

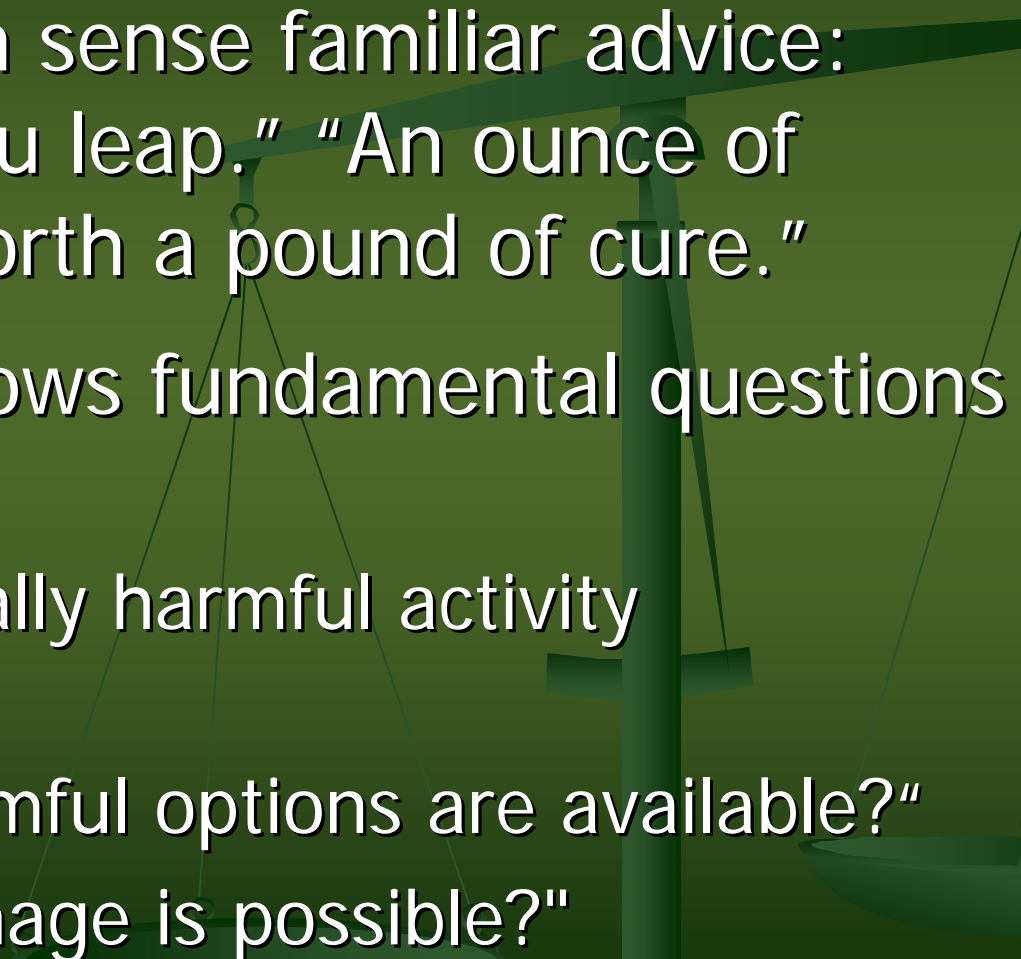
# Precautionary Principle in Mendocino County

How did we get where we are and  
where might we go next?

Report to the Mendocino County Board of  
Supervisors

November 4, 2008

# What is the Precautionary Principle?

- It's the common sense familiar advice: "Look before you leap." "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."
  - This process allows fundamental questions to be asked:
    - "Is the potentially harmful activity necessary?"
    - "What less harmful options are available?"
    - "How little damage is possible?"
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# Essential Elements of the Precautionary Principle

- A framework for decision-making
- Anticipates how our actions will affect the environment & human health
- Full scientific certainty is not necessary to act
- Essential elements:

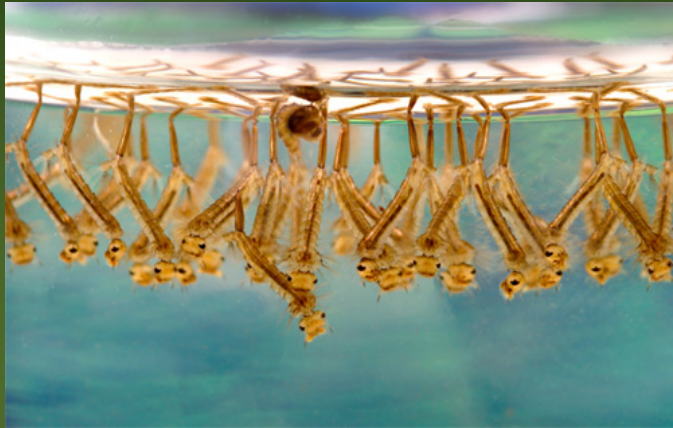


**ANTICIPATORY ACTION**  
**RIGHT TO KNOW**  
**ALTERNATIVES ASSESSMENT**  
**FULL COST ACCOUNTING**  
**PARTICIPATORY DECISION-MAKING**

# What has happened so far?

- Spring 2005-group of diverse citizens began to meet to discuss the Precautionary Principle
- Sept 2005-MC BOS voted to study the application & possible adoption of the Principle
- 3 public forums held to educate public
- June 2006-BOS adopted & selected EH & the Water Agency as pilots
- 2007-Precautionary Principle Workgroup developed the Procedures and Public Participation Guidelines
- April 2008-EH reported on pilot
- Procedures & Guidelines revised, final report written

# Pilot Project Summary



- Although time consuming, allowed staff to become more informed of alternatives
- Not well attended
- Called for public workshop rather than a formal public hearing
- Changes needed in Procedures and publicity techniques
- Need easier way for public to give input on issues of concern

# Existing Uses at Public Health



- Every 15 Minutes Program (AODP) dramatizes crash scenes aimed at improving safety of young drivers.
- Needle Exchange Program provides clean needles to IV drug users to prevent disease spread.
- Communicable Disease Program responds to diseases that can spread to more people & need to be contained.

# Recommendations of Workgroup

- Focus first on using the Precautionary Principle uniformly across the HHSA.
- Establish clear criteria for when to use different levels of public input such as public expression time at the BOS meetings, emails, and public workshops.



# Recommendations of Workgroup

- Develop a process to consolidate public input from many sources on issues that may require use of the Precautionary Principle Procedure.
- Adapt procedures to address limited resources to fully implement the Precautionary Principle



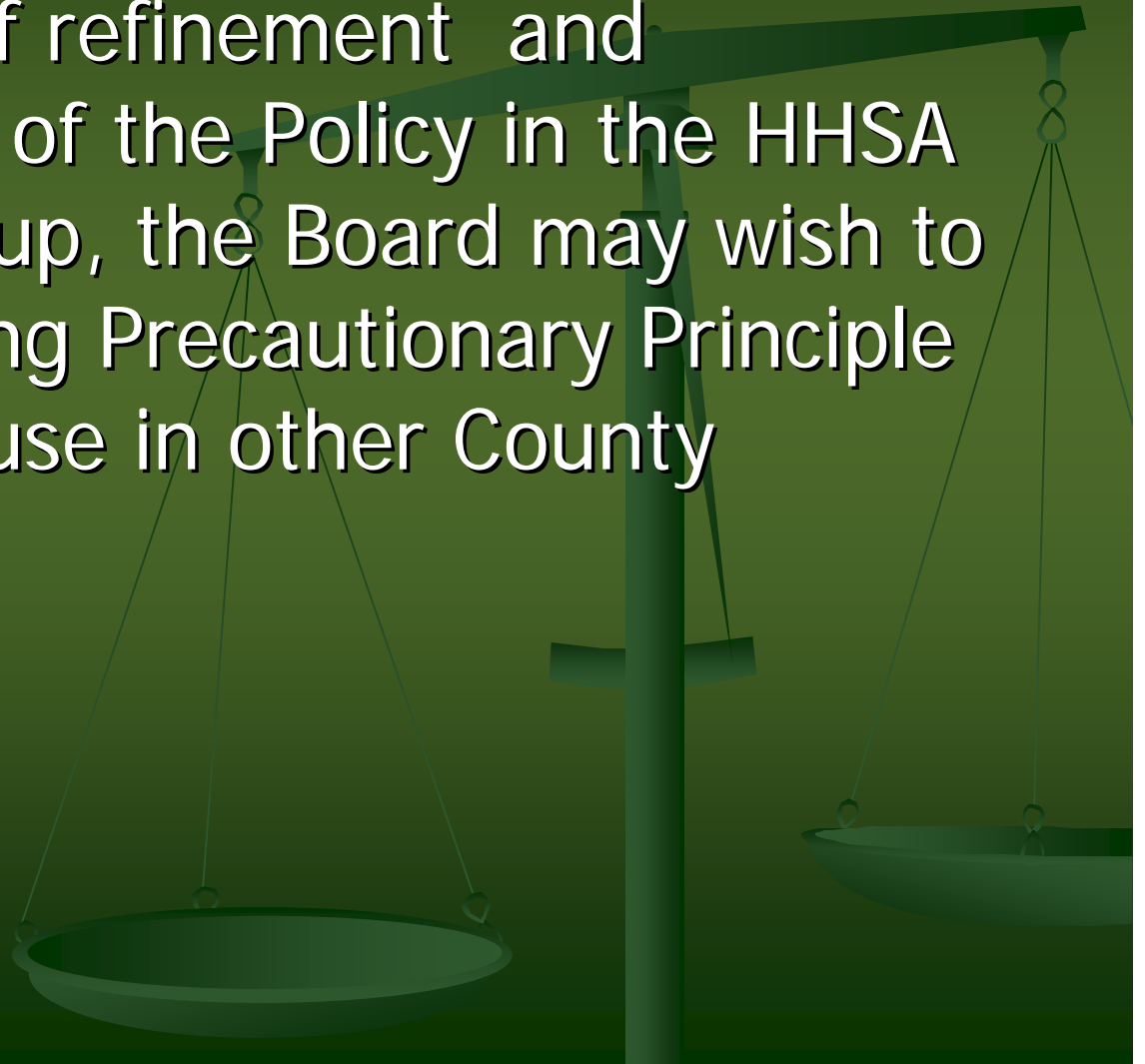
# Recommendations of Workgroup

- The Precautionary Principle Workgroup continue within Community Health Services of the HHSA and develop strategies for educating and involving staff.
- Add to the County's Mission Statement that it strives to promote health and ecological sustainability by living within available resources.



# Next Steps?

- After a period of refinement and implementation of the Policy in the HHSA by the Workgroup, the Board may wish to consider adopting Precautionary Principle Procedures for use in other County departments.



*Any Questions or Suggestions  
about Next Steps?*

