



## U.S. Environmental Protection Agency National Environmental Youth Advisory Council

Public Docket [EPA-HQ-OA-2024-0043](#)

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### Meeting Summary

On October 22, 2024, the National Environmental Youth Advisory Council (NEYAC) met virtually. See appendix A for the meeting agenda and appendix B for a list of the NEYAC members present. Presentations are in appendix C. The meeting was recorded and can be viewed in full at <https://www.youtube.com/live/8glF-sS6ZTM>.

For questions regarding NEYAC, please contact the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA, or Agency) Designated Federal Official (DFO) Carissa Cyran at [cyran.carissa@epa.gov](mailto:cyran.carissa@epa.gov).

## Welcome: Logistics and Agenda Overview

**Rhonda Wright** | NEYAC Alternate Designated Federal Officer, EPA

Rhonda Wright welcomed attendees and said the charge questions are available in the public docket (see link above). She noted that a summary of the meeting will be available within 90 days of the meeting, and she shared the agenda.

## Call to Order and Introductions

**Rhonda Wright** | NEYAC Alternate Designated Federal Officer, EPA

Rhonda Wright called the meeting to order and conducted the roll call (see appendix B).

EPA attendees were EPA Administrator Michael Regan; Karim Marshall, Senior Advisor for the Office of Environmental Justice and External Civil Rights; Lana Suárez, Associate Manager, Office of Resource Conservation and Recovery; and Alejandra Nunez, Deputy Assistant Administrator for Mobile Sources, Office of Air and Radiation.

## Reflections on the Recommendations Process

**Gabriel Nagel** | Chair

Gabriel Nagel said that, as the generation bearing the brunt of the climate crisis, it is essential that youth voices are at the forefront of the decision-making process. He thanked members of the NEYAC's workgroups on climate change, environmental justice, and circular economy. He said that members have worked for 10 months to develop recommendations, which reflect the urgent need for policies that include disadvantaged communities, promote sustainable practices, and empower youth to take active roles in proposed solutions. He urged EPA to prioritize community engagement, particularly in environmental justice communities. Investing in youth, partnering with schools, and ensuring that EPA resources are accessible and inclusive will help prepare the next generation to be leaders in sustainability and climate action.

Members then shared their thoughts on the recommendation process and their experiences working with one another and EPA. Many expressed their appreciation for respectful debate, noted how much they've learned from one another and the stakeholders they spoke with, and said they looked forward to the next set of charge questions.

## Discussion on the Recommendations with Administrator Michael S. Regan

**Gabriel Nagel** | Chair

Administrator Regan acknowledged the hard work of the NEYAC and said they had drafted a historic set of recommendations. He said the members' energy and wisdom has been on full display for the past year, and he is grateful for their dedication and excited to hear more.

Gabriel Nagel explained that the discussion would be structured around the charge questions.

## Environmental Justice

Meghana Kunapareddy shared the following environmental justice charge question:

*(EJ1) What barriers to awareness or access exist to empowering and connecting with youth in Communities with EJ concerns for Agency resources and outreach (such as environmental leadership, careers, internships, etc.)? What approaches, processes, or strategies would the NEYAC recommend that would enhance awareness and access?*

Meghana Kunapareddy shared the following overarching recommendations related to environmental justice:

- Enhance digital outreach and engagement.
- Engage schools and youth organizations.
- Develop user-friendly online resources.

Administrator Regan asked whether the NEYAC had any specific tools or programs that they would recommend as a part of the last recommendation. Meghana Kunapareddy replied that they had focused on the useability of current tools such as the EJScreen.

Page Tsirigotis shared NEYAC recommendations related to the second charge question related to environmental justice:

*(EJ2) How can the EPA engage youth in environmental sustainability? How can young people actively promote innovation and implement sustainable ideas? How would you identify youth's vision for a just and sustainable future?*

Page Tsirigotis said the NEYAC makes several recommendations, but here focused on what EPA could do in person. These include supporting:

- A national EPA Climate Ideas conference.
- A Filmmaking fellowship.
- Awards and recognition for innovative sustainability projects by youth.

Administrator Regan asked the NEYAC how they would grade EPA on its current efforts to engage youth in person. Page Tsirigotis said that creating the NEYAC was the best next step for EPA. Gabriel Nagel said perhaps he'd grade EPA as a B+, and noted that, in their workgroup discussions, they said EPA has a lot of one-time events, but more sustained programs would be valuable. Wanjiku Gatheru gave EPA credit for its Climate Week Youth Summit and suggested tailoring existing events more closely to youth.

Alexandra Angerman presented the third charge question related to environmental justice:

*(EJ3) How should EPA work with corresponding state, local, and/or Tribal governments to ensure desired on-the-ground impacts and efforts to advance environmental justice come to fruition? What do youth consider as reliable and impactful engagement and indicators of success?*

She said the overarching recommendations are to:

- Develop additional continuous outreach and ongoing programming, not just one-off events.

- Launch assessment outreach programs before and after events to assess quantitative and qualitative impact
- Facilitate youth engagement in environmental decision-making.

Page Tsirigotis shared recommendations on the following charge question:

*(EJ4) What best practices, technologies, and/or platforms are best positioned to connect youth to environmental resources EPA has available, including but not limited to, green space access/preservation, cleanup efforts, grant opportunities, and policy-developing opportunities, particularly for communities with EJ Concerns?*

Page Tsirigotis presented just a few of the NEYAC's recommendations in this area, focusing on digital approaches. She said the NEYAC recommends that EPA:

- Create short, engaging videos; and
- Create challenges/contests and trends for youth.

Finally, Rachel Billiot-Bruleigh presented recommendations on the following question:

*(EJ5) What topics relating to Environmental Justice are most urgent to youth?*

She said that the EPA currently supports false solutions such as carbon capture and storage, liquified natural gas, and waste energy incineration. She said the NEYAC recommends that EPA:

- Prioritize just climate solutions.
- Recognize and protect the intrinsic rights of nature.
- Strengthen enforcement.
- Support just workforce transitions.

### Climate Change

Gabriel Nagel shared the NEYAC's process for developing the recommendations for the first climate change charge questions:

*(CC1) Is the Agency's regulatory process sufficiently transparent for meaningful, effective engagement with youth, EJ, and other communities?*

He said that these include:

- Simplifying online platforms for easier navigation and public engagement.
- expanding formal structures such as local advisory councils to facilitate continuous collaboration.
- Partnering with educational institutions to promote environmental education.

Osasenaga Idahor shared draft recommendations and sub-recommendations that address the following charge question:

*(CC2) What are areas of interest to youth communities that EPA should engage on? What are the most pressing issues in your communities that the Agency should focus on or prioritize?*

He said the NEYAC recommends that EPA:

- Expand K–12 climate education, focusing on environmental justice communities.
- Create green job pathways and involve youth in policymaking.
- Expand and simplify environmental grants for youth projects .

Gabriel Nagel shared recommendations on the third climate change charge question:

*(CC3) What does success look like for NEYAC? What data or metrics would the group use (if any) to identify successful outcomes of the NEYAC engagement?*

He said the EPA should:

- Develop a database of scholarships and internships for environmental careers.
- Track NEYAC recommendations in environmental legislation.
- Organize an EPA summit and provide school sustainability resources.

### Circular Economy

Kristy Drutman shared the following charge question:

*(CE1) How can EPA and its partners (e.g., state or local governments, non-profit organizations, industry groups or academia) more effectively engage young people to help reduce food waste at home and abroad?*

She said the NEYAC recommends that EPA:

- Enhance school and educational outreach.
- Experiment with social media outreach campaigns.
- Change the narrative around food.

Nick Blumenthal discussed recommendations related to the following charge question:

*(CE2) How can EPA's efforts to manage food (as a material) in the most sustainable and efficient way be improved to benefit and work for youth?*

He shared the following recommendations:

- Strengthen community partnerships by enhancing how it engages youth.
- Tailor outreach programs that align with existing science education curricula.
- Expand presence in locations where youth already spend time, such as by setting up interactive mobile workshops.
- Inspire greater interest in environmental stewardship.
- Foster a deeper understanding of sustainability and agriculture.

Wanjiku Gatheru shared the next charge question:

*(CE3) How can outreach and education on making the most of food and preventing food from going to waste at home be most effective in disadvantaged communities?*

She said the NEYAC recommended that EPA prioritize:

- Building connections to food.
- Enhancing community engagement and trusted partnerships.
- Addressing food deserts and their consequences.

Lisette Perez shared the final charge question and associated recommendations, which were as follows:

*(CE4) What roles can food retailers and food service providers play in helping young people and those living in disadvantaged communities waste less at home?*

The NEYAC recommends:

- Expanding plastic pollution and reliable recycling programs.
- Supporting private sector organizations with grant programs and community building.

Gabriel Nagel opened the floor for discussion.

Administrator Regan thanked the NEYAC for their thoughtful and strategic recommendations. He said he appreciated the digital approach because he believes EPA has a lot of information that could be shared more effectively. He also heard their recommendations for more in-person activities and engagement, as well as for grant programs and employment programs that empower youth. Administrator Regan also raised the issue of the Agency's support for "false solutions," which he said needs unpacking in light of regulations and legal requirements. He said he would spend time reading the recommendations carefully, and he'd like to have a conversation at some point about which of these are priorities.

Karim Marshall thanked the NEYAC for their robust set of action items and said many recommendations can be acted on relatively quickly. He said a key issue that runs throughout the recommendations is how EPA will know if the programs and activities they implement are working, and he invited their feedback on that. Secondly, he said hearing stories of youth who are doing excellent work in the field would help advance EPA's mission.

Administrator Regan concurred with the value of stories, and he asked to hear not only the "what" but the "how."

Alejandra Nunez, Deputy Assistant Administrator for Mobile Sources, Office of Air and Radiation, thanked the NEYAC for their work and said she looks forward to having more conversations. She asked they NEYAC's thoughts about what the Agency should focus on in the near-term.

Lana Suárez thanked NEYAC members for their thoughtful work and said she especially appreciated the circular economy recommendations on how strengthening the connection with food can help reduce waste. She iterated a desire for helpful examples.

Regarding implementation priorities, Page Tsirigotis suggested the EPA start with those that are easiest to implement.

Administrator Regan thanked her for the comment and noted that what might be easiest for the Agency may not be most important to the NEYAC. He said that EPA will get back to the NEYAC about their plans after they've had time to digest the information.

Gabriel Nagel said that the NEYAC will work on putting together a list of experiences and stories.

Administrator Regan thanked the NEYAC again and said he'd like to build on the momentum and work with NEYAC to determine an implementation plan.

## Public Comment

**Nora Strande** said that she grew up in Minnesota, east of St. Paul in an area that is highly contaminated by PFAS. She said that, before she died of cancer, her sister advocated a ban on PFAS from consumer products, including dental floss, children's toys, and carpeting. After her sister died, a bill passed that is the toughest law on PFAS in the world. She said that EPA's drinking water standard will reduce PFAS exposure, but there are other ways to reduce exposure, as well, such as choosing cleaning products that meet the standard. She said much more can be done to protect people and asked that they work together to reduced student exposure to PFAS.

**Ken Spare** said he is glad the NEYAC is in action. He said he was the chair for the Youth Advisory Board in Region 7 in the 1970s, and he is glad to see involved young people. He said they were unpaid, inhouse employees, and they participated in the first land use study in the nation.

## Closing Remarks

**Jane Nishida** | Acting Deputy Administrator, EPA

Jane Nishida said that the formation of the NEYAC was an exciting day for EPA. She noted that the members have grown up witnessing and experiencing environmental injustices firsthand. She thanked commenter Nora Strande for sharing her personal story of her sister.

Jane Nishida said the NEYAC was asked to provide input on a range of issues and policies, and the submission of their first set of recommendations is another exciting moment for the Agency. She acknowledged the time and hard work that members gave to producing the recommendations. She said youth have always been at the forefront of every environmental movement in recent history, and EPA recognizes the importance of engaging youth to ensure access to clean air, safe water, and healthy land. She said the NEYAC has given EPA a lot to think about, and EPA is grateful for their service and leadership.

## Next Steps and Public Meeting Adjourns

**Rhonda Wright** | NEYAC Alternate Designated Federal Officer, EPA

Rhonda Wright said that public comments can be submitted until 11:59 pm on November 5, 2024. She said the next meeting will be in early 2025, with specific dates forthcoming.

She thanked participants and attendees and adjourned the meeting.

## Appendix A. Agenda



### Official Meeting of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency National Environmental Youth Advisory Council

October 22, 2024  
Virtual Meeting  
12:40PM – 2:30PM EDT  
Public Docket [EPA-HQ-OA-2024-0043](https://www.epa.gov/epaosopr/pd/epa-hq-oa-2024-0043)

*All times in Eastern Standard Time*

12:40PM – 12:50PM	<p>Welcome: Logistics and Agenda Overview</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rhonda Wright, NEYAC Alternate Designated Federal Officer, EPA</li> </ul>
12:50PM – 1:15PM	<p>Call to Order and Introductions of Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rhonda Wright, NEYAC Alternate Designated Federal Officer, EPA</li> </ul>
1:15PM – 2:00PM	<p>Presentation of Recommendations &amp; Discussion with Administrator Michael S. Regan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Environmental Justice Recommendations:</b> <i>Gabriel Nagel, Facilitator</i></li> <li>• <b>Climate Change Recommendations:</b> <i>Gabriel Nagel, Facilitator</i></li> <li>• <b>Food Loss and Waste Recommendations:</b> <i>Gabriel Nagel, Facilitator</i></li> </ul>
2:00 PM – 2:10 PM	<b>Break</b>
2:10PM – 2:20PM	<p><b>Public Comment Period</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members of the public who have registered to provide oral comments will have an opportunity to do so.</li> </ul>
2:20PM – 2:25PM	<p>Closing Remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EPA's Acting Deputy Administrator Jane Nishida</li> </ul>



2:25PM – 2:30PM	Next Steps and Public Meeting Adjourns <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rhonda Wright, NEYAC Alternate Designated Federal Officer, EPA</li></ul>
	<b>Wrap Up</b>

**Appendix B. NEYAC Members and Roll-Call Status**

Emmanuel Alcantar, not present

Alexandra Angerman, present

Rachel Billiot-Bruleigh, present

Nick Blumenthal, present

Colton Buckley, not present

Kristy Drutman, present

Wanjiku “Wawa” Gatheru, present

Osasenaga Idahor, present

Sophia Kianni, present, not present

Meghana Kunapareddy, present

Gabriel Nagel, present

Kiera O’Brien, not present

Lisette Perez, present

Asada Rashidi, not present

Page Tsirigotis, present

**Designated Federal Officer**

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## Appendix C. Presentations

# NEYAC Recommendations

Environmental Justice | Climate Change | Circular Economies

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# 01

# Environmental Justice

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**EJ1. What barriers to awareness or access exist to empowering and connecting with youth in Communities with EJ Concerns for Agency resources and outreach? What approaches, processes, or strategies would the NEYAC recommend that would enhance awareness and access?**

1. Enhance Digital Outreach and Engagement

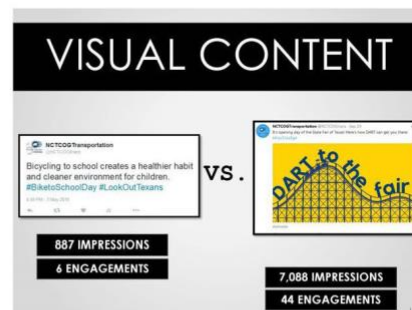
- Focus on partnering with social media creators that employ storytelling to engage youth. This can be done through infographics, short form films, posts, etc.

2. Engage Schools and Youth Organizations

- Partner with educational institutions to incorporate environmental justice education, focusing on developing relationships with community leaders and speakers.

3. Develop User Friendly Online Resources

- Creating interactive tools that assist youth in navigating the EPA's resources for environmental justice and engaging communities to receive input on tools/programs.



**EJ2. How can the EPA engage youth in environmental sustainability? How can young people actively promote innovation and implement sustainable ideas? How would you identify youth's vision for a just and sustainable future?**

- National EPA Climate Ideas Conference → presentations by youth on personal experiences & efforts relating to sustainability
- Filmmaking Fellowship → environmental impacts by youth in a creative format
- Awards and Recognitions → innovative sustainability projects by youth





**EJ3. How should EPA work with corresponding state, local, and/or Tribal governments to ensure desired on-the-ground impacts and efforts to advance environmental justice come to fruition? What do youth consider as reliable and impactful engagement and indicators of success?**

- **Develop additional continuous outreach/programs (not just one-off events) that individuals can expect and plan for**
  - Workshops and seminars: engage in problem-solving
  - Long-term partnerships with community organizations, schools, and tribal councils
- **Launch assessment outreach programs pre/post-event to assess qualitative and quantitative impact**
  - Conduct ongoing surveys, evaluations, and other data to improve initiatives to better serve community
- **Facilitate youth engagement in environmental decision-making**
  - Regional youth councils
  - Additional internships and volunteer roles
  - Offer grants on environmental projects lead by youth

Examples:



**EJ4. What best practices, technologies, and/or platforms are best positioned to connect youth to environmental resources EPA has available, including but not limited to, green space access/preservation, cleanup efforts, grant opportunities, and policy-developing opportunities, particularly for communities with EJ Concerns?**

#### Digital Presence

- Short, engaging videos
  - Focus on platforms that youth frequent the most (e.g. Instagram, YouTube)
- Create challenges and trends for youth
  - Both to inform them of EPA resources and engage them with the agency
  - Example: Innovative Policy Challenge





### EJ5. What topics relating to Environmental Justice are most urgent to youth?

- Protections for Sacrifice Zones
- **Prioritizing Just Climate Solutions:** Prioritizing climate solutions that safeguard vulnerable communities & ecosystems, while avoiding false solutions which impose significant costs
- **Inherent Rights of Nature:** Recognizing and protecting the intrinsic rights of nature, especially in vulnerable ecosystems (ex: wetlands, prairies, & old-growth forests) critical to environmental health but threatened by corporate & anthropogenic activity
- **Strengthen Enforcements:** Stronger enforcement policies on industries affecting air & water quality, including implementing carbon standards for existing gas power plants, stricter enforcement of the Clean Air & Water Acts in sacrifice zones, greater fines for non-compliance, & environmental restoration
- **Just Workforce Transitions**

## 02 Climate Change

**CC1. Is the Agency's regulatory process sufficiently transparent for meaningful, effective engagement with youth, EJ, & other communities?**

*Process*

- Visited EPA regional offices and EJ communities to identify barriers
- Analyzed EPA online platforms for clarity and accessibility
- Discussed with EPA officials to understand how regulatory decisions are communicated

*Recommendations*

- Simplify online platforms for easier navigation and public engagement
- Expand formal structures like local advisory councils to facilitate continuous collaboration
- Partner with educational institutions to promote environmental education



**CC2. What are areas of interest to youth communities that EPA should engage on? What are the most pressing issues in your communities that the Agency should focus on or prioritize?**

*Process*

- Reviewed state climate education policies and curricula gaps
- Engaged youth and EJ communities on education and job opportunities
- Consulted educational institutions and green job experts

*Recommendations*

- Expand on K-12 climate education, focusing on EJ communities
- Create green job pathways and involve youth in policy-making
- Expand and simplify environmental grants for youth projects





**CC3. What does success look like for NEYAC? What data or metrics would the group use (if any) to identify successful outcomes of the NEYAC engagement?**

*Process*

- Consulted universities and organizations on scholarships & internships
- Reviewed metrics for tracking federal advisory council impact
- Engaged youth leaders on sustainability resources and conferences

*Recommendations*

- Develop database of scholarships and internships for environmental careers
- Track NEYAC recommendations in environmental legislation
- Organize EPA summit and provide school sustainability resources




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# 03

## Circular Economies

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**CE1. How can EPA and its partners (e.g., state or local governments, non-profit organizations, industry groups or academia) more effectively engage young people to help reduce food waste at home and abroad?**

- **School & Education:** Emphasizing the importance of early intervention in shaping food habits and attitudes through educational techniques like gameplay, storytelling, and hands-on participation.
  - Ex: Provide schools funding for vegetable & native gardens.
- **Experiment With Social Media Outreach Campaigns:** Making information fun by creating apps or challenges that encourage group participation, such as workshops and competitions focused on reducing plastic usage.
- **Changing the Narrative around Food:** Incorporating culturally significant foods into educational initiatives to form connections with food that holds personal and communal importance.
  - Ex: Incorporating Indigenous knowledge and storytelling to talk about indigenous food systems & native gardens.



**CE2. How can EPA's efforts to manage food (as a material) in the most sustainable & efficient way be improved to benefit and work for youth?**

- **Integrate** environmental and food topics into science curricula to make them relevant and engaging.
- **Design** lesson plans and projects around sustainability, climate change, and agriculture.
- **Coordinate** with teachers and administrators for seamless integration into classroom activities.
- **Establish** educational initiatives in community centers, after-school programs, libraries, and parks.
- **Use** workshops, interactive exhibits, and mobile learning to engage youth outside of school.
- **Foster** long-term community involvement by making environmental education accessible in daily life.



**CE3. How can outreach and education on making the most of food and preventing food from going to waste at home be most effective in disadvantaged communities?**

- **Building Connections to Food:** Promote sustainable agriculture initiatives that integrate land restoration practices and traditional knowledge into modern farming techniques.
- **Community Engagement & Trusted Partnerships:** Combine sustainability, STEAM education, and cultural awareness to create meaningful connections and ensure inclusivity across diverse communities.
- **Addressing Food Deserts & Their Consequences:** Educate communities on sustainable food practices through school gardens, after-school programs, and collaborations with educational institutions.



**CE4. What roles can food retailers and food service providers play in helping young people and those living in disadvantaged communities waste less at home?**

- Plastic Pollution & Reliable Recycling
- Grant Programs & Community Building