



Plumas County
Public Health Agency
Environmental Health Division

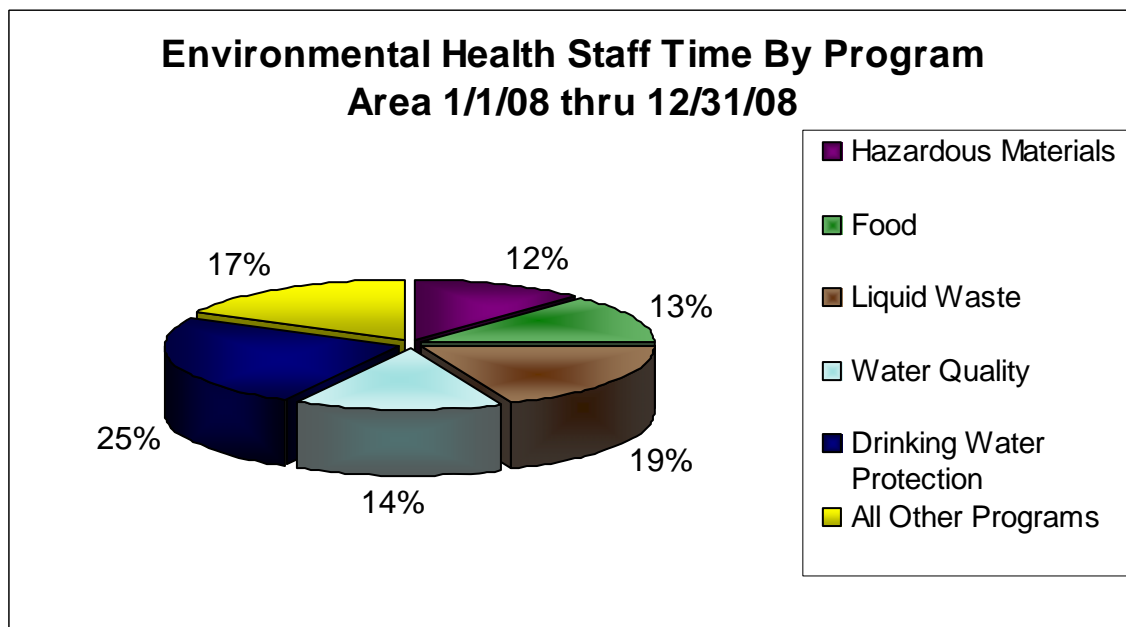
ANNUAL REPORT
2008

Plumas County Environmental Health Services 2008 Annual Report

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH is a Division of the county's Public Health Agency. The Division consists of a director, two clerical staff, and five field staff. Our main office is in the Health and Human Services Center in Quincy, and we also maintain a satellite office in the Chester Civic Center.

OUR MISSION is to preserve the environment and enhance public health through outreach, education, collaborative planning and sensible application of environmental health principles, laws and statutes.

WE CARRY OUT THIS MISSION by providing a variety of services in each of ten program areas. These program areas are primarily where people interact with the environment. The amount of time spent in each program area depends on a variety of risk factors as well as the service needs of the community. In Plumas County, core environmental health programs include: liquid waste management, drinking water protection, hazardous materials management, water quality assurance, and food safety. In 2008, staff time was allocated according to the chart below.

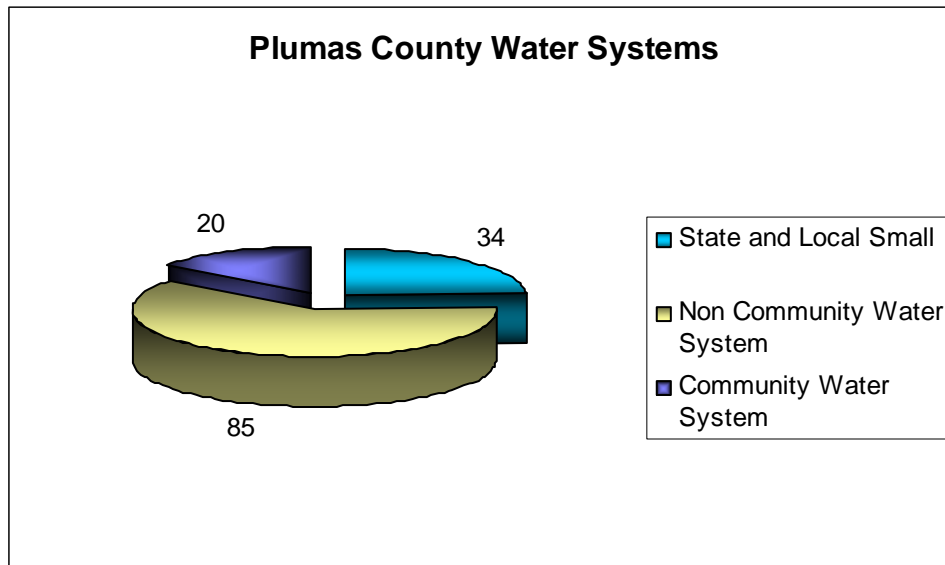


Notable activities in the primary program areas can be summarized as follows:

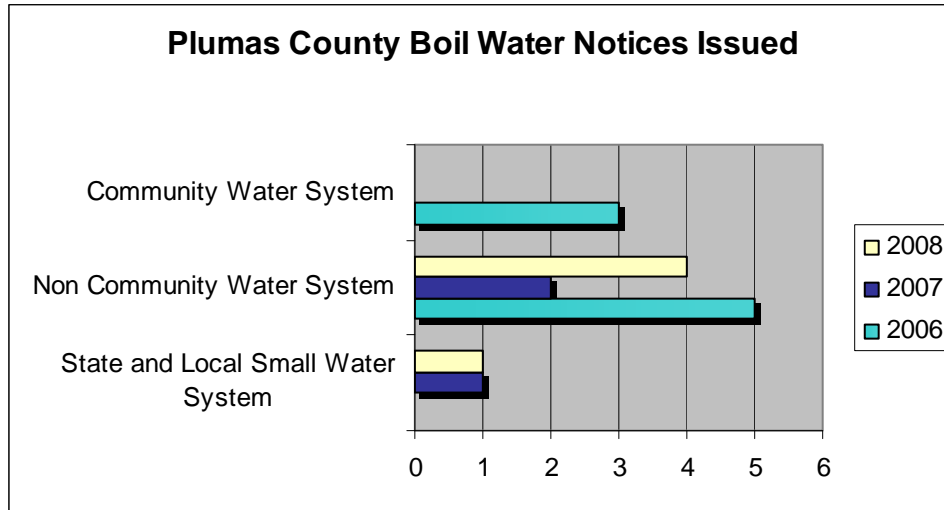
DRINKING WATER PROTECTION

Ensuring safe and potable drinking water supplies is a vital function of Environmental Health. In 2005, Environmental Health was certified as the Local Primacy Agency (LPA) by the State Department of Health Services. This designation provides water system purveyors and operators a local contact and resource in helping protect drinking water quality. 2008 marks the third full year of successful program implementation and one quarter of our staff resources are dedicated to this effort.

Environmental Health monitors drinking water quality of 139 drinking water systems throughout the county. These include non community systems such as resorts and campgrounds, small systems serving less than 15 connections, and community systems with up to 200 connections. All told, Environmental Health ensures drinking water quality at public water systems serving over eleven thousand residents and visitors to Plumas County annually. The number and type of regulated drinking water systems subject to regulation are as follows:



Whenever drinking water quality does not meet established standards, the system operator must advise its customers. If there is an immediate risk to human health, the system operator must issue a Boil Water Advisory. The number of Boil Water Advisories issued is a good indicator of overall drinking water quality, and is a key part of public health protection. Data on the number of Boil Water Advisories issued the past three years is charted below:



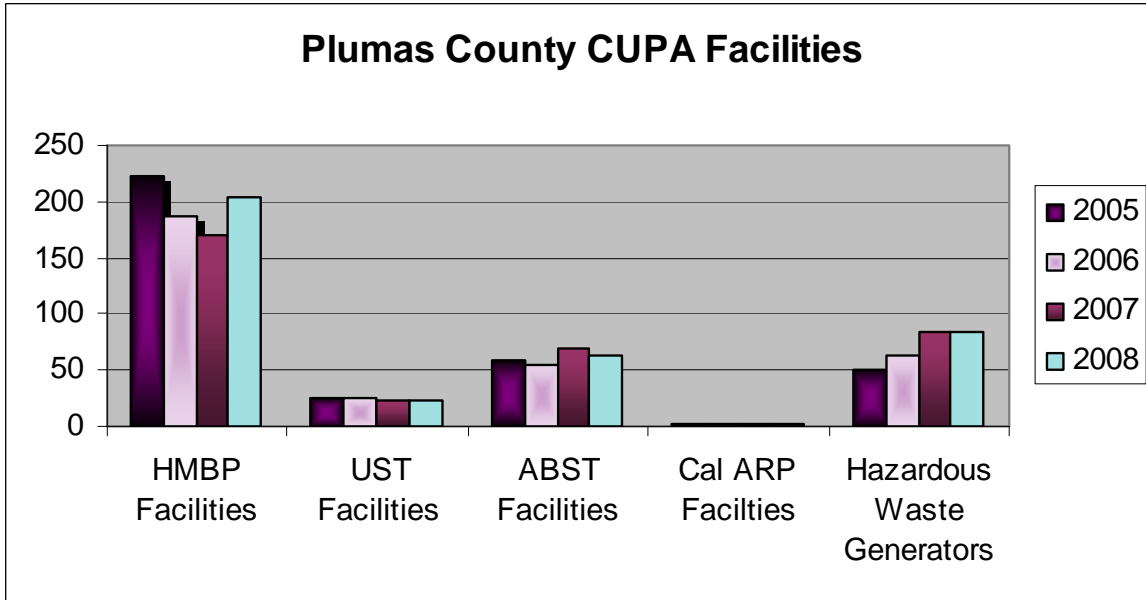
As seen above, overall drinking water quality for public water systems in Plumas County remains excellent.

HAZARDOUS MATERIALS MANAGEMENT

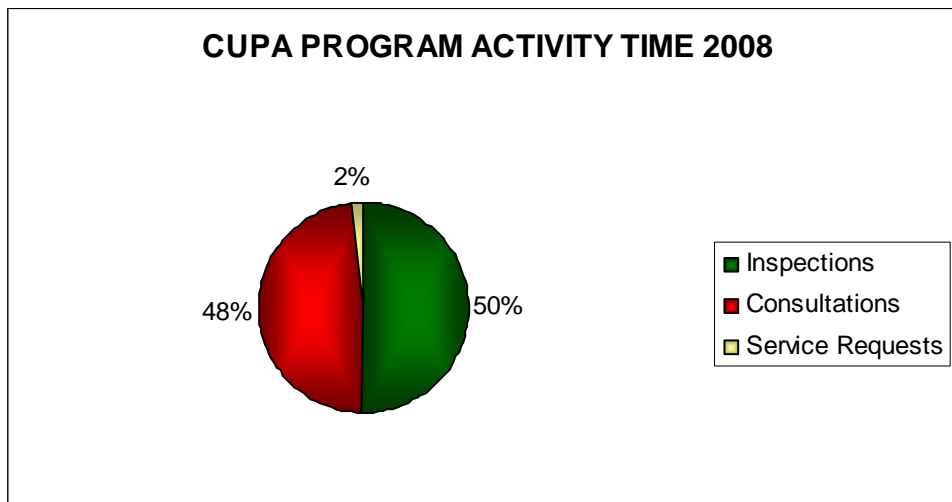
Our hazardous materials management program is designed to reduce the risk of exposure to chemicals or contamination. This comprehensive program (also referred to as the CUPA program or the Unified Program) includes management of chemicals in underground tanks, above ground tanks, wastes generated through industrial processes, risk management planning, and pollution prevention. We also work closely with emergency response agencies to plan, prepare, and respond to accidental releases. In 2008, this program occupied about twelve percent of Environmental Health staff resources.



Program requirements are based on the likelihood or consequences of a release. The chart below shows the number of businesses subject to each of the program areas, including basic inventory reporting (Hazardous Materials Business Plan or HMBP), underground storage tank monitoring (UST facilities), above ground storage tank monitoring (AST facilities), accidental release response planning for extremely hazardous materials (Cal ARP facilities), and hazardous waste generator reporting and management. The number of regulated businesses shows little change over the past few years.

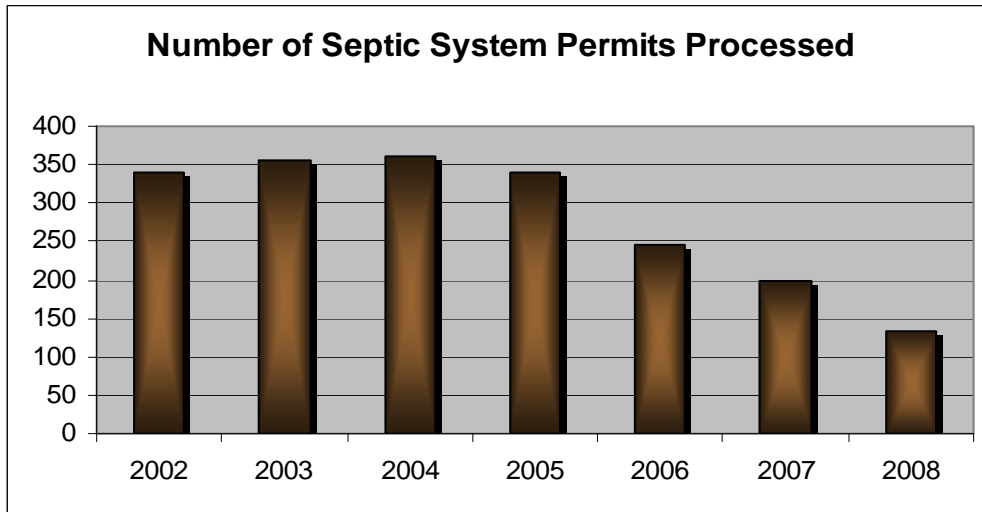


Environmental Health carries out this state-mandated program through certification by the California Environmental Protection Agency (Cal EPA). Mandated services are inspection-related activities, but we also spend about half our time offering consultation, education and compliance assistance to regulated facilities. Plumas County also provides these services to Sierra County under contract.



LIQUID WASTE MANAGEMENT

Our liquid waste program ensures that wastes are properly handled, treated and disposed to protect public health and the environment. This includes preventing direct and indirect exposure to contaminated wastewater as well as preventing contamination of surface and groundwater. We review and approve the location, design, construction, installation and repair of all on-site sewage disposal systems through a permit and inspection program. In 2008, almost one fifth of Environmental Health staff resources were dedicated to this program. Consistent with building and construction-related permit trends statewide, the number of septic system permits issued in 2008 is down by more than one-half from historic highs.

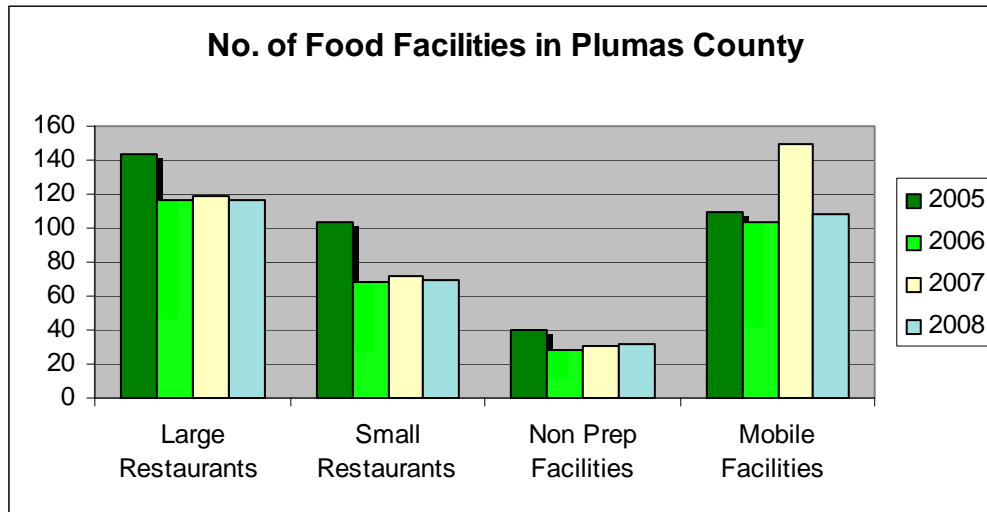


As required by legislation passed in 2000, this past year State Water Resources formally proposed statewide wastewater regulations in response to AB 885. The regulations as proposed offer little flexibility and would be extremely expensive for Plumas County and its residents. In response, Environmental Health coordinated county staff and educated the public on these important regulations. This effort is ongoing as Environmental Health is committed to working with local

and statewide stakeholder groups to revise these regulations to lessen the administrative and economic impacts to Plumas County and its homeowners.

FOOD SAFETY

Our food safety program helps protect the public from food-borne illness. In Plumas County, the inventory of food facilities includes large restaurants (with a seating capacity of more than 25 or food preparation area in excess of 500 square feet), small restaurants, non-prep facilities such as convenience markets, and mobile or temporary facilities serving community events and the county fair. The inventory of facilities operating in Plumas County since 2005 is as follows:



A big part of our food safety program includes public education and outreach. As part of that effort, all food facility inspection reports are now available to the public on the internet. Accessed through the Environmental Health web page at www.countyofplumas.com/publichealth/envhealth inspection reports are available by geographic location and date of inspection. On-line access to these inspection reports has been very popular with the public.

Another important part of the food safety program is food safety knowledge and certification. Starting in 2003, Environmental Health began administering Serv-Safe food safety certification exams for retail food handlers. Although this certification is available from private vendors, offering it locally provides advantages to the facility operator and demonstrates Environmental Health's commitment to food safety. The decrease in the number of exams given the past few years reflects the 5 year renewal cycle. Nevertheless this remains a popular service due to its local availability and flexibility.



WATER QUALITY ASSURANCE

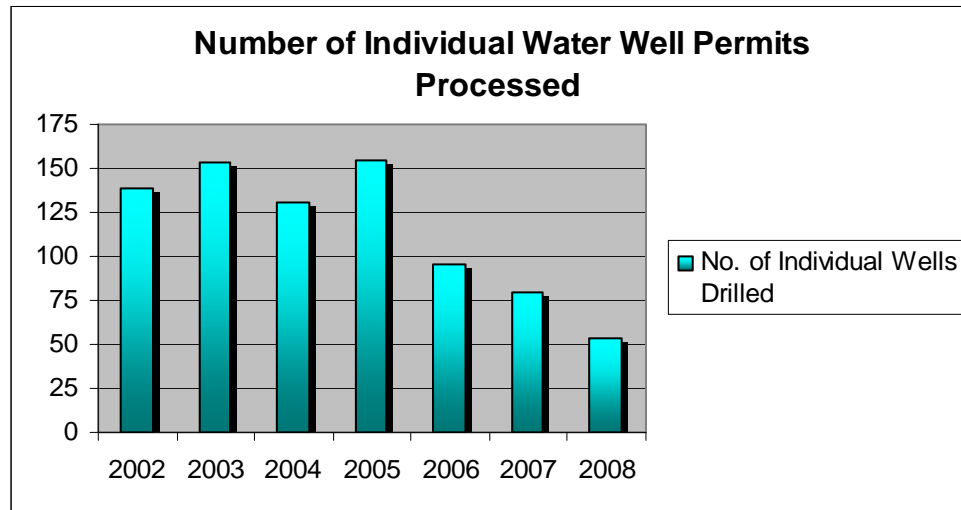
Protecting the quality of Plumas County's lakes, streams and groundwater supplies is another core function of Environmental Health. The importance of this work has been highlighted by the California Department of Fish and Game's project to chemically treat Lake Davis to eradicate northern pike. In 2008, Environmental Health completed the 10th and final year of well testing as a result of the 1997 pike eradication project. Last year we also began year one of a new ten year testing cycle for chemicals used in the 2007 treatment.



Also in 2008, Environmental Health received Department of Public Health accreditation for water quality testing. Environmental Health now offers certified water quality analysis for coliform bacteria and E. coli. This service supplements the nearest private laboratory options in Chico or Reno. Available for wells, springs, or surface water, analyses are useful for routine water quality checks for private sources or to help pinpoint contamination

problems with public water systems. This service will greatly enhance Environmental Health's water quality protection program.

Another important part of water quality assurance is the well protection program. Plumas County is highly dependent upon groundwater for domestic, commercial and agricultural uses. Unless properly located and constructed, water supply wells can compromise the quality of this valuable resource. Through our permit and inspection process, we ensure all wells meet the appropriate state and local standards. The number of individual wells drilled in Plumas County since 2002 is shown on the chart.



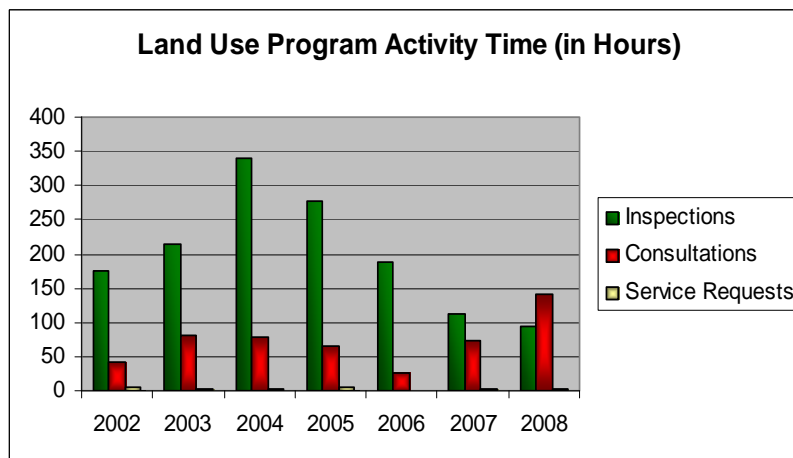
SOLID WASTE

After many years in a four county agreement with Lassen, Modoc and Sierra Counties, Plumas County Environmental Health received state certification for the solid waste program in July 2008. Responsible for ensuring the proper and safe handling of the county's solid waste, we inspect and permit county landfills, transfer sites, and investigate old or abandoned sites for hazards. Environmental Health staff also responds to complaints about litter, debris, and illegal dumping. In 2008, Environmental Health also received grant funds to clean up abandoned tire piles like the one shown above.



LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT

Working in concert with Planning and Building Services, Engineering, Public Works, and other state and local agencies, we evaluate proposed planning and development projects for compliance with environmental health standards, practices and regulations. This helps ensure today's

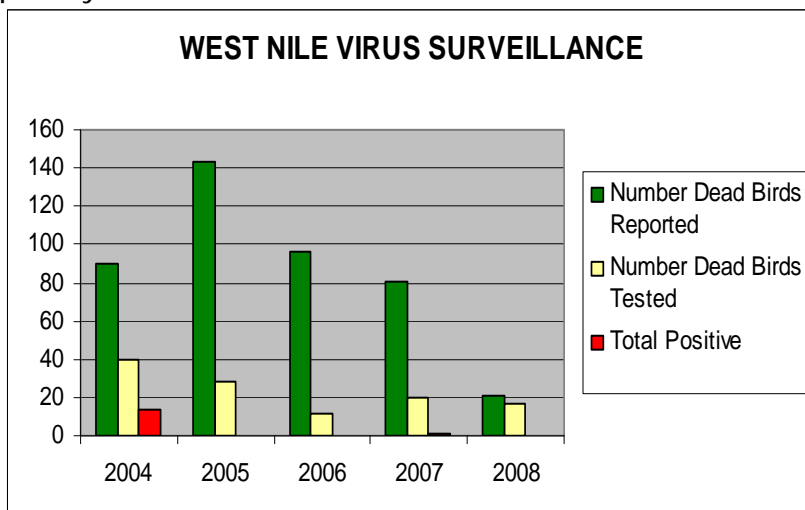


projects meet the environmental health needs of the community for years to come. As noted on the chart above, land use program trends mirror those seen in the septic system permit and well permit programs.

RABIES AND VECTOR CONTROL

Our rabies and vector control program protects the public from exposure to vector-borne diseases such as rabies, hantavirus, plague and West Nile Virus. We closely coordinate with state, federal and local partners while performing exposure investigations, environmental surveillance, consultation and other activities.

In 2008, West Nile Virus surveillance remained a top vector-borne disease priority for California, and Environmental Health coordinated dead bird testing for



Plumas County. This past year, 21 dead birds were reported and 17 were submitted to the State Department of Public Health Laboratory for testing. No WNV disease activity was detected through this effort in Plumas County in 2008.

RECREATIONAL HEALTH

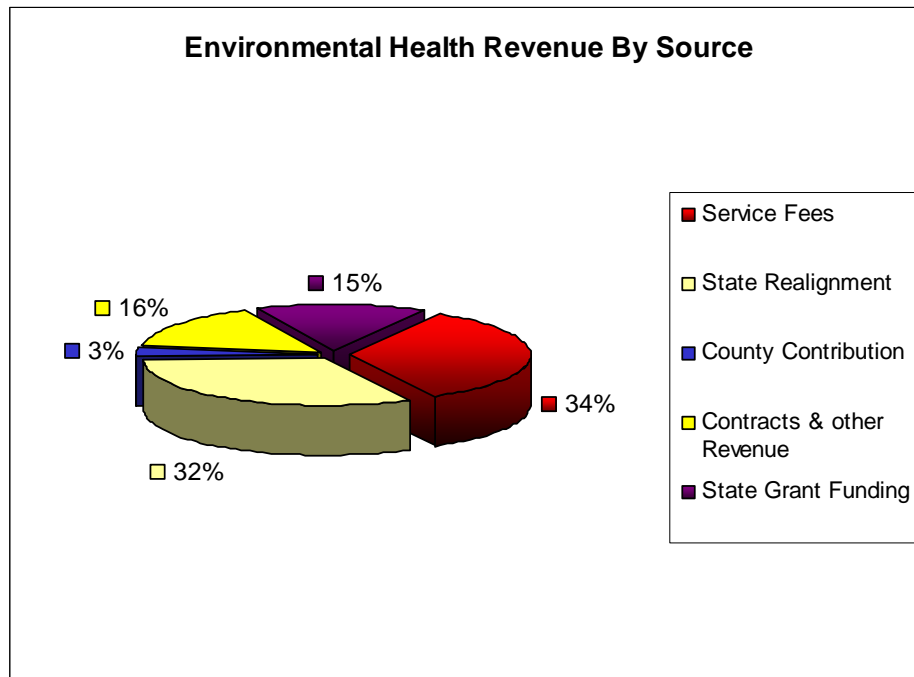
Our recreational health program helps prevent the spread of disease by ensuring the safe and sanitary operation of public swimming places. Primarily this means public swimming pools and spas, but we also monitor the quality of popular natural bathing places such as freshwater ponds and beaches, and may post warnings or close certain areas to protect the public.

HOUSING AND INSTITUTIONS

The housing and institutions program helps assure that rental housing, day camps, organized camps, and institutions (such as the jail) are maintained and operated in a safe and sanitary manner. This is important because the condition of our housing is a significant indicator of the health, social and mental well-being of county residents.

BUDGET AND REVENUE

Environmental Health revenue sources include Fees for Service, State Realignment, State Program Reimbursement Grants, Contracts for Services, and County Contribution. These funding sources are summarized below.



LOOKING FORWARD

2009 promises to be another exciting and challenging year for Environmental Health. Noteworthy issues include:

- **Maintaining High Quality, Efficient Service:** As the statewide trend of shrinking resources continues, and as fewer permit requests for septic, well, and land use program inspections are processed, improving program quality and efficiency will be increasingly important. Environmental Health is committed to continually improving program service delivery and efficiency, and focusing on the core services that have the greatest impact on protecting public health and the environment.
- **Wastewater Challenges:** Proper wastewater disposal and management pose significant future challenges for Plumas County. Municipal wastewater treatment plants are finding it difficult to meet increasingly stringent state discharge standards and their treatment plants and infrastructure are aging and deteriorating. Meanwhile, the proposed statewide onsite wastewater regulations are pushing rural areas to more dependence on community systems, but without necessary planning or funding for long-term sustainability. Our involvement in formulating effective and workable onsite wastewater regulations will be critical to future growth, development, and economic sustainability for rural areas throughout California.
- **Water Testing Laboratory:** After receiving accreditation from the state Department of Public Health late in 2008, Environmental Health is pleased to offer this service to the public. This low-cost, local option for water quality testing will greatly enhance our water quality protection program.

Although many of Environmental Health's programs and priorities are established by state legislation and regulations, collaborative planning continues to be a guiding principle for all our activities. Without collaboration, Environmental Health could not meet the needs of the community we serve. We would like to thank all of our state and local partners for their continuing support.

Jerry Sipe, Director
Plumas County Environmental Health