

# Tribal & Environmental Justice

## Information Sheet



**Delta  
Stewardship  
Council**

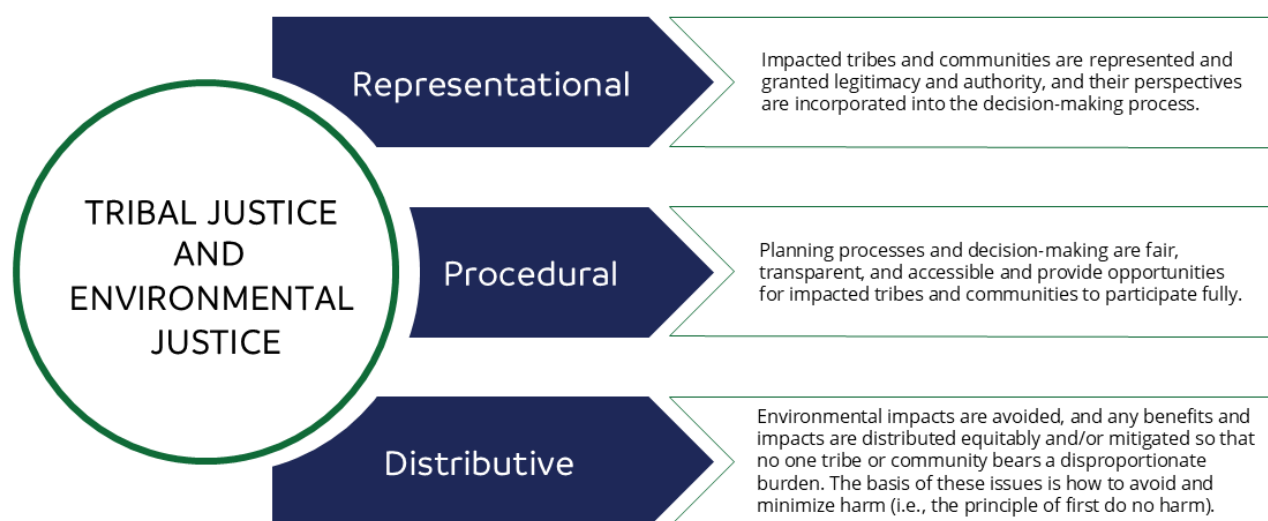
A CALIFORNIA STATE AGENCY

### What is Tribal & Environmental Justice?

**Tribal justice recognizes tribal equity, and the priorities and unique status tribal nations, Native communities, and Indigenous peoples have with environmental decision-making and management.** Tribal justice involves interweaving tribal knowledge and perspectives into environmental decisions.

**Environmental justice is about creating a healthy environment for all.** It is the fair treatment of all people, no matter their race, culture, income, or national origin, and their inclusion in the creation and enforcement of laws, regulations, and policies that affect the environment.<sup>1</sup> Environmental justice is especially focused on ensuring that communities most burdened by pollution have a seat at the table in environmental decisions.

Environmental justice can be organized into **representation, process, and distribution issues** that, when addressed, can create more environmentally just decision-making.



<sup>1</sup> Paraphrased from statutory definition in Government Code section 65040.12, subdivision (e).

## Environmental Impacts on the Delta

Communities in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta face a variety of environmental impacts.

### Examples that Delta Communities Face Today



High flood risk made worse by subsidence and sea level rise



Water pollution from farm runoff, historic mining operations, and other sources



Harmful algal blooms



Extreme heat and drought



Loss of native plants, animals, and wetlands



Poor air quality

## Concerns in the Delta

The Delta Stewardship Council (Council) consulted with California Native American tribes and met with community-based organizations in the Delta to understand how tribes and communities are affected by these environmental impacts and the challenges they face in being fairly included in environmental decisions. Through these conversations, public comments, and other sources, Council staff identified some key representational, procedural, and distributional issues that tribes and communities encounter when working with public agencies and governments in the Delta. It is important to note that common environmental justice issues also impact tribal communities disproportionately.

### Common Issues

	Environmental Justice	Tribal Justice
<b>Representation</b>	Inadequate representation of vulnerable communities	Lack of consideration of a tribe's unique status, issues, and priorities Repression of cultural practices
<b>Process</b>	Lack of government transparency and coordination across agencies	Marginalization and exclusion Poor tribal consultation
<b>Distribution</b> <i>(impacts distributed inequitably)</i>	Climate change, flood risk, water supply and quality, pollution exposure, lack of affordable housing, lack of access to healthy foods, limited access to green spaces	Pollution exposure through ceremonial and subsistence practices Commodification of water

## Recommendations for Agencies Working in the Delta

Addressing tribal and environmental justice issues in the Delta will take a collective effort. The Council developed some general recommendations for all agencies working on issues in the Delta to consider (summarized below).

### General Recommendations

	Invest in Relationship- and Trust-Building
	Work Through Trusted Community Partners
	Be Intentional and Justice-Oriented
	Make it Easy to Participate Early and Often
	Follow Through
	Enhance Coordination and Connections Between and within State Agencies and Local Governments
	Identify and Fill Research and Data Needs and Effectively Communicate Findings

### Learn More!

To learn more about tribal and environmental justice in the Delta, read the Delta Stewardship Council's Tribal and Environmental Justice issue paper or visit [deltacouncil.ca.gov/environmental-justice](https://deltacouncil.ca.gov/environmental-justice).

Please email questions to [environmentaljustice@deltacouncil.ca.gov](mailto:environmentaljustice@deltacouncil.ca.gov).



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