high traffic areas in schools to provide quality drinking water to more than 3,200 students and staff.

Water

- Created a bilingual after-hours voicemail at the Kern County Agricultural Commissioner's office for reporting non-emergency pesticide incidents.
- Conducted outreach to 425 community members to increase their awareness of water quality issues, interim solutions and how to engage in long-term solutions.
- Established a Task Force in Lamont to address water rate structures that were serving as a deterrent to economic growth.
- Heightened advocacy with the EPA and CDPH to ensure construction of a new water well in the City of Arvin.
- Partnered with the Governor's Office and the State Water Resources Control Board to lead advocacy efforts to support allocation of \$4 million in additional emergency funding for interim water solutions in 2014.
- Supported Arvin, Lamont, and Weedpatch residents in advocating for improvement in local water districts.

What We Are Working To Achieve

By 2020,

- Reduce the use of pesticides
- Improve infrastructure related to water drainage and sewage systems as well as improved streets
- Improve drinking water quality by removing contaminants
- Establish and enforce local, regional, and state methods and policies to improve air quality
- Improve local and regional land-use planning to develop more walkable communities as well as to create and design future development that promotes health, clean air, and clean water

What is BHC?

Building Healthy Communities is a comprehensive community initiative that is creating a revolution in the way Californians think about and support health equity in their communities. Residents are proving that they can make health happen in their neighborhoods, schools and with prevention—and in doing so, they are creating a brighter future for their children. In South Kern, over 2,500 residents, youth, businesses and organizations are leading the Building Healthy Communities South Kern (BHC-SK) effort to positively change the health of our communities through a shared vision, goals and action plan. Residents in Arvin, Lamont, Weedpatch and the unincorporated areas of Greenfield are proving that they have the power to build healthy communities for the next generation by building power among residents and youth, creating partnerships, leveraging resources, and changing the narrative.

Inspired in 2009 by The California Endowment, a private foundation, BHC-SK is promoting healthy change in the areas of:



Economic Development:
Creating a vibrant local economy.



Education:
Improving pre-K to adult education.



Environment:
Creating a healthy environment with clean air and water.



Health:
Increasing access to a better health care system.



Recreation:
Improving recreation activities, facilities, and parks.



In partnership with The California Endowment.

Although making real change can be difficult, our children deserve clean water, healthy food, safe places to learn and play, and access to health care so they can live long healthy lives. People who live, work and play in South Kern are proving that we have the power to make health happen in our communities.

How Do I Get Involved In BHC-SK?

What's Next?

- Accelerate funding and implementation of community-wide, long-term safe drinking water infrastructure projects.
- Advocate for land-use policies that promote healthy communities and reduced greenhouse gas emissions through implementation of SB 375 implementation and an updated Kern County General Plan.
- Establish funding stream for the Kern Environmental Enforcement Network (KEEN) for enhanced resident and youth advocacy.
- Working to expand the radius and chemicals included in the pesticide buffer zone around schools.

Contact Information

We have the power to build healthy communities for the next generation. Let's work together to improve our communities and create a brighter future for our children. Join the BHC South Kern initiative and help us build healthy communities.

To get involved, call 661-845-2724 or visit www.healthysouthkern.org
Lamont Weedpatch Family Resource Center/Lamont School District
7839 Burgundy Avenue, Lamont, CA 93241

 Find us on
Facebook
www.facebook.com/BHCSK

Partners

- Arvin Community Service District
- California Rural Legal Assistance
- California Walks
- Californians for Pesticide Reform
- Center on Race, Poverty, and the Environment
- Central California Environmental Justice Network
- City of Arvin
- Committee for a Better Arvin
- Community Action Partnership of Kern
- Community Water Center
- Dolores Huerta Foundation
- Global Community Monitoring
- Greenfield Family Resource Center
- Greenfield Walking Group
- Kern County Parks and Recreation
- Kern County Public Health Department-Call to Action
- Kern Environmental Enforcement Network (KEEN)
- Lamont Public Utility District
- Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability
- Local Government Commission
- New America Media
- Recology
- Rural Community Assistance Corporation
- South Kern Sol

Our vision: everyone who lives, works and plays in South Kern partnering to create a health, safe and clean community that embraces our cultures and fosters opportunity for all residents, especially youth, to develop their full potential.