

Staff Report 75 (Informational)

Progress report on the Commission's third year implementing its Environmental Justice Policy.

INTRODUCTION

In December 2018, the State Lands Commission adopted an updated Environmental Justice Policy and implementation framework, committing to the principle that past environmental injustices will not define California's future ([Item 75, December 3, 2018](#)). This Policy reflects input from environmental justice and community-based organizations and guidance from an environmental justice working group.

The twelve goals outlined in the Policy are bold and transformative. They reflect an urgent need to address the inequities of the past, so they do not continue into the future. They are also reflective of climate change and how the impacts on human health continue to disproportionately affect marginalized and disadvantaged communities. As the Commission works to adapt to climate change and promote climate resiliency, addressing environmental justice becomes even more imperative.

This December marks the Commission's third year of implementing its Environmental Justice Policy. Since the adoption of the Environmental Justice Policy, staff has worked internally and collaboratively with environmental justice organizations and other agencies to implement the Policy. Key areas of progress include interagency coordination, development of processes for environmental justice outreach, and launching a Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Team. Below is more information on our third year of implementation.

JUSTICE, EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION TEAM

Commission staff created and implemented its first ever Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion team. This new team, known as the JEDI team, is a participatory decision-making team comprised of staff from each division and at all levels of seniority. The JEDI team is dedicated to promoting equity, inclusion, and diversity and addressing environmental justice within the Commission and throughout its work. A major focus of the JEDI team is advancing and harmonizing the critical

work that the previous Environmental Justice and Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) teams put forth.

The JEDI team consists of four subcommittees: diversity, inclusion, and hiring; Environmental Justice Policy implementation; outreach and engagement; and an equity matters newsletter. Each subcommittee focuses on advancing goals that will help the Commission continue to successfully implement its Environmental Justice Policy and Racial Equity Action Plan, and to develop other initiatives to embed justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion into the Commission's programs, practices, and culture.

JEDI team meetings this past year provided educational opportunities for staff as well as a safe space to engage in difficult conversations covering topics of equity, diversity, and inclusion. Staff engaged in an insightful presentation and discussion about microaggressions and the impact they play in the workplace. Staff learned how to identify microaggressions, the three types of microaggressions identified by psychologists, and how microaggressions can erode workplace culture if not addressed. Additional meeting topics included defining and understanding meaningful community engagement and outreach, successfully conducting community engagement, and sharing examples and challenges with other state departments that also have JEDI teams. Staff also had the opportunity to learn from a sister agency on their work to evaluate a major permit application through the lens of environmental justice and lessons learned from their engagement with the environmental justice community.

The Commission's JEDI team work also aligns with its new Strategic Plan. When the Commission was developing its new Strategic Plan, staff was intentional in ensuring that the Strategic Plan aligned with the efforts and goals of the JEDI team. Staff also ensured that the Strategic Plan reflected the Commission's commitment to addressing social, economic, and environmental justice and committing to collaborative leadership, among other things.

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Commission staff is implementing its Environmental Justice Policy in many ways. Staff is part of an interagency partnership that includes the California Coastal Commission, State Coastal Conservancy, Ocean Protection Council, San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Staff participates in monthly coordination discussions with these agencies to discuss equity and environmental justice and to learn from one another. Discussion topics include how agencies evaluate the effectiveness of environmental justice policies, how well community engagement is working, and

how environmental justice is analyzed in regulatory settings. Other topics include peer-to-peer sharing, trainings, policy initiatives, and resource sharing.

Internally, staff developed a comprehensive worksheet that the Commission's Land Management and Mineral Resources Management Divisions, the two principal divisions that process lease applications and negotiate lease terms, use to determine when environmental justice outreach is necessary. Using the CalEnviroScreen program managed by the California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, staff identify the census tract covering the proposed project or lease areas along with adjacent tracts bearing environmental burdens. Staff evaluates the geographic location for lease application or proposed project areas to determine whether environmental burdens, should there be any, would disproportionately impact nearby communities. Based on identified environmental burdens, staff conducts outreach to environmental justice communities and seeks input. This year, staff sent over 200 outreach letters and emails related to 13 lease applications or proposed projects. As a result of the outreach, staff meaningfully engaged with 12 environmental justice organizations.

Key outreach and engagement efforts included the Commission's two offshore wind energy applications off the coast of Vandenberg Space Force Base in Santa Barbara County, and the Rincon Island decommissioning project in Ventura County. Both outreach efforts resulted in engagement with local community advocates. Staff gained valuable insight regarding the need to incorporate equity into the offshore wind projects workforce. Some advocates in Ventura County expressed their desire to have Rincon Island become a public space for their community to visit and enjoy. Staff will continue its community engagement as the offshore wind energy applications are processed and the Rincon Island decommissioning project unfolds.

Staff participated in a meeting with representatives from National City, a predominately minority city in San Diego County that is, geographically, considered coastal yet has no beach access and very limited access to San Diego Bay. Most of National City's waterfront has been industrialized. Staff joined the Mayor, City Manager, City Attorney, Deputy City Attorney, and a Port Commissioner on an environmental justice tour. Staff learned that National City is working on addressing a multitude of environmental justice issues. They have completed several toxic site cleanups and have converted remediated land to open space, affordable housing, and community gardens. Staff witnessed firsthand the disparities this community faces daily. Conducting more site visits, such as this one, will be crucial for staff to observe, listen, and learn from environmental justice communities. These site visits will be imperative as we continue to implement the Commission's Environmental Justice Policy.

Leveraging technology is an important aspect of the Commission's work and a key focus area in its new Strategic Plan. Consistent with this focus area, staff transformed its environmental justice webpage by adding a GIS StoryMap (<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/97ec2716365c4258990ce0921abb96ce>) that illustrates case studies an environmental justice working group prepared for the Commission when it was developing its updated Environmental Justice Policy. This new feature provides an engaging and interactive way for the public to learn more about the Commission's Environmental Justice Policy and implementation efforts. Staff also created and incorporated infographics to illustrate the 12 Policy goals and implementation blueprint. These changes resulted in a much more vivid, enriching, and informative website page. They also enhance transparency and showcase ways that the Commission's work intersects with environmental justice, and underscore why it is critical that the Commission address environmental justice in its work.

Another focus area this year has been transitioning the agency-wide community engagement and outreach training, conducted in February 2020, into a model curriculum available to other state departments. Staff worked with each module presenter to record each module and develop written content supporting the presentations. Staff is working with the California Natural Resources Agency and the training outreach team to finalize the model curriculum and feature it on the Agency's website to be a broadly available resource for other governmental entities.

The Commission is a member of the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC). The Commission's representative on BCDC is a member of BCDC's Environmental Justice Commissioner Working Group, a group that provides staff guidance to ensure that BCDC incorporates social equity and environmental justice into its work. In this capacity, the Commission's representative also collaborates with a team of environmental justice advisors who provide extensive expertise and perspectives from organizations serving socially vulnerable, underrepresented, indigenous, and environmental justice populations. The Commission's contribution in this role advances environmental justice efforts for both BCDC and the Commission.

The Commission has also focused on ensuring that local jurisdictions managing legislatively granted Public Trust lands are incorporating environmental justice into their land management work. Commission staff has oversight over hundreds of thousands of acres of granted Public Trust lands, many of which are prime waterfront areas in California. When staff exercises that oversight, particularly as it relates to waterfront re-development projects, staff advises and assists grantees to

ensure that environmental justice considerations are reflected in their public land management activities.

NEXT STEPS

Staff has reflected this past year on the implementation of its Environmental Justice Policy. The ongoing pandemic has brought challenges to everyone and has affected how the Commission implements its Policy. Meaningful community engagement and outreach, like many things, is more apt to flourish through in-person communication. Unfortunately, staff has been unable to do in-person outreach for the second year in a row, and that has been constraining. And while staff has embraced and leveraged the new virtual format within which we work, staff looks forward to resuming in-person community engagement in the year ahead.

Staff is eager to continue implementing the Commission's Environmental Justice Policy in the months to come, knowing that meaningful results are outcomes of successful implementation. Staff intends to continue building and sustaining relationships and partnerships with environmental justice communities and advocates, and to strengthen and grow its interagency partnerships. Staff is excited to continue building on the efforts of the JEDI team and to strengthen its Racial Equity Action Plan. Staff is likewise excited to conduct regional outreach in environmental justice communities to identify community needs and ensure that environmental justice concerns are reflected in the Commission's work. Staff also hopes to continue focusing energy on ways to protect and extend public access to disadvantaged and marginalized communities and make the distribution of environmental benefits and burdens less unequal.

Environmental Justice Policy Goal 12, Accountability, is another area that staff intends to focus on in the year ahead. One strategy outlined in the Implementation Blueprint to accomplish this goal is to establish an external environmental justice advisory group to advise the Commission and staff on the Environmental Justice Policy's effectiveness and provide input on ways to improve and adapt our work. Having the expertise of environmental justice advocates will provide invaluable information to staff. It will also foster accountability and help ensure that the Commission is progressing in its Environmental Justice Policy implementation and doing so in a way that is beneficial to disadvantaged and vulnerable communities.

Finally, staff intends to facilitate focused discussions with division staff to explore ways to continue improving how we incorporate environmental justice considerations into all facets of the Commission's work.

OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION:

1. This progress report on the Commission's third year implementing its Environmental Justice Policy is consistent with the "Leading Climate Activism," "Prioritizing Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice," "Partnering with Sovereign Tribal Governments and Communities," "Meeting Evolving Public Trust Needs," and "Committing to Collaborative Leadership" strategic focus areas of the Commission's 2021-2025 Strategic Plan.