



**United States Department of Energy**  
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**Remarks as Prepared for Delivery by Acting Deputy Secretary of Energy Jeffrey  
Kupfer**  
**State of Environment Justice in America**  
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Thank you for that gracious introduction, Melinda. And thank you for your work on this important matter.

I know many of our colleagues from the Office of Legacy Management and other offices throughout the Department of Energy are here with us today – thank you all for your contributions. And to Mike Owen, our Director of the Office of Legacy Management – thanks for your leadership.

And let me also thank our hosts here at the Howard University School of Law. We appreciate the opportunity to work with you and recognize the significance of holding this important conference at such an historic educational establishment.

The Department of Energy is committed to environmental justice. We consider it a Department-wide activity, and a Department-wide responsibility. We take it seriously, and that is why I appreciate the opportunity to be here today.

I want to talk to you about what we are currently doing at the Department in regard to environmental justice, and also what we plan to do.

We think about environmental justice at the Department as follows: the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of race, ethnicity, culture, income, or education level, with respect to development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.

Let me address the first component, fair treatment. Fair treatment of all people. That means no population, no group of people, based on race, ethnicity, culture, income or educational level, should receive a disproportionate share of negative environmental consequences.

At the Department of Energy, “fair treatment” is how we try to do business. Several of the Department’s Operating Principles memorialize this commitment. We endeavor, in all we do, to treat people with dignity and respect, to always tell the truth and do the right thing, while keeping our commitments and ensuring safe, secure, and environmentally responsible operations.

The second basic component of environmental justice is meaningful involvement of all stakeholders in Departmental decision-making. Meaningful involvement requires that our stakeholders have a working knowledge of the subject matter under discussion, as well as the process for conducting the discussion. In order to be productive, all participants must be versed in the subject matter and understand the rules of engagement. Otherwise, their participation will not be meaningful.

With this second component in mind, our environmental justice program conducts a number of activities for stakeholders and host communities near our sites across the country. Our intent with these activities can be described as follows: To give our stakeholders the opportunities to participate in DOE decision-making to the greatest extent possible, to give our stakeholders the tools to participate in DOE decision-making, and, to give our host communities technical assistance to help them strengthen their economies to the greatest extent possible

Let me now discuss with you some specific, ongoing activities at the Department.

The Department is partnering with Tennessee State University to address several of our environmental justice goals. Through one of these efforts, carried out in conjunction with the National Urban Internet, we are providing technical assistance to the communities near the Oak Ridge and Savannah River Sites, and to stakeholders elsewhere.

This partnership, called, “Building Community Capacity through Technology,” helps distribute excess and surplus computers and create technology centers. The centers allow community groups, public schools, small towns, and rural communities to address energy, environmental, economic development, academic and other challenges. Over the last four years, the partnership has donated approximately 5,000 computers.

Dr. Lonnie Sharpe, Acting Dean of the School of Engineering at TSU, is the principal investigator for this project. As I understand it, Dr. Sharpe has personally installed computers and software in Augusta, Savannah and Oak Ridge. He has also traveled the back roads of small town America, to places such as Keysville, Jonestown and Glendora. We very much appreciate the work Dr. Sharpe and Tennessee State are doing with us in community capacity building.

And I’m going to describe one of the centers we helped establish.

The New Ellenton Center sits outside the Savannah River Site gates in South Carolina, and is a “hub” providing service to other small towns and rural communities in the area. Once fully developed, the center will include various profit centers, including a refurbishing and distribution center, small business incubator, a computer repair training center, and a basic technology education center. In addition, the center will include a cyber café that will provide computers and high-speed internet access for community residents.

In addition to the Community Capacity Building through Technology project, we are also partnering with Tennessee State and the Medical University of South Carolina to conduct a training and technical assistance program called the “Community Leaders’ Institute.”

The Community Leaders’ Institute introduces community leaders to resources and information that will help them address environmental and other issues in their communities. The purpose of the Community Leaders’ Institute is to keep leaders informed and to emphasize the unique relationship between

environmental protection, human health, environmental justice and economic development – all essential components of community development.

While important to all communities, these resources and skills are particularly lacking in small, rural, tribal, and other communities that have historically been subjected to disproportionate levels of environmental risk with comparatively little in the way of recourse or reward.

These multi-day workshops have been conducted in various small towns and rural communities of Georgia and South Carolina. And we're also doing this work in other parts of the country. Earlier this year, we organized a Community Leaders' Institute in Albuquerque, New Mexico and included the Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute as a partner, focusing on strengthening Native American communities.

Another key element of the Department's environmental justice and community capacity building efforts are our Dr. Samuel P. Massie Chairs of Excellence. The Massie Chairs are a team of world-class scholars, researchers and educators from nine Historically Black Colleges and Universities and one Hispanic-Serving Institution. The Massie Chairs conduct research, provide advice and assistance to municipalities, and promote collaboration among Federal agencies, the private sector, research institutions, and other HBCUs.

And with the United Negro College Fund Special Projects, the Department conducts a summer Internship/Mentorship program for undergraduate students attending minority institutions. DOE has entered into a memorandum of agreement with the United Negro College Fund to bring students to DOE laboratories for hands-on mentoring experiences in the fields of environmental science and engineering.

Finally, we believe we have an important role as one of the founding partners of this fine conference. The Department is a prime sponsor, has many senior leaders participating on panels and in various sessions, and several of our colleagues serve on the planning committee. It is a valuable and productive conference.

Let me now move past our current efforts, and on to our vision for environmental justice activities at the Department into the future.

I am pleased to announce today that we have completed our new Environmental Justice Strategy, the plan by which we will manage our environmental justice responsibilities and commitments.

The Department's Environmental Justice Strategy illustrates a commitment to advancing the quality of life for our communities. It formulates goals based on clear priorities and tangible benefits that consider programmatic, legislative, and regulatory responsibilities. It emphasizes community participation, stakeholder involvement, and community empowerment. It refocuses research to recognize various health issues in minority, low-income and tribal communities. And it encourages new approaches to occupational and environmental-science research for high-risk communities and workers, embraces interagency coordination to facilitate environmental justice, and heightens the sensitivity of our managers and staff to environmental justice within DOE.

Let me briefly describe to you the four basic goals of the new strategy:

Goal 1 –

Identify and address programs, policies, and activities of the Department that may have disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority, low income and tribal populations.

Goal 2 –

Enhance the credibility and public trust of the Department by further making public participation a fundamental component of all program operations, planning activities, and decision-making processes.

Goal 3 –

Improve research and data collection methods relating to human health and the environment of minority, low income and tribal populations.

Goal 4 –

Further Departmental leadership by integrating environmental justice with activities and processes related to human health and the environment.

We believe this new and improved strategy is reflective of our commitment to environmental justice at the Department, and clearly outlines our objective, goals, and specific actions.

As we look ahead, the new strategy, which was developed through a Department-wide effort led by our Environmental Justice Task Force, will be closely accompanied by a new Five-Year Plan...further laying out the path forward for Departmental environmental justice efforts. It is absolutely essential that the public participate in the development of the Five-Year Plan.

We will continue to seek out comments and suggestions from all stakeholders – tribes, community organizations, site-specific community advisory boards, and so forth. The success of our efforts is dependent upon significant contributions by these and other groups, by the public, and by you.

I thank you for your attention and for the opportunity to participate in this important conference.

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