

Environmental Justice Interagency Collaborative Newsletter

ISSUE 1 | VOLUME 1 | 2011

It comes down to this: that all life is interrelated. We are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied to a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects us all indirectly.

- Martin Luther King, Jr., December 1967

Welcome to the First Edition of the *Environmental Justice Interagency Collaborative Newsletter*. This Newsletter is one of many opportunities the agencies are utilizing to share information and to communicate the various collaborative efforts ongoing throughout the Federal Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice (EJ IWG). Please provide your suggestions concerning the Newsletter to Melinda Downing, Melinda.Downing@hq.doe.gov.

The State of Environmental Justice in America 2011 Conference

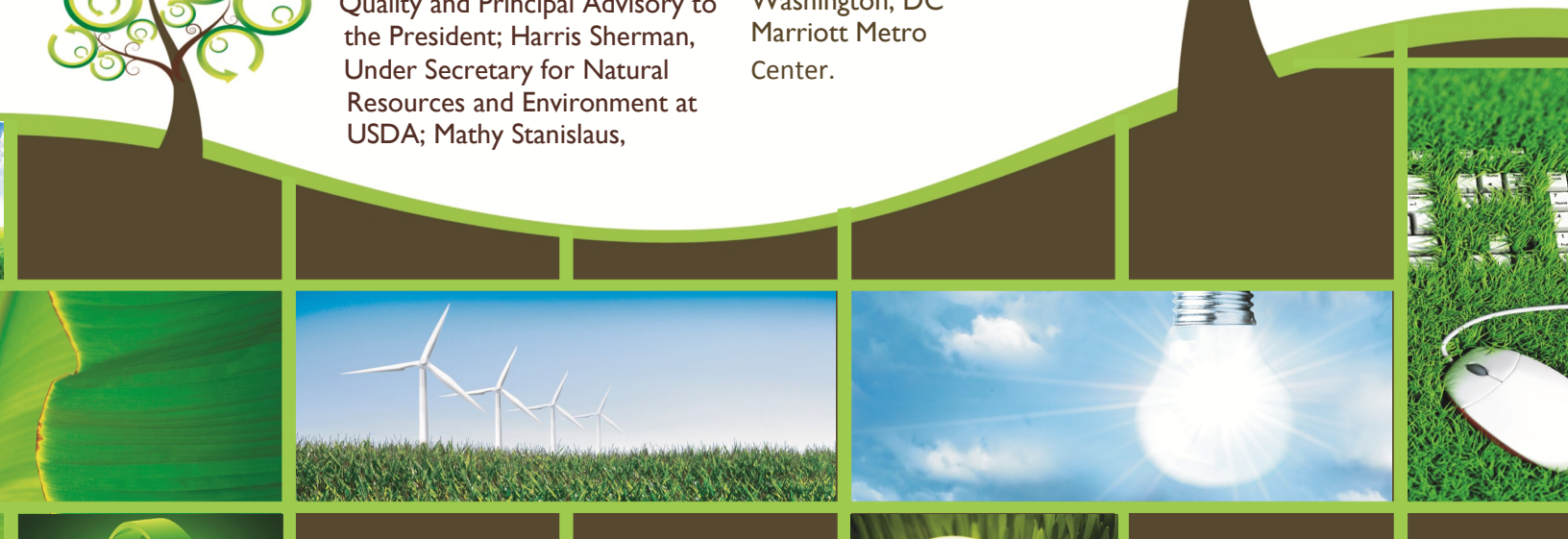
A collaboration of the U.S. Departments of Energy (DOE), Agriculture (USDA), and Interior (DOI), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), National Small Town Alliance, Howard University School of Law, and others conducted *The State of Environmental Justice in America 2011 Conference* in Washington, DC, on April 27-29, 2011.

This year's conference theme was "Building the Clean Energy Economy with Equity," and focused on climate change, green jobs, and equity for low-income, minority, and Tribal populations. The main goal was to continue bringing together participants from Federal agencies, academia, business and industry, nonprofit organizations, faith-based organizations, and local communities to participate in dialogue on achieving equality in environmental protection. DOE's Associate Deputy Secretary Melvin G. Williams, Jr. delivered opening remarks on the second day of the conference. USDA Secretary Thomas Vilsack delivered the Keynote Address.

Other speakers included Nancy Helen Sutley, Chair of the White House Council on Environmental Quality and Principal Advisory to the President; Harris Sherman, Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment at USDA; Mathy Stanislaus,

Assistant Administrator, Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response, EPA; Robert Stanton, Senior Advisor to the Secretary, DOI; and Ignacia Moreno, Assistant Attorney General, Natural Resource and Environment Division, U.S. Department of Justice. In addition, Congresswoman Donna Christensen, (Democrat, U.S. Virgin Islands) presided over the Health Disparities Panel.

To mark the renewed commitment to environmental justice by the Obama Administration, the **2012 National Environmental Justice Conference and Training Program** has been scheduled for **April 11-13, 2012**, at the Howard University School of Law and Washington, DC Marriott Metro Center.



DOE Environmental Justice Online Training

The Department's Office of Legacy Management, in partnership with the Office of Human Capital, will soon release its Environmental Justice Online Training for DOE employees and contractors. This one-hour course is designed to provide insight into the principles of environmental justice and how they are applied to the DOE strategy and activities. It includes information related to:

- Environmental justice overview;
- Government initiatives; and
- Community relations.

For additional information, contact Melinda Downing, Melinda.Downing@hq.doe.gov, 202 586-7703, DOE Environmental Justice Program Manager.

Elected Officials Forum— Brownfields 2011 Conference

The Elected Officials Forum was chaired by EPA Deputy Associate Administrator for Intergovernmental Affairs, Sarah Hospodor-Pallone. Mathy Stanislaus, Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response, kicked off the Forum with opening remarks. The Forum provided an overview of Federal resources available to support the efforts of mayors and other local officials to promote sustainable communities and implement programs that will address the myriad quality of life needs in their cities and towns.

Representatives from Federal agencies (EPA, DOE, and USDA) briefed local officials and their representatives about opportunities for Federal and local partnerships, technical assis-

tance, grants and other tools, and programs available to support communities.

Mayors and other local officials discussed the effectiveness of Federal programs in meeting their communities' needs. A special panel of key mayors led this portion: Heather McTeer Hudson, Greenville, MS and Chair of the Local Government Advisory Committee (LGAC); Ron Davis, Prichard, AL and member of the Prichard, AL LGAC; Carlos Romero, East Palo Alto, CA; and, Ralph Suozzi, Glen Cove, NY. These officials discussed successful models in their communities, shared best practices, and identified challenges and barriers to meeting their goals of maintaining clean, healthy, and economically robust communities. The mayors applauded EPA's support for their cities, including visits by the Administrator and a visit to East Palo Alto by Regional Administrator Jared Blumenfeld.

Federal Resources Panel

EPA

Megan Quinn, Office of Brownfields and Land Revitalization (Grants Team)

Matthew Dalbey, Ph.D., Acting Director, Federal and State Division, Office of Sustainable Communities

Surabhi Shah, Director, Urban Waters Initiative (Office of Water)

Marva King, Co-Chair and Grants Team Lead, Community Action for a Renewed Environment Program (Office of Air and Radiation)

Christopher Kloss, Green Infrastructure Coordinator (Office of Water)

Mustafa Ali, Associate Director, Office of Environmental Justice

Bill Hanson, Acting Associate Director, Office of Strategic Environmental Management (Office of Policy)

DOE

Melinda Downing, Environmental Justice Program Manager

USDA

Korah Abraham, Program Support Director, PA Rural Development

EDITOR:

Melinda Downing

Environmental
Justice Program
Manager

U.S. Department
of Energy

Melinda.Downing
@hq.doe.gov

202 586-7703



U.S. Department Of Agriculture Secretary Vilsack

QUOTE:



Preserving natural resources and building a healthy environment for all Americans is a top priority for U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and in the past two years we have instituted a number of policies with positive change for the environment. We are working to promote new strategies to target conservation more effectively

and maximize taxpayer dollars to benefit clean water and healthy soil. We proposed a new forest planning rule that will allow all Americans to better use our national forests and have looked to improve green spaces in urban areas through urban forestry programs. We are working internally – and with Federal and state partners – to develop strategies that identify and target ‘food deserts’ to ensure that no matter where you live you have adequate access to healthy, affordable food.

Environmental justice is not just about ensuring environmental burdens do not disproportionately affect areas of persistent poverty – but about creating opportunities for underserved communities. At USDA, we are working to do just that.

We are deeply focused on bringing economic opportunity to rural communities. Today, 90% of this nation's persistent poverty counties are rural. That is why President Obama's Administration has made historic investments in rural America to promote thriving economies and create jobs.

Environmental justice is about building thriving rural communities where young people want to live, work and raise their families. Over two years, we have laid out a framework to encourage the development of local economies by creating opportunities for businesses by ensuring access to innovative technologies, opening new markets for crops, and better utilizing our natural resources.

Let me give you two important examples of where we have looked to make a real difference in tribal relations and persistent poverty counties.

The Obama Administration and USDA are working diligently to improve tribal consultation practices and ensure the meaningful and timely involvement of tribal governments in the policies affecting their governments, communities, and people.

USDA Office of Tribal Relations and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) are engaged right now in a Sacred Sites policy improvement process to ensure that the USFS is doing everything it can to improve our ability to protect and preserve Sacred Sites. USDA officials have met with tribal elected leaders and spiritual leaders in over 50 locations and they are working to develop a series of recommendations to deliver better results for native communities.

Elsewhere, USDA has deployed a cross-agency “Strike Force” to better serve persistent poverty communities and socially disadvantaged farmers. In targeted regions, we are coordinating activities among all agencies and leveraging expertise working with community-based organizations. The Strike Force is currently identifying and addressing disproportionate environmental issues and adverse human health or environmental effects taking place in persistently poor communities in the pilot states of Arkansas, Georgia, and Mississippi.

Some of the proposals and projects currently identified by our Strike Force teams are rural library projects, health care centers, law enforcement vehicles projects, rural community and farm program assessments, loan application assistance, water and sewerage structures, air quality assessments, housing, farm to food markets, and a grocery store.

Today, USDA employees at all levels are working to better understand the impact of our policies on the American people. Our new approaches on resource management and our focus on creating prosperity for rural communities are helping to build a stronger nation for all Americans.



Expanding the Conversation on Environmentalism

Since taking the helm at the EPA, Administrator Lisa P. Jackson has set a new direction for the Agency. First, she has made it clear that this EPA will be guided by scientific integrity, unparalleled transparency and the rule of law. She has developed and implemented rules that will protect children, keep people healthy, and save lives.

Administrator Jackson has also made expanding the conversation on environmentalism and working for environmental justice a top priority. This priority focuses on ensuring consideration for the environmental and public health concerns of every community across the United States, particularly overburdened communities. As part of this priority, she has incorporated environmental justice into the EPA's strategic plan to ensure that environmental justice goals are established for each program across the Agency.

The impact of EPA's new priority and environmental initiatives is focused primarily on low-income, tribal, and minority communities. These new initiatives are intended to help overburdened neighborhoods reduce risks, improve health and the environment, and strengthen economic potential.

In July 2010, EPA released Plan EJ 2014 (<http://www.epa.gov/compliance/environmentaljustice/plan-ej/index.html>), a plan to integrate environmental justice into its programs and promote continuous, meaningful engagement with communities and stakeholders. Plan EJ 2014 is named to mark the 20th anniversary of Executive Order 12898 *Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations*, as the first time that environmental justice was recognized as a significant issue at the Executive level of Federal government.

The goals of Plan EJ 2014 are to protect health in communities overburdened by pollution; empower communities to take action to improve their health and environment; and to establish partnerships with, local, state, tribal, and Federal organizations to achieve healthy and sustainable communities.

In a further commitment to expanding the conversation on environmental justice, EPA Administrator Lisa P. Jackson and Council on Environmental Quality Chair Nancy Sutley reconvened, for the first time in nearly a decade, the Federal Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice (EJ IWG) in September 2010. Several Cabinet level members attended and confirmed their commitment to environmental justice, agreeing to several actions, including holding a White House Forum on Environmental Justice; conducting community dialogues around the country, and updating their agency's environmental justice strategy.

On December 15, 2010, the Obama Administration hosted the first White House Forum on Environmental Justice. The Forum allowed more than 100 environmental justice leaders from across the country and agency representatives to interact with White House Council on Environmental Quality Chair Nancy Sutley, EPA Administrator Lisa P. Jackson, Attorney General Eric Holder, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar, Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis, Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius, and Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano. The day-long event included panel discussions on a wide variety of issues of importance to the environmental justice community.

Since the Forum in December, the EJ IWG has held seven stakeholder meetings around the country to hear from people in the communities where they live, work, and play. The meetings have been opportunities for communities to interact with representatives from multiple agencies in one setting, and have allowed agency representatives to see firsthand community successes and learn about some of the remaining challenges.

This new focus on environmental justice will continue as Administrator Jackson and our Federal partners expand the conversation and promote better health, cleaner places to live, and stronger communities. In August, Federal agencies signed the "Memorandum of Understanding on Environmental Justice and Executive Order 12898," which committed each agency to, among other things, finalizing an EJ strategy and releasing annual implementation reports. Links to the other Federal EJ Strategies can be found on the Environmental Justice Interagency Workgroup webpage at <http://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/interagency/index.html>.



EPA and DOE Superfund Job Training Initiative

EPA and DOE Superfund Job Training Initiative (SuperJTI) is an environmental remediation job readiness program that provides free training and employment opportunities for citizens living in communities affected by Superfund sites. The Superfund program uses its experience working with communities to create partnerships with local businesses, universities, labor unions, communities and social service organizations, and other Federal agencies to address local workforce issues. EPA's goal is to help communities develop job opportunities and partnerships that remain long after a Superfund site is cleaned up.

EPA offers SuperJTI training through its Technical Assistance Services for Communities (TASC) contract, which provides independent educational and technical assistance to communities affected by Superfund sites.

Prior to each training program, SuperJTI conducts extensive community outreach and recruitment. Trainees are selected based on a rigorous multi-step screening process. Program enrollment generally ranges from 20 to 30 participants. Programs usually last three to six weeks.

Each program combines intensive classroom instruction with hands-on training exercises for each participant. Training courses are selected in coordination with EPA staff and local project partners. Core courses include pre-employment skills, 40 hours of Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response training, and CPR/First Aid. Upon successful completion of each training program, graduates receive assistance with job placement and follow up services from SuperJTI staff for one year.

Graduates of SuperJTI have been placed into a variety of positions, working as environmental technicians, production operators, material handlers, truck drivers, equipment operators and radiological control inspectors. SuperJTI places over 80% of program graduates into jobs.

Upon completion of the program, trainees possess the marketable skills needed to begin a successful career in environmental remediation and become valuable members of the workforce in their communities.

For more information, please contact Melissa Friedland (friedland.melissa@epa.gov) 703 603-8864 for EPA Regions 1-5, or Viola Cooper (cooper.viola@epa.gov) 415 972-3243 for EPA Regions 6-10.

"This Administration's commitment to our new energy future must include everyone. It is imperative that environmental justice remains a central tenet in moving toward our clean energy future."

Steven Chu
Secretary of Energy

