

**STAFF REPORT  
INFORMATIONAL  
95**

A	Statewide	02/27/18
S	Statewide	S. Pemberton

**INFORMATIONAL UPDATE ON EFFORTS TO OVERHAUL THE COMMISSION'S  
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE POLICY**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Last year, the Commission directed staff to update the Commission's Environmental Justice Policy. The purpose of this staff report is to update the Commission and the public about efforts to overhaul the Commission's Environmental Justice Policy and to elicit feedback about this effort and its implementation.

**DISCUSSION:**

The Commission protects the lands and resources entrusted to its care through balanced management, marine protection and pollution prevention, adaptation to climate change, and ensuring public access to these lands and waters for current and future generations.

Established in 1938, the Commission manages 4 million acres of tide and submerged lands and the beds of navigable rivers, streams, lakes, bays, estuaries, inlets, and straits. These lands, often referred to as sovereign or Public Trust lands, stretch from the Klamath River and Goose Lake in the north to the Tijuana Estuary in the south, and from the Pacific Coast 3 miles offshore in the west to world-famous Lake Tahoe and the Colorado River in the east, and include California's two longest rivers, the Sacramento and San Joaquin. The Commission also manages 458,843 acres of school lands held in fee ownership and the reserved mineral interests on approximately 790,000 acres where the surface estate was sold. These lands are predominantly in the deserts in the southeast and the forested areas of the northeast.

The Commission also protects state waters from marine invasive species introductions and prevents oil spills by providing the best achievable protection of the marine environment at marine oil terminals and offshore oil platforms and production facilities. And the Commission monitors sovereign lands, typically prime waterfront lands and coastal waters, that the California Legislature granted in trust to about 70 local jurisdictions.

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The Commission protects and enhances these lands and natural resources by issuing leases for use or development, providing and protecting public access, resolving boundaries between public and private lands, and implementing regulatory programs to protect state waters from oil spills and invasive species introductions. Through its actions, the Commission secures and safeguards the public's access rights to navigable waterways and the coastline and preserves irreplaceable natural habitats for wildlife, vegetation, and biological communities.

The Commission is organized into divisions that include Land Management, External Affairs, Environmental Management and Planning, Mineral Resources Management, Marine Environmental Protection, Legal, and Administrative Services. Although each division has its specific tasks, many of the Commission's programs are collaborative and inter-divisional. Examples include sea-level rise planning, abandoned mine remediation, abandoned vessel removal, the Bolsa Chica Lowlands Restoration Project, coastal hazards and legacy well removal and remediation, granted Public Trust lands oversight, the low-energy offshore geophysical permit program, marine invasive species prevention, marine oil terminal engineering and maintenance standards, oil spill prevention, and renewable and geothermal energy leasing.

During the past year, the Commission embarked on a path to overhaul its Environmental Justice Policy, anchored on statewide outreach, with the goal of understanding the different issues Californians face related to the public lands and resources the Commission manages. Our staff team has met and spoken with dozens of environmental justice organizations, local agencies, and the public from Southern California to the Central Valley. These conversations and meetings helped staff understand various concerns, how they differ from region to region, and how environmental justice is connected to the Commission's programs, statutory duties, mission, and vision.

The staff has also reviewed relevant environmental justice policies and implementation plans from other state agencies, including the California Natural Resources Agency, State Water Quality Control Board, and California Air Resources Board.

~~The Commission recently began receiving assistance from a consultant, with funding through the Resources Legacy Foundation, which is assisting staff to engage environmental justice and equity organizations. Eight environmental justice organizations are participating in a focus group the consultant convened. They include Azul, Central Coast Alliance for a Sustainable Economy, Communities for a Better Environment, Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment, East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice, Leadership~~

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~~Counsel for Justice & Accountability, and Sacred Places Institute. The focus group will ultimately provide staff and the Commission with recommendations and feedback for updating the Commission's Environmental Justice Policy. On February 12, 2018, the focus group and Commission staff held its first meeting.~~

The Commission recently began engaging with a working group of environmental justice and equity organizations that will provide staff and the Commission with recommendations and feedback for updating the Commission's Environmental Justice Policy. The working group's eight members include Azul, Central Coast Alliance for a Sustainable Economy, Communities for a Better Environment, Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment, East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice, Leadership Counsel for Justice & Accountability, and Sacred Places Institute. The working group is convened by a consultant with support from Resources Legacy Fund. On February 12, 2018, the working group held its first meeting. Commission staff attended in person and by videoconference to describe the Commission's work and its goals for the updated environmental justice policy, and to learn about the members' interests and work on environmental justice issues.

### **GOVERNMENT ALLIANCE ON RACE AND EQUITY:**

This year, Commission staff is participating in the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE), a national network of governments working to achieve racial equity and advance opportunities for all. GARE, in partnership with the California's Health in All Policies Task Force, is piloting a year-long Governing for Racial Equity Initiative to help state government departments, offices, boards, and commissions take a systemic approach to advancing racial equity. The Commission's participation in GARE is a logical extension of its focus on updating its environmental justice policy.

GARE cohorts are teams of government staff that work together to change the norm of what is expected and possible from government. Cohorts participate in a structured curriculum focused on strategies to normalize conversations about race, to operationalize new policies and institutional culture change, and to organize to achieve racial equity. The curriculum is based on the experiences of early adopters, including the City of Seattle, who have helped to pilot, test, and refine the curriculum and tools necessary to advance racial equity. Building on this field of practice over the last decade, GARE has worked to transform governments across the United States into more effective and inclusive democracies.

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**CONCLUSION:**

Over the next several months, staff will continue to identify and synthesize proposed content for the environmental justice policy revision, conduct outreach sessions, and coordinate where feasible with Commission meeting locations. Staff anticipates presenting a draft policy revision and implementation plan, based on research, outreach, and collaboration, in the coming months.