**PERCH Project Summary**

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| PERCH Project: Environmental Health Studies in Northwest Florida |
| CDC Grant R01 EH000096-1; August 17, 2005 to August 16, 2006 |
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Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties in Northwest Florida, have experienced continuing deterioration of environmental health due to pollution from point sources (industrial, military, and Superfund sites) and non-point sources (stormwater runoff, septic tanks, lead contaminated homes, contaminated aquifers, and other diffused sources of pollution). In response to the emerging evidence of groundwater contamination from area Superfund sites and the community's general concerns about regional environmental pollution and potential impacts on human health, the University of West Florida (UWF) initiated environmental health studies in Escambia and Santa Rosa counites in 2002. The objectives of these studies are to identify potential pollutant exposure risks and assist the Northwest Florida community in its efforts to set priorities for improving the health status and quality of life of area residents.

The proposed study will explore additional environmental health concerns that have not been previously addressed in the two counties. Specifically, the study will investigate whether game fish caught in local ponds and lakes serves as additional source of contaminants to human consumers. In this task, we will collect largemouth bass and analyze tissue samples for dioxins, PCBs, and mercury levels, and compare the data to U.S. EPA screening values. The second task of the proposed study will investigate body burdens of mercury in women of child-bearing age to assess whether the high rates of atmospheric mercury deposition in Northwest Florida are reflected in the local population. Hair samples will be collected from area residents and data will be compared to results from previous national studies, such as NHANES. Finally, the proposed study will monitor the health and pollutant levels in a previously untested residential community near the Escambia Wood Treating Company (ETC) Superfund site. Current residents of the Clarinda Triangle area will be offered a complete health screening, and blood levels of dioxins and arsenic will be measured to assess their exposure to the ETC contaminants.

The proposed research program addresses the "Healthy People 2010" focus area of Environmental Health, and is in alignment with the NCEH's performance Goal 1: Determine human health effects associated with environmental exposures. The proposed study seeks to enhance the overall assessment of environmental impacts on public health in Northwest Florida. The information gathered will assist local residents in understanding their potential exposure to persistent contaminants and provide information on whether dietary or behavioral modifications may be necessary to reduce body burdens.