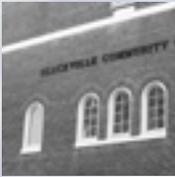


# Environmental Justice at the U.S. Department of Energy

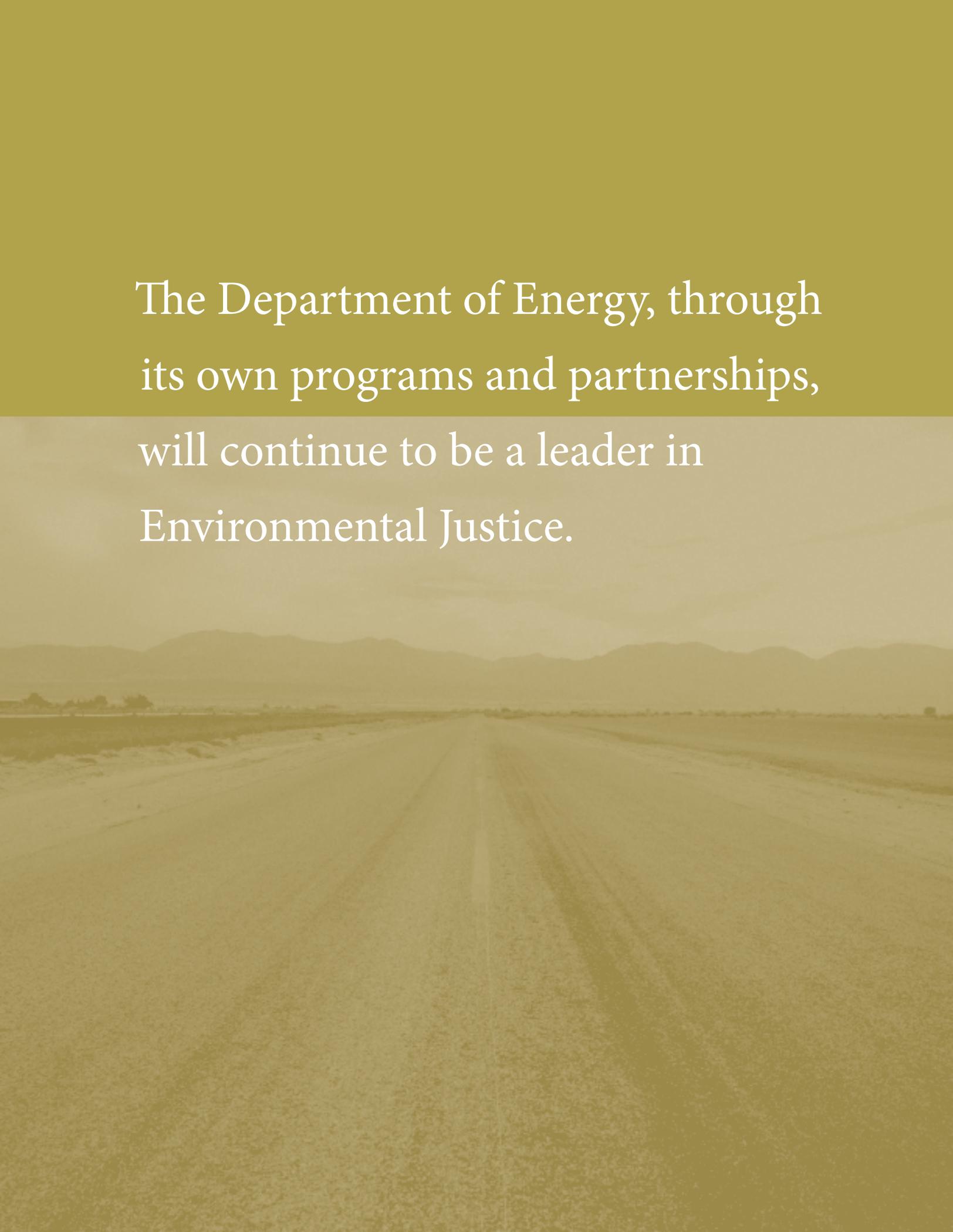
A Decade of Progress



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U.S. Department of Energy

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A long, straight road stretches into the distance under a hazy sky, with mountains visible in the background. The road is flanked by flat, open land. The overall scene is captured in a monochromatic, sepia-toned style.

The Department of Energy, through  
its own programs and partnerships,  
will continue to be a leader in  
Environmental Justice.

# Environmental Justice at the U.S. Department of Energy

## A Decade of Progress

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“Environmental Justice is here  
to stay ... and its momentum  
is growing.”

*Melinda Downing*

BLACKVILLE COMMUNITY C



## Message from... The Environmental Justice Program Manager



In 1994, Executive Order 12898, “Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations,” challenged the Federal Government to make Environmental Justice a part of the Federal decision-making process.

The Executive Order focused the attention of Federal agencies on the human health and environmental conditions in minority and low-income communities with the goal of achieving environmental justice and fostering non-discrimination in programs that substantially affect human health or the environment. Under Executive Order 12898, Federal agencies were directed to make achieving environmental justice an integral part of their missions.

Within the Department of Energy, that vision has become a reality. The integration of environmental justice principles is everywhere. It’s at Headquarters and the Field. It touches national programs and local communities. It’s a major consideration in environmental statutes, regulations, and policies. Environmental Justice is here to stay ... and its momentum is growing.

An important principle of environmental justice is to create partnerships between Federal agencies and other stakeholders to promote comprehensive solutions to environmental issues. Here at DOE, the results are inspiring—demonstrating that the forces of environmental protection, economic development, meaningful public participation, and community revitalization can work together for the benefit of all.

In my mind, there is one lesson that I’ve learned participating in the Environmental Justice movement: the need to involve all stakeholders in the development of the solutions. All groups in a community must be mobilized to truly make a lasting difference. While a relatively simple lesson, such participation is not easily implemented, especially when distressed communities are burdened with so many needs.

The Department of Energy, through its own programs and partnerships, will continue to be a leader in Environmental Justice.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Melinda Downing".

**Melinda Downing**

A green-tinted photograph of a large sunflower in the foreground and a wind turbine in the background. The sunflower is in sharp focus, showing its dark center and radiating petals. The wind turbine is visible in the background, slightly out of focus. The overall scene is set in an open field.

It is crucial to recognize that the future success of the environmental justice movement is to pave the way for the next generation to benefit from our progress.

## Introduction

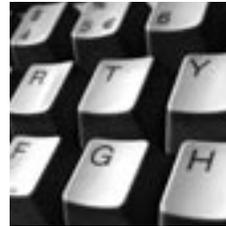
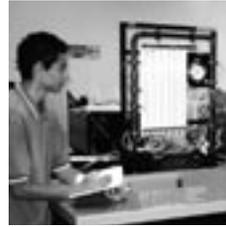
The President issued Executive Order 12898, “Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations,” on February 11, 1994. It challenges each Federal agency to make environmental justice an integral part of its mission:

- To focus attention of Federal agencies on the human health and environmental conditions in minority communities and low-income communities with the goal of achieving environmental justice
- To foster non-discrimination in Federal programs that substantially affect human health or the environment
- To give minority communities and low-income communities greater opportunities for public participation in, and access to public information on matters relating to human health and the environment.

### DOE's Role

The Department of Energy (DOE) is fully committed to promoting environmental justice and public involvement in DOE's programs. The overall goal is to create an open and accessible decision-making process, resulting in decisions that are:

- Technically and economically feasible
- Environmentally sound
- Health and safety conscious
- Designed to address public values and concerns
- Readily implemented.



### DOE's Strategy

- To identify and address DOE programs, policies, and activities that may have disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on low-income communities and communities of color
- To enhance the credibility and public trust of DOE, by making public participation a fundamental component of all program operations, planning activities, and decision-making
- To improve research and data collection methods relating to human health and the environment of low-income communities and communities of color, by incorporating full characterizations of risks
- To integrate effective environmental justice principles, as appropriate, with activities and processes related to human health and the environment.

## Partnerships

*A number of government agencies have attempted to address the myriad of environmental issues facing local communities: toxic site cleanup, lead abatement, asthma rate reduction as well as community and economic development. However, the scope of the environmental issues is beyond the scope of any single agency. Consequently, the DOE approach has been to establish, join and support partnerships that enable the full range of environmental issues confronting communities to be addressed in a comprehensive, holistic manner. The result: environmental problems in minority and disadvantaged communities can be addressed in a comprehensive, holistic, and integrated manner, while empowering those communities to be key players in the decision-making process.*

As a member of the **Federal Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice (IWG)**, DOE collaborates with other Federal agencies to coordinate Federal environmental justice efforts and develop a dialogue and strategy for future environmental justice projects in communities around Federal sites. These agencies have joined forces to promote collaboration among stakeholders in environmentally and economically disadvantaged communities—rural, urban and Tribal—to achieve integrated solutions that result in environmental improvements, economic development, and neighborhood revitalization. The IWG works with local officials, business and industry, non-governmental organizations and—first and foremost—community members to find solutions.



DOE supported the **Congressional Black Caucus (CBC)** in “Listening Sessions” which allowed members of the CBC to take public comments that will be used to develop forward-thinking, comprehensive environmental and health policies that recognize and foster the unique relationship between environmental protection, human health, environmental justice and economic development. Listening Sessions were held in various locations throughout the U.S. and the Virgin Islands.

DOE entered into a cooperative agreement with the **National Conference of Black Mayors** to build and enhance members’ capacity for energy and environmental planning and for monitoring and responding to energy and environmental issues in more than 500 communities. The program utilized computer-based technology, Internet access, training and formal relationships with the **Dr. Samuel P. Massie Chairs of Excellence** and Historically Black Colleges and Universities as sources of technical assistance and guidance.

DOE is a member of the **Federal Interagency Brownfields/National Brownfields Action Plan Agenda** and participates in the working group that updates the Administration’s Brownfields National Partnership Action Plan Agenda.



“Developing and implementing [solutions to environmental and health problems] require a holistic approach and a Healthy Communities Model ... no single agency is capable of addressing all of these factors alone, making interagency coordination and cooperation an imperative.”

*Charles Lee, IWG Chair, EPA Office of Environmental Justice*

## Community Capacity Building

*Often, communities, particularly small towns, rural areas, minority and low-income communities, are limited in their ability to participate in decisions relating to the environment due to the lack of access to information, technology, expertise and decision-makers. The Department of Energy has promoted extensive programs to build the capacity of these communities to participate effectively in the environmental decisions that impact their community.*

DOE has taken a lead role in the **IWG & Environmental Justice Training Collaborative**. This Inter-agency Environmental Justice training was developed to be generic for any agency or private sector use. DOE is currently assisting in the development of an Environmental Justice and Cultural Resource Preservation module, which was piloted for the IWG in late September 2004.



Rep. James Clyburn with Mayor Marilyn Murrell, Chair of the Small Town Alliance

DOE is one of the anchor Federal agencies that teamed with the **Small Town Alliance** and the Dr. Samuel P. Massie Chairs of Excellence to produce the National Conference on Community and Academic Partnerships. This national conference addressed issues facing small towns and rural

areas in light of the Federal government's growing reliance on E-government. Current plans call for follow-up by a series of conferences with the same focus and intent in small towns across America. Other Federal agencies that served on the planning committee include the United States Departments of Agriculture, Housing and Urban Development, Health and Human Services, the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the United States General Services Administration. All activities of the National Conference on Community and Academic Partnerships were designed to give small towns the tools and assistance for more effective participation in Federal programs.

DOE developed a **community capacity-building project in partnership with Howard University** in Washington, DC, to provide disadvantaged citizens with access to computers and the Internet. By creating community technology centers and providing excess DOE computers, this project offers citizens the opportunity to explore environmental cleanup information and obtain technical assistance using internet-based sources and computer-based information and models.

Another activity initiated through the **Howard University partnership** involves working with **Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)** and other environmental professionals to ensure community stakeholders receive the best technical assistance available. The HBCUs provide technical assistance online and in person through conferences, workshops and direct one-to-one interaction. This puts stakeholders in a position to make positive contributions to environmental decisions, and to make sure that environmental decisions are made in the best interests of the community.



Melinda Downing with Rueben Barrales, Deputy Assistant to the President & Director of Intergovernmental Affairs at the Partnership Conference

DOE has expanded the community capacity building partnership with **Tennessee State University** to provide technical assistance to the communities around DOE facilities in Oak Ridge (Scarboro Community) and the Savannah River Site (Augusta and Savannah, Georgia). The partnership with Tennessee State University has enabled these communities to build community centers that enable access to computers, the Internet, training and technical assistance in order to expand and develop capacity to participate in environmental decision-making.

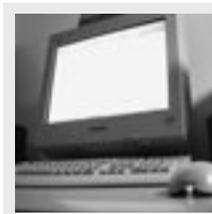


Community Leaders' Institute in Blackville, SC

Another DOE community capacity building partner is the **Medical University of South Carolina**, which has convened **Community Leaders' Institutes** to

introduce small, rural and minority community leaders to resources and information that will help them address environmental and other issues in their communities. Community Leaders' Institutes have been held in South Carolina towns for communities near the Savannah River Site.

DOE has teamed with the **National Conference of Black Mayors (NCBM)**, the **National Urban Internet** (a non-profit organization), and other Federal agencies in an initiative entitled "Computers for Black Mayors." This effort is designed to ensure that nearly 500 NCBM member mayors have Internet ready computers, technology training and technical assistance. Computers are donated from the various Federal agencies' excess inventory. Historically Black Colleges and Universities provide workshops and on-line training for the mayors and their staff members. Computers are often used to create municipal technology centers, which are open to all citizens and, in some instances, provide the best



opportunity for students to conduct Internet research and to prepare printed papers for their schoolwork. In addition, the technology centers are designed to boost the town's economic development prospects. High-speed Internet allows the town to search for funding opportunities in Federal and philanthropic sectors. With technical assistance from HBCUs and other institutions, the towns can now prepare a series of proposals and manage projects in a manner unthinkable prior to the centers. To date, more than 1,500 computers have been donated to small towns and community groups.



Dr. Mildred McClain presents DOE with an award for its ACA-Net participation.

**Academic Institutions, Communities and Agencies Network (ACA-Net)** is a collaborative approach involving communities, academia and government that helps develop the capacity of environmentally impacted communities to solve

environmental problems through education and technical assistance. In addition to promoting dialogue among all stakeholders, ACA-Net helps communities respond to both short- and long-term environmental problems by using specially designed response teams with expertise drawn from academic institutions.

DOE is also participating in "Tribal Wind Power—A Viable Strategy for Community Revitalization and Capacity in the Northern Great Plains." DOE has partnered with other Federal agencies and the **Intertribal Council on Utility Policy (ICOUP)**, a confederation of Federally recognized tribes in the Northern Great Plains, to demonstrate that the development of wind energy can be a viable strategy to provide for future economic, cultural, and community revitalization through development of sustainable homeland tribal economies.



## Public Involvement

*At the very core of Environmental Justice is the concept that all stakeholders, including those who have been historically disenfranchised and underrepresented, should have their voices heard. The Department of Energy has numerous programs to promote public involvement in its programs.*

The Department of Energy is a participant in the **National Environmental Justice Advisory Council (NEJAC)**, an EPA advisory committee that seeks input from affected stakeholders on environmental justice issues. DOE served on NEJAC's Federal Facilities Working Group, composed of ethnically diverse members representing state, local and tribal governments, community groups, academia, industry and interest groups, to improve public involvement at various sites across the nation.

**The National Coalition for People of Color and Disenfranchised Communities** consists of organizations and individuals that provide independent and objective grassroots input and direction to communities, agencies, public officials and concerned citizens

regarding environmental health impacts. Central to this effort is the need to build trust through meaningful public participation, comprehensive data gathering and analysis and information sharing. DOE assists the Coalition in conducting environmental health summits, which brings people of color and disenfranchised communities together in a dialogue with Federal agencies on ways to ensure meaningful and effective public involvement and to effectively address health conditions and concerns of communities living near or around DOE facilities.

DOE has teamed with other Federal agencies, Tribal Environmental Watch Alliance, New Mexico Alliance, Citizens For Environmental Justice, the National Urban Internet and others to form the **Coalition for the Los Alamos Community**. This is an effort to help residents of Los Alamos, Albuquerque and other communities impacted by activities at the Los Alamos National Laboratory become better engaged in decision-making processes at the Site. This coalition will help community residents research potential



Citizen meetings are a key to successful public involvement.

funding sources, prepare proposals and manage projects. It will also help these communities gain access to technical assistance to review and analyze technical and complex documents generated at the Site. The assistance providers will also help these communities develop and present positions and recommendations to the Site and others. It is expected that the bulk of the technical assistance will be provided online.



## Education & Training

*It is crucial to recognize that the future success of the environmental justice movement is to pave the way for the next generation to benefit from our progress. We have harnessed the power of some of the nation's best scientists and engineers to help us today, and we are providing opportunities for the next generation to pursue careers in science and engineering.*

**The Dr. Samuel P. Massie Chairs of Excellence** are a team of world-class scholars, researchers and educators from nine Historically Black Colleges and Universities and one Hispanic-Serving Institution who conduct research; provide advice and assistance to municipalities; mentor young scientists and serve as role models for students; and promote collaboration among Federal agencies, the private sector, research institutions, and other HBCUs. The Massie Chairs are a key element in DOE's community capacity building efforts and support Brownfields, economic development and environmental projects.

**United Negro College Fund Special Programs Corporation/U.S. Department of Energy Mentorship for Environmental Scholars (MES).** In 2000, the Secretary of Energy and the United Negro College Fund Chairman executed a Memorandum of Agreement that builds upon Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Minority Institutions efforts in the fields of environment, life sciences, computing, and engineering. A total of 40 students in the MES Internship Program will receive internships during their undergraduate study and will spend 10-12 weeks interning at a DOE national laboratory or facility. Each scholar is partnered with a laboratory or facility scientist to assist/mentor the student in his or her distinctly designed research project.

The Department also supports the **Environmental Technology Consortium**, a group of 17 leading research-oriented Historically Black Colleges and University/Minority Institutions. The Consortium conducts research, education, technology transfer and exchange programs in environmental technology and waste management.

DOE helps sponsor the **African-American Yearbook**, a comprehensive compilation of demographic, economic, health, organizational, and educational data that serves as a bibliographic bridge across the data divide. The Yearbook offers a wealth of information for students seeking scholarship and education assistance, as well as information about business opportunities, career guidance and health care.

**Public Participation, Environmental Justice and Communicating With the Public** training courses. The Department of Energy produced and conducted training classes to help DOE technical staff and DOE contractor staff to gain a greater awareness of environmental justice issues, communication styles for various stakeholders and strategies for incorporating environmental justice concerns in DOE decision-making. The classes were designed to help senior staff communicate more effectively with the public in settings such as public meetings, advisory committee meetings, or briefings. The intent of the classes was to support DOE's goal of having an open, transparent and inclusive decision-making process. Classes were offered at DOE Headquarters and field locations.

# CASE STUDIES

## PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

*The following case studies are indicative of what happens when all involved parties pull together toward a common goal. These projects combine strong stakeholder involvement, capacity building, university support and strong partnerships at all levels. The result: improvements in the lives of individuals and communities.*



**Augusta Brownfields Commission.** In Augusta, Georgia, DOE and EPA collaborated to build community capacity for environmental decision-making by creating a community technology center. Howard University Urban Environment Institute provided technical assistance. Paine College provided Internet access to the center. Once the center was in operation, Howard University, EPA and DOE provided training sessions that included basic computer operations, geographic information systems (GIS), risk assessment, risk management, and other subject matters such as grants research and proposal writing. With the skills gained through this training and the support of the Mayor of Augusta, the community was able to draft and submit a winning EPA Brownfields Pilot proposal. The Augusta Brownfields Commission has cleaned a waste site that has plagued the community for years. The Commission is currently taking steps to redevelop the site and is targeting other sites in Augusta for cleanup and redevelopment. DOE continues as a member of the Augusta Brownfields Partnership, which assists the community in achieving its revitalization goals.

**DOE Headquarters, Savannah River Operations Office, Westinghouse Savannah River Company, Savannah State University, Citizens For Environmental Justice and the Environmental Protection Agency Partnership.** Under this partnership and grant, communities near Savannah River are building the capacity to better participate in the decision-making processes of the site relative to environmental cleanup and future missions. The local communities are given access to Federal and university experts to gain information, increase knowledge and receive technical assistance. The benefits to the communities—and to DOE—are significant. They include:

- Citizens better understand the decision-making process
- Citizens and students have the tools to better understand technical issues
- Students have access to a state-of-the-art environmental laboratory at Savannah State University (SSU)
- Students are exposed to additional opportunities at at SSU and the Site
- Communities and DOE are working together
- A better prepared community to participate in decisions from the beginning
- Improved trust in and credibility of DOE with many stakeholders
- A model partnership that can be replicated at other sites.



## Recognition & Commendations

*The Department of Energy's Environmental Justice Program has been recognized by Congress, governmental groups, advocacy groups and individuals—from small-town mayors to college students.*

**Plaque Awarded to Melinda Downing and Department of Energy from the Small Town Alliance.** Award for efforts to provide small towns with computers, technology training and technical assistance.

**Certificate Awarded to Melinda Downing and Department of Energy from the U.S. House of Representatives and the Congressional Black Caucus.** In grateful appreciation for outstanding support of the National Environmental Policy Commission.

**Certificate Awarded to Melinda Downing and the Department from the National Conference of Black Mayors.**

**The National Campaign for Tolerance.** Authorize Melinda Downing be placed on the Wall of Tolerance honoring those who are taking a personal public stand against hate, injustice and intolerance and who are leading the way toward a more just America as founding members of the National Campaign for Tolerance.

**Black Youth Leadership Development Institute.** Certificate of Appreciation.

**United Negro College Fund Special Programs Corporation(UNCFSP)/U.S. Department of Energy Mentorship for Environmental Scholars (MES).** Excerpts from student letter:

*This summer I was blessed to be sponsored as an intern through the UNCFSP. I worked at the Argonne National Laboratory, in Argonne, Illinois. I had the summer of a lifetime! As an intern, I worked for the Department of Energy. I worked on several projects that included environmental cleanup, contamination, and research work on chromium and its effects on the body. I applied computer, writing and research skills to complete my tasks.*

*I learned so much more science this summer. I got the feeling of what it's like to work in the real world. It can be ugly sometimes, but the more you know, the better you are prepared. This summer I had to lean back on my education, my past work experiences, people and professional skills. Once we are on our own, there is nothing anyone can tell us anymore. We can only apply what we have learned, hopefully in the right way and go for the gold.*

*Thank you United Negro College Fund Special Programs for providing this opportunity to students. Thank you Department of Energy for directing these great programs.*

Shavon Tate – MES Intern

## The Future: Furthering DOE's Commitment

The commitment of DOE to environmental justice initiatives is ongoing. DOE continues to pursue an integrated approach by all its components to:

- Formulate clear strategies for environmental justice
- Emphasize community participation and empowerment of stakeholders and communities
- Encourage modified approaches to structure models for occupational and environmental science research of high-risk communities and workers
- Embrace interagency coordination to ensure environmental justice
- Heighten the sensitivity of DOE managers and staff to environmental justice responsibilities.

DOE continues to give community groups the tools they need to participate more effectively in environmental decision-making. When citizens are active in environmental decision-making, and have a working knowledge of the process and substance of an issue, they can better protect themselves and produce decisions that reduce conflict and protect resources. Environmental justice means that all people who are impacted by a decision have an opportunity to meaningfully participate in the process that concludes with an action. With more meaningful public involvement and opportunities for a dialogue among parties, affected communities and agencies will be able to make more just and cost-effective decisions.

### For More Information

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