Community Engagement Core [1]

The Community Engagement Core (CEC) works to address environmental concerns through measurements of airborne PCBs in affected communities, integration of activities with ongoing educational programs, and dissemination of the findings to the communities at large. Specific aims include:

- Engage East Chicago and Columbus Junction junior high students with health science and engineering education programs that highlight the sources, remediation, and human impacts of PCBs
- Address community needs regarding the impacts of dredging in East Chicago, Indiana, in terms of potential airborne PCB sources, remediation strategies, human impacts, and relative health risk
- Facilitate engagement activities with the town of Altavista, Virginia, and the environmental remediation firm, Ecolotree, Inc. [2]

A key output of our education efforts is our inquiry based airborne PCB learning materials. These materials have been developed and tested in several junior high school classrooms in each of our partner communities and a high school summer camp. Every spring we host the Columbus Community Schools 7th grade students on the University of Iowa campus for a 2.5-hour interactive tour of our science and engineering laboratories.

The Community Advisory Board in East Chicago, IN, was created in 2014. Updates about the dredging process are shared, information about the school education program is exchanged, and thoughts for future engagement areas are brainstormed. A superfund site nearby was identified as one area/topic that the community would like more information.
A relatively new collaboration between the Town of Altavista, Ecolotree, Inc., the Iowa Superfund Research Program (isrp) Projects 4 and 5, and the isrp CEC and RTC has been expanded. A workshop titled Altavista’s 6-acre Petri Dish: Testing Sustainable Solutions for PCB Contaminated Sediments, [3] was held in June of 2015 in Danville, VA. The workshop highlighted lab and field work results from 3 years of in-situ PCB degradation and containment in Altavista.

For more information about PCBs and schools, please visit our Links [4] page.

• Craig Just, PhD, Core Leader
  Assistant Professor, Civil and Environmental Engineering, The University of Iowa. Dr. Just has a broad and long-standing experience in engagement. He guided the development of the Public Engagement Grant Program that commenced at the University of Iowa in 2011. His commitment to engagement was acknowledged in 2010 with the David Skorton Award for Staff Excellence in Public Service. He co-directs the UI Obermann Graduate Institute on Engagement.

• Ashlee JoHannes, MS
  Ashlee currently works as an Outreach and Engagement Coordinator for the Iowa Watershed Approach Flood Resilience Program and the Iowa Superfund Research Program [5], which are run through IIHR-Hydroscience and Engineering [6] at the University of Iowa.

• Scott Spak, PhD
  Dr. Spak is the core leader of the Research Translation Core [7] of the isrp and assists with the closely related Community Engagement Core.