

00:01

Matthew Tejada: Hello, everyone, thank you for joining us today.

00:04

My name is Matthew Tejada, I'm the Director of the Office of Environmental Justice

00:09

and the Environmental Justice Program

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here at the Environmental Protection Agency in Washington D.C.

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We are really, really happy to be with you all this afternoon virtually.

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It has been a long time, we wanted to have a public engagement call

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really early on in this new year, that was one of the reasons we announced it

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pretty quickly after the president came in, and the first thing that we want to note

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with these public engagement calls is of course this isn't the first time that EPA has

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done these sorts of calls, it is a restart of a practice that we've had in the past

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that we found effective,

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but we appreciate and absolutely are committed to these sorts of calls just being one element

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of how the agency engages community members, engages environmental justice advocates

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across the United States, so this is just a first step,

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please know that, it was it was one of the quickest

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and first things that we could do, we will be developing other ways

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across the entire agency and the entire federal government,

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I think of much more thoroughly and meaningfully engaging communities

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with environmental justice concerns, the members of communities and leaders

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of advocacy organizations that work in and on behalf of a lot of communities

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across the United States.

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The purpose for these calls is one, just to reopen the dialogue

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so that we can more regularly share information about what is going on inside of EPA,

01:54

around environmental justice work, but even more importantly for us to hear directly

02:00

from all of you across the United States.

02:02

What are your demands, what are your needs, what are your realities,

02:06

what are your recommendations and requests for what we can do at EPA

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to better support the efforts of leaders on the ground working for their communities

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to improve your health, to improve your environment,

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to deal with things such as climate change, the lasting impacts of the COVID pandemic,

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we really do want these to be a regular way for us to interact

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and hear directly from all of you.

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We also want these to be a form of an accountability mechanism,

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not just for the EJ Program but for EPA.

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We're going to have a way of documenting what we hear in these, the requests we get

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and what we do about them in between these quarterly calls and that's one of the reasons

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that we really wanted from the outset to have these be a regular

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engagement function for the EJ Program,

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because we wanted this to be a form of accountability that we report back,

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we follow up, we are actively listening to what is shared with us today,

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and in future meetings.

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So just know that we are recording this today,

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we will be creating some notes of action items and we'll be following up on those

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and it's our intention that in future calls,

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one of the elements of the calls will be for us to revisit what we heard and what we did

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as a result of that in the previous call.

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One of the other things of course that we want to be able to do here

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is not just from the EJ Program, but really be able to have more updates

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and more in-depth conversation or more in-depth focus

03:41

on what other parts of the agency are doing on environmental justice.

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After all that's really where the important stuff happens on EJ,

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not what the EJ Program itself does, but what about the other parts of EPA

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our national programs, our regional colleagues, what are they doing to pursue

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environmental justice.

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And of course a lot of that will be dependent upon what sort of feedback

04:02

we our hear from you all the public, on what topics are of the highest interest

04:07

and importance to communities across the United States.

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So for today's call, we're really happy to have a couple of our new political

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appointees are joining us.

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I'm going to hand over to them here in a minute, we're going to hear from some of our new

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leadership on environment from both EPA, and I believe also from CEQ.

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And then we're going to have Charles Lee of a quick update about

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just some of what we know already in terms of the status of EJ at this moment

04:38

as the Biden-Harris Administration really moves to implement the agenda

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that they have already charted.

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And then we're going to stop and we're going to hear from you all,

04:48

so we're going to start by having questions come from the question and answer pod.

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So if you have those questions, we do have a couple members of staff

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who are moderating that question and answer pod.

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We'll go first to hearing some of those questions and providing some answers

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through this forum and then if we have time,

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we do have the ability to open up folks microphones,

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so when we get there, we will ask folks to raise your hand virtually

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if you have something to share.

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And that will be dependent upon time and of course we want to be respectful

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of the many folks who are on this call today, and try to get to as many as possible.

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So we'll have that engagement period, then we'd like to take a pause around

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the one hour mark, around 3 o'clock Eastern Time,

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we do have some very quick program updates concerning grants,

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concerning the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council, EJSCREEN.

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We want to share some very quick updates with folks after we have one session of hearing,

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we'll get through that really quickly and then go back to more question and answer

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and more engagement in that dialogue directly with you all.

05:58

So with that, also I want to now take a brief minute for a couple of housekeeping points

06:03

and I'm going to pass it over to one of our OEJ staff members, a long time staff member

06:09

Jasmin Muriel.

06:14

Christina Motilall: Matt, I'm sorry this is Christina, unfortunately Jasmin

06:17

was kicked out for a second.

06:19

Matthew Tejada: Okay.

06:20

Christina Motilall: She's trying to rejoin we're not sure what happened

06:22

so we're hoping she'll be back in just a couple of seconds.

06:25

Matthew Tejada: Right.

06:25

Christina Motilall: She will let me know when she is back in, so if you'd like we can continue

06:30

Matthew Tejada: Sure, once you-- go on to the next slide and that's you Christina

06:33

Christina Motilall: How convenient.

06:35

Hi everyone, my name is Christina Motilall, I am the Communications Lead

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for the Office of Environmental Justice.

06:41

And I just wanted to go over a couple of housekeeping points for the call today.

06:44

The first one is, please make sure that you're either joining by your phone

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or by your computer, not both.

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We have limited space in the call so if you join by both,

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you're taking a spot from someone else, so please choose one or the other.

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At the current time everyone is on mute, if you have any questions as Matt said,

07:04

you can drop your questions into the little Q&A section below

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and myself and a few other individuals will either answer your question,

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directly to you or will make the choice to answer your question publicly,

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so everyone can read it or we'll select your question to be answered during the out loud

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question and answer section.

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I'm following the Q&A section, we'll also have a time where you can raise your hand

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if you'd like to submit a comment during the dialogue,

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please limit your comment to one minute so that we can be fair to everyone else

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and get as many people in as we can.

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And as Matt had mentioned before, we will be providing these materials on our website

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as you heard when you entered that this was being recorded, the recording will

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also be available on our website following the call.

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And also very quickly, if you are selected to speak, please make sure that you speak slowly



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so that people can understand you.

07:55

All right, thank you so much.

07:57

Matthew Tejada: Thank you, Christina, and with that I'm very excited

08:04

to announce the first of our EPA's members of our new political senior leadership,

08:11

and that is our Associate Administrator for the Office of Public Engagement

08:16

and Environmental Education, Rosemary Enobakhare, Rosemary?

08:22

Rosemary Enobakhare: Thank you, so much Matt, can you hear me?

08:24

Matthew Tejada: Yep

08:25

Rosemary Enobakhare: Perfect.

08:26

Rosemary Enobakhare: Hi everybody, I'm Rosemary Enobakhare, I am the Associate Administrator

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for the Office of Public Engagement and Environmental Education,

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so excited to be here with you all today.

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In this historic moment, in this historic time,

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environmental justice has never been the center of a president's agenda,

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and so having this moment where we have President Biden, who has made it clear

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that racial equity and environmental justice

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are our core to the work that we're going to be doing

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and we're going to do a government-wide approach to addressing these issues,

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and I am just really excited to be here to do this work stakeholder engagement

09:11

with various communities, particularly the environmental justice community is going

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to be so critical and so important for our work.

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And so I look forward to working with Matt and his team to engage

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with you all around the important work that we're going to be doing in the months

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and years ahead.

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A few things that I just want to highlight pretty briefly, is that we're basically

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directives from President Biden and some of the executive orders that he released

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is one, when we talk about equity, equity starts at home.

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And so President Biden has directed us to focus inwardly at each agency,

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particularly at EPA to make sure that we are upholding principles of equity and justice

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within our own workforce.

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The president Biden has also directed EPA to really examine our programs

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to make sure that we don't have any barriers to entry,

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and that we are addressing some of the legacy pollution that we're seeing

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in so many communities across the country.

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And so we need to be able to work with you all, folks who are on the ground,

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folks who are working in communities to be able to understand ways that we can work

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together to come up with solutions that address these important issues.

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The next thing is really strengthening enforcement, the folks on our team are starting

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to come together to think through ways that we can make sure

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that we're thinking about how we can strengthen enforcement in various communities

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and frontline communities across the country, we have a lot of work to do,

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and we are looking forward to doing that work alongside of each and every one of you.

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So I am really excited about these stakeholder calls, these conversations are so important

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and so critical for the work that we have ahead of us,

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and get the engagement piece, the stakeholder engagement piece,

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is something that is extremely valuable for EPA, something that EPA has done

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pretty often previously but we're going to make put a very big focus on engaging

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with communities from the start as we think through some of the policies and the work

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and regulations and work that we have ahead.

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So thank you so much for this opportunity to spend time with you all.

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I'm really looking forward to hearing from you all and we're looking forward

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to these ongoing conversations.

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This is the first of many and so really looking forward to working

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with each and every one of you.

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I know after this call Matt and his team will be sending around some additional resources

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and I've asked for him to share my email with folks to be able to get in contact with me

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Now, I'll be doing a lot of the stakeholder engagement for the incoming administrator,

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and so we want to again be able to get him out to hear more about the work that's happening

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across the country and lean into this work, so that we can know firsthand

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and work with you to be able to address these important issues.

12:01

So thank you so much and looking forward to working with you.

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Matthew Tejada: Thank you so much Rosemary, and we will absolutely make sure folks

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have your contact information, and just me personally, I've never had the experience

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since I've been at EPA of having a leader like Rosemary come in

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and really want to focus and coordinate and put a primacy on the engagement across the board.

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So I'm really excited to have Rosemary to work with,

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it's going to be a fabulous new chapter in the way that the agency engages with everyone,

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so thank you so much Rosemary.

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Rosemary Enobakhare: Thank you.

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Matthew Tejada: I'd now like to also introduce another senior leader,

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we're so happy that she was able to join us today,

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I know she's got tremendous, tremendous requests for her time and attention

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over at the Council on Environmental Quality,

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and I know many folks out in the community space too are really excited

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just to have her at the Council on Environmental Quality,

13:02

so please Cecilia Martinez, thank you so much for joining us

13:06

this afternoon and the floor is yours.

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Jasmin Muriel: Matt I'm sorry I wanted to let you know I'm also back, when you're ready for me

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Matthew Tejada: Thanks, Jasmin.

13:18

Cecilia Martinez: Thank you, Matt, it's such a pleasure and honor to be here

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with EPA folks who have been holding down the environmental justice agenda for so long

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and I can I just give kudos to Matt and to the whole OEJ team for all the work

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that you've been doing all along the way and historically and it's really exciting

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I joined Rosemary as well in terms of the great appreciation

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that we have now in this new era of environmental justice

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which is what I like to think of it that we have never had environmental justice

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as a focal point or a federal policy agenda.

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And it's exciting and it's also daunting and of course we all want to be held accountable

14:05

for this agenda, so my role the first ever role at the Council of Environmental Quality

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is the Senior Director for Environmental Justice.

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My role is basically to help coordinate a whole of government approach

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to environmental justice to build on the work that EPA folks have been doing

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to support further upgrading of environmental justice at EPA,

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but just as importantly to make sure that environmental justice

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is a core function of all the agencies across government, including Department

14:36

of Energy, Department of Transportation, HHS, HUD, etc.

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As we all know EJ at its foundation is intersectional, it's the historical definition of EJ

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is a safe and healthy environment where we work, play, pray, learn, and go to school.

14:56

And so I think this is an exciting time some of the things that will be happening soon

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and you will be hearing more information about that is that there will be

15:05

a first ever White House Environmental Justice Advisory Council,

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again to help guide and provide recommendations to a whole of government approach,

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as well as the commitment by the president to have a 40 percent of the investment benefits

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of the two trillion dollars in investments in energy, transportation, health, and housing

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as we transition to this clean economy and our role is to make sure

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that those 40 percent investment benefits go to the place where they're needed.

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So I'm really happy to join the team and like Rosemary and Matt,

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please feel free to reach out to me at CEQ hopefully we'll also provide my email address

15:48

to Matt and really look forward to working with all of you.

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Matthew Tejada: Thank you so much, Cecilia, and yes, we will definitely make sure

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to include your email address and the information materials we share with folks afterwards.

16:02

Thank you so much for joining us.

16:05

And now I'd like to pass it over to the Senior Advisor,

16:08

the Senior Policy Advisor for EJ, Charles Lee.

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Jasmin Muriel: Matthew, I'm--

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Matthew Tejada: I'm sorry, yeah, and first Jasmin, I'm sorry, go for it Jass.



16:19

Jasmin Muriel: It's okay, I'm gonna take two seconds.

16:25

Buenas tardes a todos, solo quería informarles que si necesitan interpretación a español

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pueden darle al globo que está en la parte de abajo de la pantalla a la mano derecha.

16:36

Solo le bajan el audio, no la presentación

16:40

así es que van a ver lo que todo el mundo está viendo.

16:44

También si tienen una pregunta, tenemos una área en la parte de abajo también

16:49

que es Q and A, ahí pueden hacer preguntas en español o en inglés, Como prefieran

16:54

y también para dejarles saber que todos los materiales van a estar disponibles

16:58

en la página de EJ y más información sobre eso más tarde.

17:04

Eso es todo, gracias. Thank you, Matt.

17:09

Matthew Tejada: Okay, now Charles.

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Charles Lee: Thank you, Matt and good afternoon everyone,

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and let me just start by saying how exciting it is to be working on environmental justice

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at this time on the Biden-Harris Administration's executive voters are a example

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of the coming of age of environmental justice,

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and for a person who has worked on EJ before it had a name, reading these documents

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is a truly remarkable experience.

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They demonstrate how like Rosemary and Cecilia have said in environmental justice

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has reached the very top of the levels of the federal policy agenda.

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It is probably too early to go into specific details about how these actions,

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how actions-- our specific actions will be implemented, but we can see many themes

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some of which are already been highlighted, but I just want to highlight a few

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or reiterate some of them, 5 of them, I thought jumped out.

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The first one is that the idea of addressing systemic racism

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carries out throughout all the executive orders.

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The second has been this has been mentioned already on community input both in terms

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of crafting the executive orders and in implementing them,

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they are comprehensive and intersectional, they reflect holistic thinking,

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and like Cecilia said taking a whole of government approach,

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they speak to the idea of just transition or the idea that

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as we move towards a clean energy future that everyone needs to benefit from that process,

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and lastly the emphasis on sound science, rule of law, and data.

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So we're talking about three executive orders and one presidential memorandum

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which are listed here on this slide, of course, the very-- the first one advancing racial

19:26

equity and support really speaks to environmental justice and the tackling climate crisis

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at home abroad where there is a specific session related to environmental justice.

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And Cecilia mentioned some of the initiatives and organizations

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that are going to be either created or started,

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and I'll just kind of go through some of them and then other ones

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a White House Environmental Justice Advisory Council, a White House Interagency Council

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on environmental justice, environmental justice officers in every federal department

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a climate and economic justice mapping tool.

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Like Cecilia said the Justice 40 Initiative and a DOJ, Department of Justice Office

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of Environmental Justice.

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I was going to share a few actual excerpts but will not do so for lack of time,

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but I do want to point out one however, because Ms. Margaret Gordon from the west Oakland

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environmental indicators projects has sent us a message about the need now to move

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community involvement to a new level.

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And so you will find in multiple places, in different ways variations of the following words,

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quote "The head of each agency shall evaluate opportunities consistent

21:02

with applicable law to increase coordination, communication, and engagement

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with community-based organizations and civil rights organizations."

21:13

Next slide.

21:16

I do want to say that over the past decade, we have learned a lot

21:23

about how to better integrate environmental justice and agency decision making.

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While we still have a long way to go, we have worked hard to distill some lessons

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which are outlined in this slide which I will go over very quickly.

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First, is about the need to define, articulate, visualize and operationalize the concept

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of disproportionate impacts.

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And this relates to the development of use of second generation EJ mapping tools

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like CalEnviroscreen and EJSCREEN.

21:58

Second, the need to have established a nexus with applicable statutory

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and regulatory authorities, this means this involves among other things

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the use of the EJ legal tools document.

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Third, we have a framework for integrating environmental justice

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in various programmatic and regulatory contexts,

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and this involves a spectrum or a framework of EJ for EJ integration approaches

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and applications using a fit for purpose continuum--

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Fourth, a early continuous

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and meaningful community involvement like Ms. Margaret had pointed out earlier.

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And lastly, a linkage to systemic racism and other structural inequities.

22:49

This is not only important as a general matter,

22:53

but assembling evidence of this language, of this linkage is important

22:59

for moving EJ analysis to a new level.

23:02

Next slide.

23:03

So I just want to touch upon this because contrary to many people who are naysayers

23:13

on the subject of environmental justice, we have in fact seen much progress over

23:18

the last decade, particularly at the state level where a suite of new statutes

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have been promulgated.

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For lack of time, I would just highlight them.

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There are those focusing on the prioritizing of allocation of resources of scale

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such as listed here California's Senate Bill 535, Illinois Future Energy Jobs Act

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and New York state's Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act.

23:51

And they have in some way shape or form, I am sure, informed the idea of this justice

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for the initiative.

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There are secondly, there are those that speak to the very important issue

24:04

of cumulative impacts and permitting of which there are now

24:08

statutes in 3 states Minnesota, California and New Jersey.

24:13

There are others-- speaking to community environmental protection

24:19

and climate resilience programs of various kinds and incorporating environmental justice

24:25

in the planning process.

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As I indicated, some of these are already informing federal policy as we move forward

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and in my personal opinion, they represent not only new advances

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in environmental justice law, but environmental law as a whole.

24:45

Thank you.

24:50

Matthew Tejada: Thank you, Charles, so with that we're going to have our first session

24:56

for some interactive-- interactivity and some dialogue,

25:01

and I'm gonna go first to Christina Motilall from the Office of Environmental Justice

25:06

for potentially our first question from the Q&A chat.

25:12

Christina Motilall: Yes, thanks, Matt, so the first question we have

25:15

is from Liz Ellis and it says, I handle both federal and state funding in Washington state,

25:22

my agency is coordinating agency regulations for EJ and Title VI,

25:25

our state is moving EJ related regulations through legislation,

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I'm not sure if any changes are being made to executive order 12898 for federal loans,

25:35

what is the EPA doing to help coordinate these different layers

25:39

of regulation which can be confusing to grant and loan recipients?

25:42

Matthew Tejada: Thanks for that Liz, yes, as somebody who used to have to navigate

25:48

our grant programs, the grant program, that I now administer I appreciate

25:53

how confusing it can be, I think a lot of the details of how the executive orders

26:01

are potentially going to impact or interact with different parts

26:09

of the federal government's activities, and particularly around funding is something

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that we're going to have to determine.

26:16

From experience though,

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and I think also just from what we have already seen and heard from

26:22

the Biden Harris Administration,

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those sorts of efforts and the impacts of them on helping our colleagues



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at the state level, helping our tribal partners in tribal government, in local government,

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we really have to look at where we are in terms of environmental justice

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across the United States and that addressing those issues,

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and really thinking about our relationship in the federal space as EPA

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with our state partners, with our tribal partners and local government

27:03

but that's going to be a central focus as it has been for some time of EPA's EJ Program.

27:12

I think there will be a lot more opportunity as we work to implement the executive orders

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and get some progress made on that implementation in really bringing some more clarity

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and some more definition to our relationship with states,

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and I would like also say particularly around issues of

27:38

how the environmental justice program works in coordination and collaboration

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with our external civil rights program, and especially in working with states

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through both of those two programs, and how they can complement one another

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that is something that I know a lot of the advocates publicly

28:00

have been demanding forever since there was a Civil Rights Act.

28:05

And since EJ was first an issue and I think in this administration particularly,

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we have a real opportunity to substantively move forward,

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and not just EPA, but really move forward nationally and move forward with our partners,

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particularly states in that regard on how to really have complementary efforts around

28:28

environmental justice and external civil rights.

28:33

Sabrina or Christina, do we have another question?

28:38

Christina Motilall: Yes, Matt, Tiffany Ganthier asks, how will the federal government

28:44

define a "disadvantaged community", as mentioned in several executive orders.

28:53

Matthew Tejada: Yeah, that is-- thank you for that question.

28:56

That is a one of the key issues obviously in the executive orders that

29:04

President Biden signed, since taking office, a little less than a month ago.

29:11

And that's something that folks are working across the government right now on,

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figuring out what exactly how that definition will be operationalized

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and what exactly it means and what it means in terms of the other parts

29:29

of the executive order whether it is looking at benefits and I know

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there's already a lot of conversations happening across the United States

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in terms of what is meant by benefits, what is meant by disadvantaged,

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what sort of data and data tools will be used to really start to bring some transparency

29:46

and some rigor to the usage of those definitions and the implementation of them

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with the other parts of the executive order like the Justice 40 Initiative.

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So it's it's still too early to say exactly how,

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but those are obviously, especially from the EJ perspective at EPA.

30:03

Those are some critical areas where we're going to be devoting a lot of work coming up

30:08

and I think again with the commitment to do this transparently and with public engagement

30:15

I think there'll be opportunities for folks to be a part of those processes as they progress.

30:29

Do we have another question or perhaps we want to take a couple hands that have been raised?

30:39

Christina Motilall: We do have some more questions if you'd like to do that

30:41

we also have some hand raised, it's whatever you like.

30:43

Matthew Tejada: Why don't we go and take a couple more written questions from the Q&A,

30:46

and I see we have 3 hands raised, so let's do 2 more Q&A questions,

30:52

and then we'll do a few folks that have raised their hands,

30:58

and we can engage in this way for about a half hour,

31:03

before we get back to doing a few brief program updates from some of the other members

31:09

of the EPA EJ Program.

31:12

Christina Motilall: Sounds great, so we had a long question come in

31:15

so I'm just gonna paraphrase it a little bit, this is from an anonymous attendee asking,

31:21

how will the EPA determine that they are speaking with the affected community leadership

31:25

and not just advocacy groups that proclaim they represent us

31:29

or say that they represent our issues.

31:32

So, how can we be sure that this will change and communities have a table of their own?

31:37

Matthew Tejada: Yeah, that's that's obviously a critical EJ issue, it's been something

31:42

that I think the EJ movement has wrestled with obviously on a lot of fronts for a long time.

31:50

I think that's one of the areas where having a robust EJ Program inside of government,

31:59

not just at EPA but whether other parts of the federal government are our state partners

32:07

where it's really critical to have folks, not just EJ practitioners,

32:12

but really more broadly understanding the first rule of EJ which

32:18

is communities speak for themselves.

32:20

But then having the experience and the skills to be able to navigate to make sure that

32:27

when we as the government engage communities

32:31

that we really are engaging with the voice of the impacted community,

32:37

and not others who would pretend or misplace themselves in representing

32:45

impacted community members.

32:48

It is something that I think we have a lot of progress in being better at,

32:54

but there's a lot of progress to make in that and part of our commitment

32:59

in the EJ program is to continue to not only improve our ability,

33:06

but improve the ability of everyone across EPA to be able to navigate in that space

33:11

and ensure that the real voice of the impacted community is not just heard.

33:18

But I think in this administration especially with the mandate we've received

33:24

from the Biden-Harris Administration, not just make sure it's heard,

33:28

but make sure it's heard first.

33:30

And that's something that I've really taken as a lesson

33:34

from my time here within EPA over the last almost eight years is--

33:41

not just the power of but the necessity of making sure that the impacted community's voice

33:49

is engaged and is fully heard and has done so in the first instance with anything that

33:55

we're doing, so that voice and the reality of the impacted community members on the ground

34:03

then frames and carries through the rest of the decision making

34:10

or the program implementation or whatever other process,

34:14

it's related to-- that impacted community voice is really the starting point

34:20

for how we look at integrating EJ into what we do.

34:25

Christina Motilall: Okay and Matt we have a question from John Brachial,

34:30

he asks, do you know what the Justice 40 Initiative will look like

34:35

under President Biden's executive order, and if so can you provide any insights?

34:42

Matthew Tejada: No, I really don't yet, those are pretty new elements in those

34:50

executive orders, a lot of appointees are still coming

34:54

into the administration at all levels and across the federal government,

34:58

so there's some sorting out to do and so we're not in a place yet to be able

35:04

to really speak specifically about how those are going to be implemented,

35:10

but I will say there is an unprecedented level of excitement

35:17

and energy and activity around the opportunity to really take the mandate

35:23

from the president and move EJ, move justice and equity considerations

35:32

into a space that is unprecedented for the United States

35:37

and as we progress in figuring out the implementation of those elements

35:44

of the executive order again to do so transparently,

35:47

and to do so in a way where the public can be a part of the process.

35:56

Victoria Robinson: Matt this is Victoria, do you want those who raise their hands now?

36:00

Matthew Tejada: Sure.

36:02

Victoria Voice: Okay, the first person I will be calling out is Yadira Orellano,

36:07

and you've been sent a message to go ahead, unmute your line,

36:11

I hope I pronounce your name correctly.

36:13

Yadira Orellano: Yes, hello everyone, my name is-- saludos my name is Yadira Orellano

36:19

I work with the people's collective for Environmental Justice in southern California,

36:23

and I am here serving as home base for Texas Environmental Justice Advocacy Services

36:28

in Houston Texas.

36:29

The reason why is because they're are intermittently having power outages

36:36

so I would like to report that Juan and Ana Parras as well as their staff

36:39

have power and water intermittently.

36:42

Black, indigenous, people of color already overstressed by unemployment COVID

36:47

a housing crisis, are also experiencing mass power outages and water shortage.

36:54

And the state of Texas, including Governor Greg Abbott, has failed to provide Texas

36:58

with clean drinking water and access to energy equity

37:01

to over 4 million people while attempting to frame renewable energy



37:05

as the cause for this power outage, and not stating factual information.

37:10

Governor Greg Abbott and the Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick have not called upon

37:15

Texas Commission of Environmental Quality to ensure monitoring is taking place

37:19

or implement a contingency plan to provide air monitors during power outages.

37:26

We have witnessed several flares, we are calling on the federal government

37:30

to provide monitoring and testing of water, air and soil due to flaring and emissions

37:35

that are not being publicly monitored or reported.

37:38

We call on the EPA to provide reports for Superfund sites, drink public drinking water

37:42

and long-term air monitoring.

37:45

The question is there an intergovernmental task force on the ground in Texas

37:50

or when can we expect more support from the federal EPA?

37:53

Thank you.

37:54

Matthew Tejada: Thank you so much Yadira, and I saw that you had your hand up

37:59

and I immediately thought Houston obviously where I lived, and it's part of my home

38:06

I hope it sounded like you were in California at the moment not in Houston,

38:11

I hope wherever you are safe and you're well and your loved ones are safe and well.

38:16

There are actually-- there's a call right now that I am missing where folks

38:23

from the agency have already pulled together

38:27

and are working on a response and coordination with our state partners

38:33

in Texas with other folks outside of Texas, I can't speak to the details of that right now,

38:38

because unfortunately we already had this call scheduled

38:43

so we have other folks on that but as has been the case, whether it is economic crises

38:53

or the COVID-19 pandemic or now, what is happening with this polar vortex

39:01

to really put a dramatic and different highlight on the fact that

39:11

communities with environmental justice concerns people of color

39:14

and indigenous and low-income communities are always hit first,

39:17

are always hit worst, need the most support to come out of to just try to recover

39:26

from these sorts of impacts in ways that far exceed

39:31

what most of our country would even think possible and really puts,

39:38

I think added emphasis, not that we need it, but if we had an emphasis

39:46

on the importance of things like figuring out this Justice 40 Initiative,

39:52

and really figuring out a different much more central focus on justice issues,

40:02

on equity issues, across the entire government.

40:06

And I believe that what the Biden-Harris Administration has already signaled

40:10

is that this will be an all of government approach and a new way of doing business

40:15

that really focuses on the fact that communities with EJ concerns, those overburdened

40:21

and most vulnerable places need to not be something that isn't also

40:27

but is the starting point for what we consider-- as a starting point for our work

40:32

is the starting point for how we make decisions.

40:35

And I am hopeful that as we work through this administration,

40:40

we will see the results happen not just in the decisions we make, but most importantly of course,

40:47

in the results on the ground for communities with EJ concerns,

40:51

particularly, in instances like this when communities are facing a crisis, are facing

40:58

the impacts of that crisis and are still dealing with them so often on their own.

41:05

So thank you with that, I hope everyone is safe, please pass on from the whole EJ Program

41:12

to Juan and to Anna and the whole Parras family and everyone at TEJAS

41:18

that we're all thinking of them and that our thoughts are with everyone in Texas right now,

41:27

especially those communities of course that are really suffering the most

41:32

in yet another catastrophe.

41:38

Victoria Robinson: Matthew, the next person is Richard Grow

41:42

Matthew Tejada: Hey, Richard.

41:46

Richard Grow: Am I unmuted?

41:48

Richard Grow: You are live.

41:50

Richard Grow: Yeah, [LAUGHS], okay , and thank you and good to see you

41:53

and just for other folks, I retired from EPA the year before last

41:57

and I've worked with several folks on this call, but since then I've continued to work

42:01

with several communities and organizations and just a suggestion you've already said

42:06

a number of-- several of you have made very encouraging remarks, Matt,

42:10

and mine goes to a suggestion that you meaning OEJ convenes soon a discussion around--

42:18

I guess the topic in general, I would call Title VI as a tool for environmental justice

42:23

and the session actually would get at more specific questions meaning how can communities

42:28

or how can EPA or how can states and recipients use Title VI

42:32

to achieve environmental justice.

42:36

I'm not suggesting this is a very convoluted seminar or anything like that

42:41

what I am trying to suggest is we start some discussions now with the right offices involved

42:47

which would clearly involve your own, I think would involve ECRCO

42:50

and it might involve other offices within.

42:54

But I think just the initial discussion -- whoever's in-- who interested in joining

43:00

it would be along the lines of OEJ and ECRCO and maybe others just bring in your initial

43:05

thoughts of how can Title VI be used as a tool for environmental justice

43:10

and if you laid out your initial thoughts and maybe there's some very specific thoughts

43:14

and methodologies, but really just get the discussion going

43:17

and have you all hear back from folks who've been coming up against the wall being frustrated

43:22

or maybe even some having some success here,

43:25

and out of that first discussion maybe come to some agreement is to have a even

43:30

more productive and pointed and supported conversation along the same lines.

43:35

But just a suggestion, let's have that discussion in one way or another

43:40

and let's get it started soon and other than that, I'll follow up with an email to try

43:45

and be a little more clear than I am you're used to my digression

43:48

Matthew Tejada: [LAUGHS] Yeah,

43:50

Richard Grow: Thank you--

43:51

Matthew Tejada: No, thank you no, Richard, Richard was a long-serving member

43:56

of Region 9 Office, and a real leader on both EJ and Title VI

44:04

within EPA and now outside of EPA.

44:06

So Richard, we have not stopped working on that and those conversations

44:14

have been taking place and are continuing to take place on an almost daily basis

44:19

between the different offices and again as we get more political leadership

44:27

into the building from the Biden-Harris Administration and get folks kind of briefed up

44:35

and understand where they are, and what they're thinking,

44:38

I think we have some very hopeful and exciting ambitions for moving our 2 programs

44:47

and our relationship between our two programs and the relationship between our two programs

44:52

with states and with other institutions across the United States.

44:57

I think we're all very excited about the prospect for making some fundamental

45:02

and meaningful progress in that area with this administration.

45:08

So for Victoria o, I think it's been Victoria, calling names I see,

45:13

We've got four more names that I'd like to go through now

45:18

and then if we can take a little break for some updates, so we can go through Ms. Margaret,

45:24

I see Ms. Margaret and I saw that she put something in the question and answer too.

45:27

So let's get to Ms. Margaret through these next four and then we'll take a break

45:32

and do some program updates and then come back for some more

45:35

questions and engagement with folks on the line.

45:40

Victoria Robinson: Sounds good, I'm going to move to Dharma Khalsa,

45:45

Matthew Tejada: Hi, Dharma, how are you?

45:47

Dharma Khalsa: Hi, I'm fine, hope you all are doing well,

45:51

as was said, my name is Dharma Khalsa, I'm from the University of New Mexico Law Clinic

45:56

representing the city of Española and the county of Rio Arriba.

46:02

I'm going to talk a little bit about a legacy contamination dry cleaner that is

46:06

located in Española which is a rural community about 30 miles north of Santa Fe, New Mexico.

46:13

I grew up in this community, my mom taught seventh grade

46:16

in a building that used to be located right on top of the plume and was torn

46:20

down about 15 years ago.

46:22

Even back then, she remembers having bottled water brought to the middle school

46:26

because they weren't allowed drinking fountains.

46:29

This contamination was discovered in 1989, finally listed in 1991, at the same time

46:36

as a similar plume in Albuquerque, New Mexico which is a big city

46:41

that was successfully cleaned up in 2013, and Española continues to actually see



46:48

increasing contamination along with new soil vapor intrusions that have not been

46:54

successfully studied and there's still a daycare right on top of it.

47:00

It's been almost 33 years, the groundwater contamination continues

47:06

and Española is as I said a rural community, it lies between two native pueblos,

47:12

Owinge to the north and Santa Clara to the south,

47:15

and we're seeing the contamination push on to the northern border

47:19

of the Santa Clara pueblo as well, it is a primarily Latinx and Hispanic community

47:24

and it generally gets the brunt of a lot of policy in New Mexico.

47:30

I'm here asking that the EPA continue to support this-- the cleanup of the Superfund site

47:39

it just recently pulled funding and put 100 of the burden on to NMED

47:45

which is the state agency, but we're asking that you continue this support

47:50

and to fully evaluate the soil vapor risks, the remediation and to combine a new plume

47:57

that was recently discovered right near the initial site. Thank you.

48:04

Matthew Tejada: Thank you, Dharma, but just my family's from Española as well

48:10

I spent a lot of my childhood in Española,

48:14

so I know it well, I'm not sure exactly where you're talking about there,

48:17

but I do want to know more about that.

48:21

So we will be following up with you, I would ask and here's a little insider tip for anybody

48:28

[LAUGHS] online.

48:29

EPA actually has a naming convention for our emails

48:33

it's just first name dot-- our last name, dot , first name @ EPA.gov,

48:37

so if we're going to follow up with folks as much as we can I want to make sure though

48:42

on this especially that we get the specific information

48:46

so that we can follow up with our underground storage tanks program

48:50

and with our Region 6 Office and we have a good relationship,

48:57

I think right now with NMED, so if you would send me an email Dharma-- Tejada.matthew@EPA.gov

49:06

we'll make sure that we put together the folks to understand exactly the what and where

49:12

of what you're describing and make sure that everyone that needs to be aware of that

49:18

and address it are doing so. Thank you for that.

49:21

Victoria Robinson: Matthew this is Victoria, I would also like to add that

49:24

we have an email address that will be monitored for incoming comments and questions

49:31

for follow-up from this meeting and that's [environmental-justice@EPA.gov](mailto:environmental-justice@EPA.gov).

49:36

That's also if you send it to Matthew, make sure you also cc

49:40

that email box to make it easier for also for us to get the things around

49:45

to engage the people in our regions, our regional EJ coordinators and the like,

49:49

so I wanted to add that in there. Okay.

49:52

The next person we have in line is Frank Holloman --avenue.

49:59

Matthew Tejada: There you go Frank, I think we can hear you now sir good.

50:02

Frank Holloman: First of all thank you all for this session

50:05

and thank you for allowing me to speak.

50:09

I'm a Senior Attorney at the southern Environmental Law Center and work with that group

50:14

in North and South Carolina and throughout the southeast

50:18

and I wanted to put before you if I could the issue of polluting and dangerous

50:25

coal ash storage by major utilities not just in the southeast

50:30

but throughout the country.

50:32

These sites contain millions of tons of industrial waste sitting in groundwater

50:40

right beside major bodies of water, rivers and lakes

50:44

and they are often surrounded by communities of color, people of modest means

50:50

rural communities who suffer the brunt of this pollution and the impact of these sites

50:57

on their property values and their quality of life.

51:03

We have urged and the communities we work with have urged

51:07

that the ash be removed from these unlined dangerous pits

51:11

and put in safe dry line storage stored in a modern way

51:15

where it won't pollute or hurt the community.

51:18

And in North Carolina, the Environmental Justice Advisory Committee

51:23

for that-- for the state's environmental agency recommended exactly that

51:27

to the state agency and in fact, the state agency ultimately did that.

51:33

That is required Duke Energy in that instance to remove the ash

51:38

that was sitting in groundwater from those unlined pits

51:42

and put it in a safe place where it wouldn't threaten these communities

51:46

or be threatened by floods and climate change going forward.

51:52

EPA in 2015 adopted a CCR rule that says exactly that,

51:59

that you can't leave ash sitting where in free liquids or in impoundments

52:06

but unfortunately, many utilities and states around the country are ignoring that

52:13

and proceeding ahead to allow the ash to remain where it is

52:17

in these unlined pits and these communities who are adversely affected.

52:24

What EPA could do and what we hope you would urge EPA to do

52:27

just like the North Carolina Committee did

52:30

and that is to issue clear guidance that the rule has to be obeyed

52:36

and the ash can't be left sitting in groundwater.

52:39

There was guidance like this under the Obama Administration

52:43

and if you had that kind of clear guidance, it would mean so much

52:48

to these communities going forward.

52:50

I might point out in the states of North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia

52:55

every one of these sites is being cleaned up and the contamination

53:01

and the ash being moved to safe dry line and storage but that's not happening in lots

53:06

of places in the country and many communities will continue to suffer for decades

53:11

to come if it doesn't happen.

53:13

I want to put that, thank you for the opportunity to speak

53:16

and put that on your-- up for your consideration to have that kind of clear guidance

53:22

so we can put this problem behind these communities once and for all.

53:26

Matthew Tejada: No, yeah thank you, thank you so much for that Frank.

53:29

I know that that has been not just a huge issue recently with some of the disasters

53:39

that have happened, have been perpetrated on communities

53:45

from coal ash impoundments.

53:49

I think that's exactly the sort of issue that we're ready for communities to put back on

53:57

our collective agenda at EPA.

53:59

And we'll also put that-- well first we'll make sure that

54:03

our colleagues over in the Office of Land and Emergency Management are aware--

54:08

I'm hopeful I haven't yet had a chance and I know he's still awaiting confirmation

54:15

but I think Carlton Waterhouse is a pretty exciting pick for some leadership

54:22

of our Office of Land and Emergency Management

54:24

and that's something that I think could potentially be

54:28

maybe a little more substantive issue that we ask for some folks to come in

54:32

and speak to more specifically on a future engagement call.

54:36

So we'll put it on that list as well

54:39

but thank you for sharing that today,

54:40

I know that that is a huge ongoing historic legacy issue

54:46

for environmental justice

54:49

and for public health of the most impacted vulnerable communities

54:52

so thank you for sharing that today.

54:55

So for-- Brandi--

54:58

Victoria Robinson: Yes, Brandi Crawford Johnson.

55:04

Brandi Johnson: Hello. Matthew Tejada: Hey Brandi.

55:07

Brandi Johnson: Hi, nice to see you in person.

55:09

Matthew Tejada: Nice to hear your voice,

55:10

I get a lot of emails from Brandi. [LAUGHS]

55:13

Brandi Johnson: I just want to keep you updated.

55:16

Matthew Tejada: I appreciate it. [LAUGHS]

55:19

Brandi Johnson: So my name is Brandi Crawford Johnson,

55:21

I'm an Environmental Justice Activist, an advocate in Kalamazoo, Michigan

55:28

and I am doing everything I possibly can to hold everyone accountable

55:33

that's responsible for the injustices

55:36

that we're receiving in the frontline community.

55:39

We are located next to two hazardous facilities,

55:42

one is called Graphic Packaging is a paper mill that is currently expanding



55:46

despite hundreds of air complaints in a respiratory disease

55:50

which is the highest in any region in our neighborhood.

55:53

I also got asthma by living in this neighborhood.

55:59

We have a class action lawsuit right now pending against Graphic Packaging

56:04

for the constant toxic gas odor that has completely--

56:08

it's like-- it seems like they've ruined our lives practically

56:11

not only we've gotten health issues from it

56:14

but no one can even enjoy their yards or invite family over

56:17

because the odor is so terrible and they've gotten about eight violations

56:20

from the state of Michigan, but there's just hasn't been really any enforcement

56:27

to that's really-- helped our community feel like we are actually being heard.

56:33

To expand on top of all of this was just really my breaking point

56:39

to filing this class action because I've tried everything

56:42

I have to work with everyone and then most recently I filed a civil rights complaint

56:47

against the city of Kalamazoo

56:48

because most recently, there has been hundreds of people like

56:52

speaking out at the city commission meetings

56:55

in the last few months about this expansion

56:58

and they have completely ignored our concerns, they're cutting down 700 mature trees

57:04

which will take away oxygen from everyone.

57:06

So that-- this mill can have extra office space

57:10

and they have been zoning the downtown area and excluding our area,

57:19

so I believe they're being discriminatory with zoning

57:22

and I think that's something that the EPA can use as a tool

57:26

as is going through the local government.

57:28

The local government has a tendency to blame the federal government for a lot of things

57:33

and so I think if we start locally with the governments

57:38

and get these neighborhoods rezoned then it can help the residents

57:44

to getting better health--

57:46

I mean, I even have doctors and toxicologists on my team helping--

57:50

I had a toxicologist meet with the EPA Environmental Justice Coordinators in Region 5

57:55

last week and he's trying to help everyone and get more air quality monitoring

58:01

and get more justice for Kalamazoo

58:03

but I just want everyone on here to realize that sometimes, if you can't get justice

58:09

through speaking out at meetings and the EPA might not have enough funding to help

58:15

or enough tools then you're gonna have to use lawyers,

58:18

you have to-- you're gonna have to file civil rights complaints,

58:21

it's the only way that you're going to get justice is if you use the law.

58:25

Thank you.

58:26

Matthew Tejada: Thank you, Brandi.

58:27

Thank you so much for all that you're doing for your community there in Kalamazoo.

58:32

You are being heard and I appreciate even though--

58:38

our colleagues Alan and Kathy are really the ones that are interacting with you,

58:42

they have kept me abreast of what is going on.

58:46

I know you are being heard,

58:49

and without community members and community leaders like you

58:54

there is no environmental justice, there is no environmental justice program,

58:58

there wouldn't even be a start to this.

59:00

So really lifting up people like you across the United States,

59:06

you're the reason why this program exists,

59:08

you're the reason why we're doing this call today

59:10

is to make sure that we're hearing from you,

59:12

that we're engaging with you, that we know what people are looking at

59:17

and needing and demanding.

59:19

And we hope that again,

59:23

we're entering into a new era of not just responsiveness to what we hear

59:28

but a completely different level of action and accountability

59:33

and actual change on the ground for communities.

59:37

So we're going to move on to the last one for this.

59:40

So here-- in just one second Ms. Margaret,

59:43

I'm going to be so happy to hear your voice.

59:45

For the folks that were-- please hold on,

59:47

I see there's at least five more folks after Ms. Margaret Gordon,

59:52

please do hold on.

59:53

We're going to take a slight pause and just do some program updates.

59:57

We've had some requests in the past, I haven't looked at the Q&A pod in a minute,

60:01

I'm pretty sure people are asking questions for some basic information.

60:04

We're going to go through some basic information just on updates

60:07

like where are the grants at-- what's going on with NEJAC.

60:11

We'll do that basic information and then come back-- come back to this list

60:15

keep going through-- the folks who would like to make a comment or ask a question.

60:20

And with that, Victoria if you would kindly please

60:24

Let's hear from Ms. Margaret Gordon.

60:28

Hi Margaret. Victoria Robinson: Unmuted, thank you.

60:34

Matthew Tejada: There you are.

60:37

Ms. Margaret, it says you're unmuted.

60:46

I don't know if maybe you're muted on your actual handset.

60:57

Let's give it one more second.

61:09

It's-- oh, try that again Ms. Margaret,

61:12

if you did something you just put yourself on mute now.

61:20

Shoot.

61:21

Victoria Robinson: Why don't we move ahead to the updates

61:25

and then keep her at the top of the list.

61:27

Matthew Tejada: Yeah let's come back to Margaret again

61:29

and see if we can't get that opened up.

61:31

This is the first time, we're actually the first--

61:34

we're the first anything I think at EPA using Zoom for Government to try to do

61:38

this sort of interaction.

61:39

So like EJ always is, we're the first ones to be on the leading edge of it

61:44

and we're-- I think it's actually going better than some of us had been worried about

61:50

but we're still working through some issues with-- using this version of zoom.

61:55

So if we could please let's go ahead to some of our EJ Program folks

62:00

who are going to give some updates and let's go right to the first one

62:03

which I believe is Karen Martin gonna update folks on the NEJAC.

62:10

Karen?

62:11

Karen Martin: Yes I'm here, good afternoon everyone, my name is Karen Martin.

62:17

I am the Designated Federal Officer for

62:20

the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council

62:23

and I want to just give you two quick updates about the NEJAC.

62:26

So the first update is that we are currently accepting nominations for new members,

62:33

we have seven vacancies right now, we are looking for-- the stakeholder categories

62:39

that we have vacancies in

62:42

include academia, we have one there community-based organizations two,

62:47

non-governmental organizations one, state and local government two,

62:52

tribal governments and indigenous organizations one,

62:55

and so the deadline to submit nominations or to get your application into us is March 24, 2021.

63:04

We have a count of a focus that we're working on this year,

63:08

we really need members from regions, EPA Regions 1, 2, 7, 8, 9 and 10

63:15

but we are accepting applications from across the country, so don't let that deter you

63:20

but we do have looking for some members to represent those areas of the country.

63:26

So you can find more information about the membership process

63:31

and also submit your application.

63:33

If you go to our [epa.gov/environmental justice/nominations-nejac](https://www.epa.gov/environmental-justice/nominations-nejac) page

63:40

and someone will put that in the Q&A pods, so you'll be able to see it.

63:45

The next update I want to give you is just--

63:48

we are working on scheduling our next kind of series of public meetings,



63:54

we hope to be announcing that in the next couple of weeks,

63:58

so if you have not signed up for the EPA EJ listserv,

64:01

please go ahead and do that,

64:03

they'll share information with you on that in the Q&A pod

64:07

and then all of the registration information will also be listed

64:12

on our registration meeting page and you can see that link there

64:17

and they will also include that in the meeting chat.

64:20

So we look forward to seeing some of you at our next public meeting, thank you.

64:27

Matthew Tejada: Thank you so much, Karen.

64:29

Next up, we have Jacob Burney, our superstar Grants Manager for EJ.

64:36

Jacob?

64:37

Jacob Burney: Hello everyone, again I'm Jacob Burney.

64:39

I'm the EJ Grants Program Manager and I have two updates for you.

64:43

So we do have two upcoming environmental justice grant opportunities

64:47

that we're targeting for a late February or early March release.

64:52

So upcoming here in the next few weeks,

64:54

so we'll be releasing simultaneously our EJ Small Grants opportunity

64:59

and our Collaborative Problem-Solving opportunity.

65:01

So traditionally, our Small Grants are 30,000 dollars for a 1-year project

65:07

so we are looking to bump up the funding per project

65:10

and our Collaborative Problem-Solving.

65:13

There are 2-year projects at 120,000, usually we're looking to bump up

65:18

that funding per project as well.

65:19

And again we're going to release those opportunities simultaneously

65:23

here late February or early March,

65:26

we're going to keep those opportunities open between two and three months.

65:30

So plan to kind of formulate your project plan, touch base with your partners,

65:35

any of their your collaborators here for that next two to three month time frame.

65:40

So you have the opportunity to submit an application to those two opportunities.

65:46

We also expanded eligibility for the two opportunities

65:49

so usually, they're eligible to non-profits and tribal governments.

65:53

So we also included US territories and state incorporate

65:58

or state recognized tribal governments as well.

66:01

So you see the eligibility list there.

66:05

We also are emphasizing a lot of the priorities that are laid out

66:09

in the Biden-Harris Executive Orders on racial equity as well as climate change.

66:15

So those priorities will be listed out and the types of projects

66:18

that we're looking to fund for these next two opportunities--

66:24

for both the Small Grants and the Collaborative Problem-Solving.

66:26

So if you have any questions, my contact information will be available here in the slide deck

66:31

and thank you very much.

66:35

Matthew Tejada: Thank you so much Jacob.

66:37

And next, we have Tai Lung who is our lead for all things EJSCREEN.

66:43

Tai?

66:44

Tai Lung: Hello everybody and I hope you guys

66:47

know what EJSCREEN is, for those of you that don't

66:50

it's the Environmental Justice Mapping and Screening Tool that we use at the agency.

66:56

Hopefully, you've heard about it, there's been a lot of press around it recently.

67:02

We have a few updates, the big thing that we did is, we just recently in January

67:09

released the newest version of EJSCREEN.

67:12

Normally, that comes out in the fall of each year but this year we got a little bit delayed

67:18

and so we just put that out.

67:20

We have a few changes to the tool that came out with that we're really excited about.

67:25

The biggest thing that I'm really excited about is,

67:29

we started to build in some climate data, climate change data into EJSCREEN,

67:33

so currently, we built in some flood data and some sea level rise data into EJSCREEN,

67:41

that's the first time we've done it.

67:43

And there was a bunch of other climate change indicators that we wanted to get in there,

67:50

we weren't able to get them in this year

67:52

but we're going to expand those climate change indicators

67:55

and try and make that more fully encompassed in the EJSCREEN tool.

68:00

We also made a bunch of other changes, things like the ability to bring in shape files,

68:06

we're processing data now at the track level to help some of our states

68:11

and other organizations that are downloading our data.

68:14

So those are some of the big changes for this year.

68:18

And then, the other thing that we have going on with EJSCREEN is,

68:23

as you've probably heard under the new administration there's been lots of talks

68:29

about of a screening and mapping tool to help identify those communities,

68:35

so we're trying to make sure that we have some input in this new administration and CEQ's

68:43

design of that tool, making sure that EJ communities are still at the heart of it

68:47

and trying to build on the experiences that we've used

68:51

or that we've learned over the last 10 years of working on EJSCREEN.

68:56

So that's where we stand right now,

68:59

and I'm here to answer any questions if you have any, feel free to reach out.

69:07

Matthew Tejada: Thank you.

69:09

Thank you so much Tai and I know EJSCREEN has received a lot of attention,

69:13

it's going to continue to receive a lot of attention, a lot of work

69:17

in that whole screening space which we are ready for and excited about.

69:21

So thanks Tai so much for being on this afternoon.

69:23

Next, we're going to have Marsha Minter,

69:26

giving a brief update on some activities from the Interagency Working Group.

69:30

Marsha Minter: Thanks Matt, good afternoon.

69:31

Again, I'm Marsha Minter and I'm the Associate Director in EPA's Office of Environmental Justice

69:37

and the Program Manager for the Interagency Working Group,

69:41

I have the logo in the back or the IWG for short.

69:45

I'd like to call your attention to some upcoming virtual geographic specific town halls

69:52

hosted by the IWG, EJ and Natural Disaster Subcommittee.

69:57

Unfortunately, history has shown us EJ racial climate and justice issues are more pronounced

70:04

in disadvantaged communities before, during and after natural disasters.

70:10

The Town Hall's desired outcome is to gather lessons learned and best practices

70:16

from on the ground voices, as well as identify action steps to better assist

70:22

disadvantaged communities.

70:24

Other town halls feature local community voices and breakout rooms allow for open discussion.

70:31

If you are on the call today and have attended previous town halls or focus groups

70:37

we hope you found them informative and want to thank you for your participation.

70:42

The flyer that you see on the screen contains the dates,

70:46

the registration link and the geographic focus.

70:51

Next Wednesday which is February 24th,

70:54

that town hall is scheduled from 6:30 PM to 8:30 PM Eastern Time

71:00

and that's 5:30 to 7:30 PM Central Time.

71:04

And that town hall will focus on Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi.

71:12

The next town hall listed on the flyer is March 31st

71:16

and that town hall will focus on California, Arizona and New Mexico

71:23

and in this call interpreters will be available.

71:29

Also due to the high demand and the interest in this subject,

71:32

the IWG has been asked to host additional opportunities

71:37

and so the committee is looking into this so stay tuned

71:41

and feel free to share the information about these EJ and natural disasters town halls.

71:49

So again, I'm happy that I was able to share this information with those on the call today

71:54

and thank you.

71:59

Matthew Tejada: Thank you, Marsha.

72:01

Next, we have one of the charter members of the Office of Environmental Justice

72:05

before it was even called the Office of Environmental Justice, Daniel Gogal.

72:09

Danny?

72:09

Daniel Gogal: Thanks Matt and it's a real pleasure to have an opportunity to talk with you all.

72:15

Today, you've heard lots about excitement that many of us have



72:19

and being able to expand our work environmental justice

72:22

and this also includes our work with federally recognized tribes and indigenous peoples.

72:26

We have a policy that hopefully folks are aware of that, it was issued in 2014

72:31

that lays out how we intend to work with both federally recognized tribes

72:36

and all other indigenous peoples which includes state recognized tribes,

72:40

native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders, non-recognized tribes, indigenous grassroots organizations

72:46

and others.

72:46

Policy speaks about four particular areas on how we go do this work

72:52

where we as an agency go and implement federal environmental programs

72:56

in Indian country.

72:57

The second part is-- of the policy speaks

73:00

to how we work with federally recognized tribal governments

73:03

and helping them with their capacity to address environmental justice.

73:07

The third is how we work with all the other indigenous peoples

73:10

which is everyone else other than federally recognized tribal governments.

73:14

And the fourth is how we intend to work

73:16

with other federal agencies, states and tribes indigenous peoples

73:19

for addressing the environmental justice concerns of tribes and indigenous peoples.

73:25

And we have staff at the agency that have the responsibility for helping to facilitate

73:31

this policy implementation and those are called environmental justice tribal

73:36

and indigenous people's advisors.

73:38

And this group is working to host a set of webinars to help with the capacity building

73:44

of not only tribes but indigenous peoples on environmental justice

73:49

and that webinar series started this past November

73:52

and you will have the opportunity to participate in those webinars

73:56

particularly if you're on the EJ listserv because you'll get the monthly notices,

74:01

we intend to offer those once a month at a minimum at least at this point in time.

74:07

And we have one and plan to have others for Pacific Islanders

74:12

because of the significant time difference

74:14

and our very first one is actually going to be held this evening.

74:18

So Matt, thanks for the time

74:20

and certainly as everyone else has said we'd be happy to hear from you

74:24

and to engage with you on a range of issues

74:26

and particularly those who are tribal and indigenous

74:29

that would like to learn more about the efforts to implement our policy.

74:32

Thank you, Matt.

74:34

Matthew Tejada: Thank you so much Danny.

74:37

Next up, we have I think the newest member of the Office of Environmental Justice

74:41

but certainly not new to environmental justice overall at EPA or beyond EPA, Sabrina Johnson.

74:50

Sabrina Johnson: Ah yes, good afternoon.

74:54

We are so pleased to relaunch our Environmental Justice and Systemic Racism Speaker Series.

75:01

Let me start by acknowledging that this really is the culmination of Charles Lee's vision.

75:09

Charles holds emeritus status within Environmental Justice both within EPA and outside

75:16

and I'm really pleased to be a part of this aspect of advancing

75:19

the next generation of environmental justice practice.

75:23

Understanding and addressing systemic racism

75:26

and the roots of disproportionate environmental and public health impacts

75:31

are highly relevant to EPA's mission and other environmental agencies as well,

75:37

and is key for achieving environmental protection for all people.

75:44

The Environmental Justice and Systemic Racism Speaker Series

75:48

will spotlight cutting edge work in science, policy and practice

75:53

that strengthens the evidentiary link between historical inequities

75:58

and current environmental conditions.

76:01

The objectives of the speaker series include

76:04

to inspire leadership in government and communities,

76:07

academia, business and industry and civil society

76:11

to think about how systemic racism relates to their own work

76:16

by hearing from leaders in national policy expertise and researchers and practitioners,

76:26

to align government leaders and staff with the vanguard activities in this area

76:32

in creating cohesive environments for fruitful partnership building

76:40

and creating intellectual ferment excitement about dealing with systemic racism

76:46

in a rigorous manner so that EPA and other environmental agencies

76:52

can overcome their historical aversion to talking about race and systemic racism.

76:59

The series begins with a set of five sessions that thoroughly examine the relationship

77:04

between redlining and current environmental inequities and disparities.

77:10

The professors Robert Nelson and Liddell Winley will kick off the series

77:18

with their mapping inequality project which provides digitized source materials

77:25

of redlining maps for some 200 or more cities

77:30

and that session will be held on March 4th, 2021 at 12 o'clock noon Eastern Standard Time

77:40

and registration is still available and open for that.

77:45

Dr. Jeremy Hoffman and Dr. Vivek Chandis will be our next session after that

77:53

studying the correlation between redlining maps with current location of urban heat islands

78:01

that will be on April 6th.

78:06

And then next, Kate Mingoya, Victor Medina and Melissa Corvera,

78:14

all affiliated with groundwork,

78:17

will be discussing application of this information in community organizing

78:24

and policy advocacy,

78:25

and that will be held on May 5th, again at noon Eastern.

78:32

And Jana Garcia and Jamie Quinn will give a presentation on CalEPA's work

78:42

on redlining and pollution and that'll be in June

78:46

and we'll alert you about the specific date when that becomes available

78:51

and we'll round out the series with a round table discussion called

78:57

Enhancing Multidisciplinary and Multi-Sector Collaboration

79:01

to Address Redlining and Current Disparities.

79:05

And that's scheduled for June-- excuse me, July this summer.

79:11

[INAUDIBLE]

79:18

Rural inequities--

79:24

Matthew Tejada: It looks like we're beginning to lose Sabrina--

79:27

having a little bit of a connection issue there

79:30

but I think she was just about finished up,

79:33

so we will move on to our final information point for folks

79:39

and then get back to the public engagement question and answer.

79:43

So with that I'd like to pass it over to two of our regional EJ Coordinators,

79:49

Alan Bacock from the Region 9 Office in San Francisco and Reggie Harris

79:53

from our Region 3 Office in Philadelphia.

79:57

Alan Bacock: Thank you, Matthew.

79:59

So I'm Alan Bacock, I'm one of the EJ Coordinators at Region 9

80:03

and as expressed earlier in comments and responses on this column,

80:07

there is a recognized importance and need for state and EPA collaborations

80:11

for strengthening the state

80:13

environmental justice efforts.

80:15

And it's understood that state agencies make most of the decisions

80:19

under both federal and state environmental laws.

80:22

And with that in mind, EPA has prioritized collaboration with states

80:27

within its strategic efforts and endeavors to be able to expand the discourse

80:32

within all levels of government.

80:34

And in 2019, EPA launched the State EJ Training Webinar Series

80:40

and it was to address an identified need from our state partners

80:45

for a systematic training on environmental justice principles, methods and practices.

80:51

The purpose of the webinar series is to build the long-term capacity of practitioners

80:57

working to advance environmental justice at the state level on a variety of topics.

81:03

A total of seven webinars have been conducted to date

81:07

with the materials and videos that are accessible on the EPA website,

81:12

and that website is located on the on the slide, at the very bottom of the slide.

81:18

This website also serves as an ongoing resource for people interested

81:22

in developing their knowledge and expertise to advance environmental justice



81:27

at the state level, including folks from communities,

81:31

academia, agency leadership and staff.

81:34

And to date around 10,000 people have registered for the webinars

81:38

and they include representatives from government agencies of all 50 states,

81:44

from Guam, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia.

81:48

And topics have included identifying and prioritizing environmentally impacted

81:54

and vulnerable communities,

81:56

enhancing community involvement in the regulatory process

82:01

using an area-wide planning approach to promote equitable development

82:05

and application of environmental justice to state environmental impact assessments.

82:11

As a complement to the webinar series,

82:13

over a number of years EPA has been conducting calls with states to advance environmental justice

82:19

and I'm going to pass on the rest to Reggie Harris from Region 3

82:24

to be able to share about that.

82:27

Reggie Harris: Well thank you, Alan.

82:28

I'm Reggie Harris, I'm the Chief of the Communities and Tribes Branch

82:33

in EPA Region 3.

82:35

Also long time Environmental Justice Coordinator and Toxicologist-- region.

82:41

In talking about the all states calls as they're referred--

82:49

Basically, they started back in 1999

82:55

when we in Region 3 were working with our states

82:59

having dialogues on environmental justice and the idea came up

83:05

to have some type of face-to-face dialogue

83:09

where we talked about environmental justice issues face-to-face

83:13

and made sure that we did communal learning and capacity building among ourselves.

83:22

At that face-to-face meeting, there was a desire for this type of dialogue to continue,

83:30

so we started all states calls in June of 1999, they continue to this day

83:38

and moving forward.

83:40

And we have divided those calls into two sets,

83:44

there's the eastern states calls and the western states calls.

83:49

Regions 1, 3, 5 and their respective states are part of the eastern states calls

83:56

and monthly third Thursday of the month, we have dialogues to address various issues

84:02

of environmental justice, we talk about EJ integration, capacity building tools,

84:09

Title VI of EJ laws, a variety of topics of relevance to our state partners

84:20

and as Alan alluded to, a lot of the ideas for the webinars that took place in 1999

84:30

came through the dialogue that we had with our states, through the all states calls.

84:39

Of particular interest, last month the state of Pennsylvania

84:45

made a presentation on our call where they talked about their efforts

84:50

to successfully train 1,500 Pennsylvania DEP staff on environmental justice

85:00

and their ongoing efforts to bring in the remaining staff and continue that training.

85:09

That dialogue received a lot of interest from the states, a lot of interest from EPA

85:17

and other partners.

85:19

So this is an example of what it is and what we do in the all states--

85:28

All states is an open dialogue and it's an opportunity

85:32

for everyone to listen and to learn.

85:37

And if you want to know more about EPA's collaboration efforts with the states,

85:44

there's a link at the bottom of this slide that you may click for more information

85:52

or you can reach out to Alan and I for additional information,

85:56

we're more than happy to answer your questions inquiries.

86:00

Thank you.

86:04

Matthew Tejada: Thank you so much, Reggie.

86:06

So I wanted to go back and see if we have Ms. Margaret,

86:10

if she's able to come off mute, if not, Margaret I saw that you put a question in the Q&A box

86:21

regarding Title VI and wanting some more focus on Title VI as-- just on its own.

86:30

I would imagine also as other folks as Richard and other folks in the chat

86:34

have brought up the interplay or the relationship between Title VI and civil rights,

86:41

it is something--

86:42

as I've mentioned we've been working with the leadership of our External Civil Rights Office

86:49

and I think we're in a place where we can come back and engage

86:53

in a way that I don't believe we ever have publicly around the relationship

87:00

and I believe some of our Title VI Enforcement Staff

87:03

are on the line listening today.

87:07

I'm pretty sure that this might be the issue that we tee up

87:11

to be maybe the focus of the next engagement call in the next quarter.

87:16

We'd also been talking with the External Civil Rights leadership

87:21

about potentially engaging in the NEJAC in an upcoming meeting.

87:28

The requests even before the Biden-Harris Administration came in

87:33

did not fall on deaf ears, we have been getting ready for this,

87:36

we are excited about it, we want to start talking to people about it.

87:39

Victoria can you see if Margaret-- if we can get her off from you

87:44

Victoria: I have put her-- ask her to unmute and see

87:48

Matthew Tejada: Hey there you are Ms. Margaret I can hear you.

87:51

Margaret Gordon: All right.

87:52

Okay first of all I'd like to thank you for having me to speak,

87:55

it's been a long time since we have had this type of engagement.

87:59

But first of all, I'm really not pleased with the word public engagement,

88:04

when we need community engagement.

88:06

That word public engagement make it sounds that we have equity,

88:12

we have equality around air warning and soil issues across the United States

88:18

and the world.

88:19

So that word public engagement needs to be abolished.

88:24

That's number one.

88:26

Number two, that we have not heard-- we have heard a lot about

88:31

orientation and education but nothing specific about remedy,

88:37

remedy for many of these local issues that our communities are suffering from

88:43

and I keep hearing-- I keep feeling as though everything is a one-size-fits-all

88:48

it's not a one-size-fits-all.

88:51

And I still get the feeling is that nobody seems to understand

88:59

how to be engaging based on the time, place and conditions of these individual communities.

89:06

Many of us do not need any more orientation,

89:09

many of us need very specifics clarifying engagement to deal with the existing issues

89:19

of equity, public health, environmental justice, zoning, land use and enforcement.

89:28

So I'm just-- I'm not so--

89:30

I'm not-- myself personally and my organization with social environmental indicators

89:35

want to go to those very specific ask and engagement for problem solving,

89:42

not continuously have all the orientation and the bureaucracy and language

89:48

that seems to be coming out of this meeting.

89:52

Thank you.

89:53

Matthew Tejada: Thank you Ms. Margaret.

89:55

We hear you, we struggled with what to term this

90:00

and so we hear you on that and so we will definitely reassess what we call this thing,

90:10

so point very, very well taken, on the one-size-fits-all absolutely,

90:16

that's been one of the things that we've brought up already

90:20

in multiple places with consideration about how to implement the executive orders.

90:26

We know from experience, everyone knows from experience,

90:30

EJ happens on the ground in local settings, in people's communities, in neighborhoods

90:36

and if you do not start from that local scale and that local knowledge

90:41

and then work up and out from there you're not really going to find

90:47

change on the ground.

90:48

So we absolutely hear you on that and we'll be carrying that forward

90:53

and lifting that up in the work we do

90:56

and in our involvement in any of the implementation of the mandate

91:00

from the Biden-Harris Administration.

91:04

And absolutely, part of that is plenty of the communities across the United States

91:11

don't need us helping them, to train or capacity or anything else,

91:15

it's us that need it, it's our colleagues in EPA



91:18

and other branches of the federal government our partners at the state level

91:22

or in tribal government or local government

91:25

are the ones that need to catch up to where all of you all are.

91:28

That point also is definitely not lost on us that,

91:31

is something that again, we have begun the process

91:35

of hopefully better developing our ability to try to provide that capacity

91:41

to our other partners, to engage with the communities that need to be engaged with

91:46

and met first and given the rightful space at the beginning of the process,

91:52

at the beginning of the decision, at the beginning of the consideration.

91:56

So absolutely right on and we hear you on all those points Ms. Margaret.

92:03

We've got-- let's do the next four folks.

92:07

Please Victoria who have held on with their hands raised,

92:10

I know we've got some other folks in the question and answer,

92:13

particularly Susan Gordon and I saw Sabrina.

92:16

After we get these four folks who have their hands raised we'll go back

92:20

and try to get to some of the Q&A questions that have been outstanding

92:25

and then try to get back to some of the other folks who have their hand raised

92:29

to make a verbal comment or question.

92:33

So Victoria, let's go back to our hand list.

92:35

Victoria: All right, the next person up is Robert.

92:39

Matthew Tejada: Robert you don't have a last name, so I hope you know we're calling on you.

92:45

Robert: Okay I am here, can you hear me?

92:47

Matthew Tejada: Right, yes sir.

92:49

Robert: Listen, thank you so much for this call.

92:51

This is actually my first time on the call, I am from a community in South Carolina

92:59

and our community is a majority minority community,

93:04

it is a rural community, it is a low-income community

93:08

and it is a fence-line community with a power-- with a nuclear power plant

93:13

a coal powered plant, a paper plant and a anti-fiberglass plant.

93:20

So our community has been littered with organizations and companies

93:25

that really are really sort of wreak havoc on our community,

93:30

and so I'm thankful for our state agency but I want to just ask

93:35

and I may need to put this in an email to someone directly

93:39

just who do we reach out to as a community that's really just starting to understand

93:46

that we have to have a more participatory sort of impact in these issues

93:57

or in these areas that impact our community, we don't know how to start.

94:04

And so I am here as an advocate for our community, as an individual

94:09

for our community to ask how do we begin this process.

94:12

I hear so many people Ms. Margaret, the call right before me

94:16

having been an advocate in her community for quite some time, it seems like

94:20

but our community is just starting in a state South Carolina

94:24

that I don't know really has a lot of community support or community participation

94:30

so I'm asking for some help in that end.

94:32

Matthew Tejada: Absolutely, Robert.

94:34

Victoria is going to give you the email address again.

94:37

I don't want to state it because I can't remember it's an underscore--

94:40

email me directly [Tejada.matthew@EPA.gov](mailto:Tejada.matthew@EPA.gov).

94:45

There are a lot of folks, a lot of community leaders,

94:48

some of the most experienced poor community leaders in the country

94:53

are your neighbors in South Carolina, we've got great staff in Atlanta in Region 4

94:58

that will want to reach out to you and get to know you and also make sure that

95:03

we're able to also introduce you to our colleagues at South Carolina DHEC.

95:09

So this is a great place to start, is one of the things that we can do

95:14

as the Environmental Justice Program, so if we don't have your email

95:18

please shoot an email to one of us [Tejada.matthew@EPA.gov](mailto:Tejada.matthew@EPA.gov).

95:23

Victoria is going to say the blanket email again just for everyone's purpose

95:28

and then introduce our next speaker.

95:31

Victoria Robinson: Yes, hi. That email address is environmental hyphen, not underscore but hyphen

95:38

justice EPA.gov, environmental-justice@EPA.gov

95:43

You see- when you email Matthew or if you send it out directly to that thing email,

95:48

you can always email myself as well Victoria Robinson

95:52

Robinson.victoria@EPA.gov simple to spell.

95:56

And the next speaker we're going to reach out to is

95:59

Rosa Mustafa of Charlotte I believe North Carolina.

96:08

Matthew Tejada: And Rosa is still on mute, it says she's muted.

96:14

Rosa Mustafa: Hi can you hear me?

96:15

Matthew Tejada: Yeah we can hear you, hello Rosa.

96:17

Rosa Mustafa: Hi, thank you for taking my question.

96:20

I want to applaud everybody from the southeast who kind of chimed in

96:24

a few minutes ago.

96:25

The southeast--I placed a question in the question box regarding--

96:30

we have a lot of infractions to take place from industries,

96:34

there could be hog farming industry out in Sanford and Duplin counties,

96:38

it could be some of the pipelines that are going through in south eastern Virginia

96:43

and each time that I read through these documents, I noticed that there's a term that they use

96:48

in a lot of this called Sacrifice Zones.

96:50

And that's been something that I've had some conflict in understanding

96:55

why that language exists and how can we strike that type of language

97:00

from even the permitting process.

97:02

I'm also air quality commissioner here in Mecklenburg county,

97:05

so we do a lot of permits but that's a common thread that I'm seeing in a lot of documents,

97:10

when they talk about communities and they usually marginalize communities

97:14

and oftentimes rural communities that you find this type of language.

97:20

Matthew Tejada: Thank you for that, Rosa.

97:23

Absolutely, that's something that-- well, in a couple of respects,

97:31

one of the guiding philosophies of the EJ Program at EPA

97:35

is that we do not define communities in any way--

97:38

that's the sole right and province of the community itself to define

97:42

what the community is, where the community is and what the community--

97:46

how the community is referred to.

97:47

And that we look to in the EJ Program for communities to determine that,

97:54

not for us to determine that.

97:56

I would also say that in this time when it seems like a lot of the rest of our society

98:06

both in the United States and internationally has woken up to--

98:12

and is ready to embrace something that people in the EJ movement

98:17

have been making very clear for a very long time.

98:22

EJ didn't just happen to some communities, that it was purposeful,

98:29

it was planned, it was policy.

98:32

I think we're going to hopefully see a completely different approach

98:39

and appreciation and lifting up of the rights of communities to determine

98:46

how they are treated, how they are engaged with,

98:52

how they are put at the beginning of the process

98:56

and how we talk about communities and everything that goes along with communities.

99:01

So thank you for pointing out that.

99:04

I don't think I've ever seen the term sacrifice zone used in an EPA document

99:11

and not at all to say that absolutely--

99:14

I just haven't personally seen it I would have-- I would have struck it

99:18

and fought not to use that language had it ever come across my desk at EPA.

99:23

So I want to lift up you pointing to that.

99:28

But again, from us in the EJ Program at EPA, we would not put that label

99:34

on a community, we wouldn't put any label on any community

99:37

that the community didn't define for itself.

99:43

How many-- we got a couple more.

99:46

Victoria let's go ahead and do these last couple that have their hands raised

99:51

and then let's do a few more of the Q&A questions.

99:59

I think Victoria's unmute but she is trying to take Sylvia McKenzie.



100:03

Sylvia?

100:04

Sylvia McKenzie: Hello can you hear me now?

100:05

Matthew Tejada: I can hear you Sylvia, thank you.

100:08

Sylvia McKenzie: Thank you.

100:08

It's a pleasure, I thank god for being on this first call with you all

100:13

but it's not my first fight against environmental injustices.

100:18

I really became heavy on the battlefield right after Katrina

100:24

because our area in New Orleans east, that's New Orleans, Louisiana,

100:29

we have been fighting for so long to keep our properties,

100:33

we were blessed that our properties weren't taken for green space in the area

100:39

and we've been fighting ever since.

100:40

I'm also part of a group called Coalition Against Death Valley

100:45

with all the river parishes and we have had our booths to the ground for a while now.

100:51

We've had some victories, we're having our voices heard but my main concern was

100:56

the grant monies that are red line that blocks us from getting what we need

101:01

to pursue education, to try to find a way to undo these policies or be part of these policies

101:09

which I also did that after Katrina.

101:11

I was part of neighborhood partnership network that was in New Orleans

101:16

and I was-- we thought we were doing good for our infrastructure,

101:21

we had a man came here Mr. Ed Blakely

101:24

and it was like everything we worked so hard for putting the ideas

101:28

and helping with policies was shoved under the table

101:32

and it's just so disgraceful after all these years we still going through this

101:38

and trainings like the lady said before, Ms. Margaret

101:42

because everyone that spoke before me spoke just how I feel.

101:45

I just want to know how can we really qualify, we local people

101:52

who know our area, who knows the land, who knows these spots

101:56

that they just take advantage of us on meaning like it's a lime, it's a lime

102:02

or company or gentilly road that's been there.

102:06

So I just want more input and I want to be more on your webinars and whatever else

102:11

but we need monies that's what we need.

102:15

So I'll pass it on to the next person and I thank you for listening.

102:20

Thank you, thank you so much Ms. Mckenzie.

102:24

We absolutely agree, the EJ Program, one of the first things that did

102:32

when it was founded back in the early 90s was to get money

102:36

two people on the grounding communities and we have continued to put that

102:41

at the center of what we do in the EJ Program

102:44

to really prioritize any dollar that we get given from our folks over on Capitol Hill,

102:53

there's a real primacy on getting that dollar into the hands of the people

102:58

who can use it best and that is in the hands of folks on the ground in communities.

103:03

And I am hopeful from what the president has already mandated

103:08

in the executive orders, that we're going to see a redefinition of the ability

103:16

not just the ability but the mandate of the government to make sure

103:22

that the benefits of what happens through the government

103:26

in our country gets to the communities that are most impacted

103:30

I would have to believe much of New Orleans would be very much front and center

103:38

in those sorts of considerations.

103:40

So I'm very hopeful that we will see some real change in the way

103:44

that communities are not considered but are the central focus

103:50

of how we think through things like resource allocation

103:56

amongst other parts of the of the government endeavor.

103:59

We had one more person who'd been waiting for a while Victoria

104:02

and then I want to get to some Q&A if we can.

104:04

Victoria Robinson: Yes, that person is Dante Swinton.

104:10

Matthew Tejada: Hello Dante I believe you are live now.

104:13

Dante Swinton: Hey, all right, so yes I'm Dante Swinton.

104:16

I'm with the Energy Justice Network, I'm based in Baltimore

104:21

and for the last several years, we've been fighting our city's trash incinerator

104:26

but we're not alone in those fights,

104:29

there's ongoing fights in Newark, Detroit went on for the longest

104:32

but there's closed in 2019 finally and now the dirtiest one is down in Miami

104:38

but among the things that we've experienced in fighting these facilities

104:45

is that they lean on the EPA having trash incineration as a component of their waste hierarchy

104:54

which is problematic considering how dirty they are,

104:58

ours being the largest polluter in Baltimore,

105:01

38 percent of stationary pollution comes from that one site.

105:05

And so I'm wanting to see if you could speak to

105:11

the need to reassess what the waste hierarchy looks like

105:14

knowing that a dirty industry is primarily located in these communities of color,

105:20

these low-income communities of the 72 trash incinerators still operating in the country.

105:25

And instead actually looking toward more international standards of zero waste hierarchies

105:31

which do not include incineration as a component of it

105:35

and actually heightens the importance of reduction, reuse and remanufacturing

105:40

and composting to remove any sort of methane concerned from landfills,

105:45

you stabilize those instead of bearing the organic waste

105:49

and I feel like it's problematic-- there are a lot of problems

105:54

but it's problematic to have the country's leading environmental arm still lifting up

106:01

a type of industry that is harmful to cities like Baltimore, Newark and beyond

106:06

and it would be great to be able to center that more now

106:10

that we have a new administration that can reassess and actually understand

106:14

the need to move towards zero waste and not choose this false solution

106:18

that is trash incineration or the commercial term waste to energy

106:22

when in actuality it is a waste of energy.

106:25

So I'll just stop there.

106:26

Matthew Tejada: Thank you, thank you, Dante I appreciate that.

106:29

Hopefully when things get normal since-- or whatever the new normal looks like,

106:36

I don't believe I've engaged with you or your organization up in Baltimore

106:43

and since you're just up the road, I'd love that opportunity

106:45

when we get back to a place where we can do that to the point though

106:50

and for me this is kind of like going back to the coal ash issue.

106:56

I think waste-- the burning of waste as a fuel has been a long-standing EJ issue

107:04

and it continues to be an EJ issue because it hasn't been addressed

107:08

and it hasn't been given it's proper consideration.

107:14

So for from our perspective in the EJ Program

107:17

since it's an issue to EJ communities or communities with EJ concerns, it's an issue for us.

107:24

So we will be raising it, we will be putting that on the agenda

107:28

and lifting up exactly what you shared today, what others have shared long before

107:35

with the administration and its officials who are coming in to the agency

107:42

at this time.

107:43

If we're going to be serious about EJ these are the sorts of issues,

107:47

that have got to be on the table.

107:49

And that's all the way from-- there's some issues that I know some folks have

107:55

that need a little more help and there's some issues that need a lot of help

107:59

and a total rethink.

108:01

So we will definitely be putting that on the agenda

108:04

for our new political folks as they come in.

108:09

Thank you so much for sharing it.

108:11

Sabrina, if we could go back I know there was one from a Susan Gordon

108:15

about Tronox-- if we could start with that from the Q&A pod

108:19

and then, as we have some time we probably have about another 5, 6, 7 minutes here

108:24

before we wrap up with Sheila.

108:26

Let's do a few more of those Q&A questions real quick, if we can.

108:32

Or Christina, whoever's going to start, Christina or Sabrina [LAUGHS]

108:35

Christina Motilall: No, it's fine, I'm very sorry, so there was a little bit of--

108:43

the chat the Q&A pod is a little overwhelmed right now

108:46

and Sabrina actually has fallen off of the call.



108:50

Matthew Tejada: Oh okay.

108:50

Christina Motilall: So I'm very sorry I am trying to--

108:52

Matthew Tejada: --We're trying to figure it out.

108:55

So I read it-- so I'm just going to address it maybe [LAUGHS]

108:58

for some others--

108:59

Christina Motilall: So thank you Matt. Matthew Tejada: Susan Gordon had asked

109:02

about a very long-standing issue around contamination

109:10

from a company called Tronox which the EPA finalized successful and historic enforcement

109:20

against about five and a half six years ago I believe,

109:24

but there are still-- we have heard it has been shared with us brought

109:28

to everyone's attention a lot of outstanding issues

109:32

around the cleanup of a lot of those waste sites, about the use of the monies

109:38

that were awarded or-- I don't even know what the legal term is

109:45

from the enforcement proceedings around that Superfund site,

109:48

I have visited with some of our colleagues inside of the building,

109:54

here just in the last couple weeks about certain elements of that.

109:59

I saw, actually just last night, that our Region 9 Office

110:03

had put out some information about some awards, to some Navajo nation companies

110:12

to pursue some more of that cleanup.

110:14

Susan, I don't know if that's answering your question specifically but again,

110:18

if you would reach out to me or reach out to the [environmental-justice@EPA.org](mailto:environmental-justice@EPA.org) email,

110:26

we can absolutely follow up with you and make sure that

110:30

whether it's from our headquarters Superfund enforcement folks

110:34

who are really on point for the national Tronox settlement issue

110:40

or from our folks out in Region 9 who are on the front line

110:45

of our relationship with the Navajo nation and with the cleanup of sites

110:50

in partnership with Navajo nation EPA.

110:53

I think there's definitely-- we want to make sure that we hear you

110:58

and that you have whatever information we have that's up to date.

111:04

Christina, other questions you're ready for from the Q&A box?

111:09

Christina Motilall: Yes, there's one, let me jump back up to it

111:13

and I-- really quick before I read it, I just want to let everyone know that

111:17

we right now have over 30 questions that we're trying to get through and answer

111:23

and we see them on our end, you might not see them on your end

111:26

but one thing that we are doing is we're taking note of all of these questions

111:31

and we do intend to be able to answer them and combine answers if we need to

111:36

for the meeting summaries.

111:38

So we are-- we see your questions and if you do have any follow-up things

111:41

that you want to talk to us about, please do send an email

111:44

to the [environmental-justice@EPA.gov](mailto:environmental-justice@EPA.gov).

111:48

Just wanted to let you know we do see your questions and we're working on them.

111:52

Okay, so another question that was asked was-- oh there it was and then it jumped-- okay,

112:01

what role does the federal government envision playing in moving to ensure

112:05

that environmental organizations and the field are representative of the communities

112:11

they serve and that BIPOC individuals are leading?

112:15

A recent report found that across environmental non-governmental organizations and foundations

112:20

the number of BIPOC in leadership positions and at the table

112:23

in those organizations are still extremely low and their voices are ignored.

112:28

Matthew Tejada: Yeah that's that's a great question,

112:30

I would start by saying before we at EPA provide any leadership,

112:38

we have to provide a better example.

112:41

and that is something that has been especially in light of this past year,

112:47

a certain executive order that was repealed or whatever the actual term is

112:55

by President Biden on his first day in office that has been a very acute issue

113:01

that we have been talking about inside of EPA.

113:05

So again, with the arrival of some more political appointees,

113:11

I hope and believe that we're going to see a different approach

113:18

in a lot of respects to looking at EPA itself

113:24

because I think EPA has a lot of work to do

113:29

and I haven't been shy about sharing this inside of the agency

113:33

in terms of our-- how we look before we can look outside of EPA to provide leadership

113:44

or at least an example more broadly with not just the--

113:49

in the environmental movement space with environmental nonprofits

113:55

but for me especially with other agencies with our state and local partners.

114:02

It is an issue of fundamental importance

114:07

and I think we're going to have not just a different way of addressing it

114:11

but a completely different way of even just being able to talk about it

114:16

from within EPA very soon.

114:20

So I'm very hopeful that these issues are going to receive the attention

114:26

that they have long, long deserved

114:29

and that many, many folks have worked their lives demanding attention to.

114:36

I'm hopeful about where we are right now and actually starting to make

114:40

progress towards that place.

114:43

We just have a few minutes here so let me tell you what I'd like to do.

114:50

I'd like to go ahead and have Sheila Lewis do kind of a summation

114:56

and then I see that there are four individuals-- well, now three

115:01

who have their hands up.

115:03

If y'all would stay on and if anybody else who wants to listen

115:07

to those three folks ask a question after Sheila is done if we could do that,

115:13

have the folks who have their hands up ask their questions.

115:17

And then as Christina mentioned, for folks that haven't had their question

115:21

answered yet in the Q&A whether verbally from me or in writing

115:24

as we've been monitoring it, we are going to pull all these together,

115:28

we're going to have transparency to this and accountability

115:31

so we will be posting this stuff up on our website

115:34

as we get kind of compiled and processed and everything,

115:38

so it's not going to be tomorrow but we will be putting out information

115:42

about when those things hit the site if you've registered today

115:45

or if you're just on the EJ listserv that we communicate out through--

115:51

So yeah, let's do that, so let's have Sheila Lewis do the summary slide

115:58

and then if folks I want to be respectful of the 4 o'clock hour of course

116:02

if folks want to jump off, I would just ask that my team that

116:06

I need to actually make this happen stay on for a few more minutes

116:10

and let's work through-- we're back up to four last call there,

116:14

but we'll work through the last four folks who have their hands up

116:17

before we end the call. So Sheila?

116:22

Sheila Lewis: Thank you, Matthew so as you've heard,

116:27

EPA and especially the Office of Environmental Justice

116:32

are excited about starting up these engagement calls again

116:36

and hope this conversation today has helped to open up this dialogue between us.

116:43

To inform you about EPA's work on environmental justice and most important

116:50

for us to hear from you.

116:52

We look forward to continuing these robust and informative conversations in the calls to come

116:59

to share new information and discuss the many issues and themes

117:04

of which we've heard of today several of which burning of waste as fuel,

117:12

as we take a look at and have discussed the coal ash storage issues

117:16

and how it impacts the adjacent community as well as the groundwater.

117:22

Also the trash incineration and it impacts on the adjacent communities

117:28

and then there's the question.

117:31

How Title VI can be used as a tool in EJ?

117:36

These are just to name a few and there are so many more.

117:40

So as a reminder, this is the first of a series of ongoing calls

117:46

that we hope to have with you, the community the next call is scheduled for May 21st, May 2021.

117:55

So please join our listserv for up-to-date information about the upcoming meetings,

118:04

environmental justice funding opportunities, events, webinars including the speaker series

118:11

Sabrina Johnson mentioned in her remarks.



118:15

We are also standing up a website dedicated to these public engagement calls

118:20

where you will be able to access information about the upcoming meetings,

118:25

the presentation materials, questions and answers from the meeting today and future meetings.

118:32

We hope to have the website available in the very near future and we will send out a message

118:39

on our list serve when the website goes live.

118:43

And in case you don't remember, if you have questions

118:46

and you would like to submit them to us, then the email address here on the slide is

118:55

[environmental-justice@EPA.gov](mailto:environmental-justice@EPA.gov).

118:59

I will leave-- I'd like to leave us with a quote I paraphrased for this occasion,

119:05

What we do makes a difference and we have to decide what kind of difference we want to make.

119:12

Thank you everyone for joining us today

119:16

as we work together to make a difference in our communities.

119:21

Keep safe, stay warm and thank you for joining us today.

119:27

Matthew Tejada: Oh that's such a nice ending, I'm sorry I'm kind of spoiling it

119:31

by not ending ending but thank you so much, Sheila

119:33

that was really wonderful, that was a that was a great quote to end on.

119:37

So again, so we're gonna answer a few more questions, we have Frank, Rosa and Alex.

119:43

So Victoria, if we could go through those three

119:47

and then we'll end the call.

119:51

Oh we lost somebody, we still have Frank up there.

119:57

Oh I hope it didn't automatically close us out.

120:02

Female Voice: We're still live.

120:03

Victoria Robinson: We're still there --I just some reason I lost my thing.

120:06

So I'm going to go ahead and unmute Frank hold on a second.

120:11

All right it was acting kind of crazy.

120:14

All right Frank you're unmuted.

120:17

Matthew Tejada: Not quite, almost-- it's waiting, it still says he's muted.

120:25

He's got it he's got a red slash on there.

120:27

Victoria Robinson: Right so he's got to mute himself.

120:30

Frank, you don't have your-- there you go, Frank now can you say something.

120:35

Frank Stafford: Hi.

120:36

Matthew Tejada: Gotcha.

120:38

Frank Stafford: Okay.

120:38

Hi my name is Stafford Frank, I'm from Mossville, Louisiana.

120:43

I'm representing the concerned citizens of Mossville

120:50

and I guess I'll start off by saying how do you--

121:05

how do you start off seeing injustice being done under the cloak of justice.

121:18

And what I mean by that is--

121:21

in our small community of Mossville, we've been trying to get air monitors installed

121:34

and the latest thing that happened was the air monitoring plan submitted

121:43

by the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality

121:48

and which was instead of adding monitors to their plan

121:57

they remove monitors.

122:00

And Mossville is a community surrounded by 15 petrochemical refineries and energy type plants

122:14

and so we submitted a case to the EPA and as it turned out, the EPA decided to go

122:32

in favor of what the DEQ wanted,

122:39

but what's so aggravating about the whole thing was that

122:48

there was the LDEQ is hiding behind a law

122:59

that allows them to remove monitors away from fence line

123:07

and take monitors that are 20 miles away and use the results from those monitors

123:19

and say everything is okay at the fence line which makes no sense.

123:26

And then another example, is Calcasieu parish has the highest CO readings in the state

123:42

and the closest CO monitors is located in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

123:50

So it's things like that and the only reason why the DEQ can do that

124:01

is because of the way the law is written.

124:05

And it's aggravating to me and to the people of Mossville is because

124:13

we see injustice being done and it's being done under the cloak of justice.

124:21

And that's what I meant by that quote.

124:26

Thank you for listening.

124:28

Matthew Tejada: No thank-- thank you so much Mr. Frank

124:31

and we have engaged with and heard from other members of your community

124:40

on many occasions particularly Mr. and Ms. Bennett.

124:44

Mossville is such a historic long-standing unfortunate example of the injustices

125:02

just like you're pointing to.

125:03

One of the things that we had been wanting to do before the pandemic

125:08

descended on all of our communities which I know impact communities like Mossville,

125:13

hardest especially right now during times when I know it's colder

125:18

than most folks have maybe ever felt in a place like southern Louisiana.

125:24

We had wanted to convene our National Environmental Justice Advisory Council

125:29

on the gulf coast close by in Houston,

125:32

I know it's not in Lake Charles or even closer to Mossville

125:36

but that was one of the reasons why we really wanted to get to a place like Houston,

125:42

was to be able to engage more and have the region there our Region 6 Office

125:47

and I know that they've had some engagement with the Mossville

125:51

community members but it's an issue that should always be lifted up

125:59

and requires our attention our support.

126:02

And again, in this time of really re-centering what environmental justice means

126:09

and what community engagement means in the center

126:12

of how we look at our relationship with states, the implementation of our authorities.

126:24

I don't know what can be said for what that means for Mossville

126:29

but where Mossville is and what Mossville has experienced is not lost on any of us.

126:37

So we hope that we can continue to lift up your voice

126:40

and the voice of your community members-- your fellow community members

126:44

and what has been done to a place like Mossville

126:49

as an example of why injustice persists in our country.

126:55

Thank you Frank.

126:56

Victoria we have one more Rosa Mustafa?

126:59

Victoria Robinson: That's correct, I've now marked her to be able to speak.

127:05

Matthew Tejada: Rosa?

127:06

Rosa Mustafa: Oh no you answered my question previously on sacrifice zones

127:10

so I yield my time to whoever's next.

127:13

Matthew Tejada: I think we're done so I appreciate that.

127:16

All right, well now we're ending ending.

127:20

I want to thank especially our interpreters, thank you so much.

127:26

I know that that's a big chore, a lot of things that don't maybe come up

127:33

often in interpretation.

127:34

Thank you all so much not for our purposes but for our community folks

127:41

to make sure that people have accessibility and an equal opportunity to participate.

127:46

Thank you all so much for your services today.

127:49

And thank you to the whole team in the EJ Program, our EJ coordinators

127:55

everyone in OEJ, to Rosemary and Cecilia again for helping to kick us off,

128:00

for Sheila for the wonderful summation that she did for everyone

128:04

that participated today.

128:05

Thank you so much.

128:06

Again we will have a summary of this, we will let folks know through email

128:10

when those summaries come out and we look forward to hearing from folks again in May

128:16

on the next EPA EJ community engagement dialogue.

128:23

Thanks everybody.