



## GrayIsGreen

### Who are we?

**Gray Is Green** is an online gathering of older adult Americans aspiring to create a green legacy for the future. As environmentally conscious elders, we respond to a generational call: to co-create a future of economic justice, ecological sustainability and social justice.

We hold next generations of humans in mind and consider the future of ecosystems and other species. We are alert to the historic challenges facing our planet. And we are aware of the question arising from descendants generations hence:

*What did you do, when you knew?*

### What do we do?

We aspire to embrace our eldership, living beyond consumerism and ageism. **Our Curriculum for Gray-Green Living** offers a variety of ways to join—and re-engage with—this elder movement.

We offer a periodic newsletter, a speaker's bureau, online resources, a [Facebook page](#) for relevant updates. In partnership with congenial organizations, we serve as a central clearinghouse of ideas and communications for older adults interested in greening their lives, learning about sustainability, advocating for sound public policy, being creative stewards or grandparents, emerging as elders, and mentoring young people.

*We invite **you** to get involved!*

[www.grayisgreen.org](http://www.grayisgreen.org)

## Community Resilience Environmental Health Is Human Health

Daily living conditions and interaction with the natural environment can affect physical and mental health. Although the burden of poor environmental health may be seen in less developed countries, there are many problems that impact people living in the United States. An understanding of these issues can help us promote positive environmental and human health at a community and individual level.

### Air Quality

Many health problems can be attributed to poor air quality.<sup>1</sup> For instance, air pollution and ground-level ozone, called smog, can make asthma and allergies worse<sup>2</sup>, especially in children and elders. High concentrations of small particulates can reach into the deepest part of the lung and impair lung growth and cause asthma and cancer.

As global climate changes<sup>3</sup> lead to longer pollen seasons, those with allergic sensitivities and asthma will suffer increased negative health effects. Smoke from wildfires will also be an increasingly prevalent air pollutant, causing respiratory and cardiovascular problems. We can each take actions<sup>4</sup> to improve the air quality in our own neighborhoods.

### Lead and Mold in Buildings

Sometimes without knowing it, people may work or live in buildings containing harmful mold<sup>5</sup> or lead.<sup>6</sup>

Exposure to these substances can cause a variety of serious health problems for people of all ages. Luckily, there are actions that help us cleanup mold<sup>7</sup> and remove lead-based paint,<sup>8</sup> a common culprit of lead exposure.

### Water Quality

Water quality is crucial, from the water that we drink to the bodies of water that we use for recreation. The natural system of watersheds<sup>9</sup> and municipal water systems<sup>10</sup> form a complex water environment that requires monitoring on many levels. The Environmental Protection Agency has an interactive map that provides information about your state's public drinking water.<sup>11</sup> If your drinking water comes from a private well, you are responsible for having it tested annually<sup>12</sup> to make sure it is safe to consume.

Pools, lakes, rivers, and oceans can become contaminated with harmful chemicals, bacteria, or other organisms. Climate scientists expect<sup>13</sup> that changing temperatures will cause increased precipitation and flooding,<sup>14</sup> which will increase the level of exposure to toxins used on crops and livestock in the water supply. Water-borne illnesses will likely increase as well, due to higher water temperatures providing a more hospitable environment for them.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends certain

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measures<sup>15</sup> to ensure your safety in recreational uses or consumption of water resources.

### Soil and Food Supply

Food grown with pesticides<sup>16</sup> can have a negative impact on your health. In particular, fumigants can be hazardous<sup>17</sup> not only through direct consumption, but also to people living in communities surrounding areas of fumigant application. Numerous pesticides can be found in your diet,<sup>18</sup> and certain types of fruits

and vegetables have higher concentrations than others. Children can be particularly susceptible to the negative health impact of pesticides, but they can be protected<sup>19</sup> with diligence and advocacy.

In addition to an impact on human health, the widespread use of pesticides in agriculture can degrade soil quality and decrease soil biodiversity. Pursue strategies to promote sustainable agriculture<sup>20</sup> and ensure a healthy future for our planet and future generations.

- 1 <http://www.cdc.gov/air/default.htm>
- 2 [http://www.epa.gov/airnow/health-prof/Asthma\\_Flyer\\_Final.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/airnow/health-prof/Asthma_Flyer_Final.pdf)
- 3 <https://toolkit.climate.gov/topics/human-health/increased-levels-air-pollutants>
- 4 <http://www.airnow.gov/index.cfm?action=resources.whatyoucando>
- 5 [http://www.cdc.gov/mold/dampness\\_facts.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/mold/dampness_facts.htm)
- 6 <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/lead-poisoning/FL00068>
- 7 <http://www.epa.gov/mold/moldguide.html#moldcleanup>
- 8 <http://www.health.ny.gov/publications/2502.pdf>
- 9 see *What is a Watershed* subtopic
- 10 link to *Water Resources in the Community*
- 11 <http://water.epa.gov/drink/local/index.cfm>
- 12 <http://water.epa.gov/drink/info/well/whatyoucando.cfm>
- 13 <https://toolkit.climate.gov/topics/human-health/changing-ecosystems>
- 14 see *Coastal Flood Risk* subtopic
- 15 <http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/rwi/illnesses/index.html>
- 16 <http://www.panna.org/your-health/food>
- 17 <http://www.panna.org/blog/time-fumigants-go>
- 18 <http://www.whatsonmyfood.org/index.jsp>
- 19 <http://www.panna.org/current-campaigns/kids-health#Top10>
- 20 [http://www.ucsusa.org/food\\_and\\_agriculture/what\\_you\\_can\\_do/](http://www.ucsusa.org/food_and_agriculture/what_you_can_do/)



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