

Tribal and Environmental Justice Issue Paper: Recommendations

Information Sheet



**Delta
Stewardship
Council**

A CALIFORNIA STATE AGENCY

Introduction

The Delta Stewardship Council (Council) developed a Tribal and Environmental Justice issue paper to better address tribal justice and environmental justice concerns in its work in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta (Delta). Through this effort, the Council learned that the issues and actions identified in the Delta are complex and cannot be addressed by the Council alone.

This information sheet presents recommendations from the Tribal and Environmental Justice issue paper developed to address tribal and environmental injustices in the Delta. These recommendations are divided into 1) general recommendations relevant to all who work in the Delta (presented at a high level in this information sheet) and 2) recommendations specific to the Council.

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

Council-specific Recommendations

Goal 1: Integrate environmental justice into the Delta Stewardship Council, consistent with the Delta Reform Act.

Strategy 1a: Commit to advancing environmental justice over the short and long term.

1. **Annually Report Progress on Actions.** Report to the Council annually on progress made in addressing the actions included in the issue paper.
2. **Policy Evaluation.** Evaluate current Council planning documents (such as the Delta Plan), including policies/regulations and performance measures, to assess opportunities to advance environmental justice within them. If appropriate, recommend amendments.
3. **Identify Environmental Justice Communities.** Develop a framework to identify California environmental justice communities affected by Delta policy and management decisions (including environmental justice communities both within and outside of the legal Delta). Use this framework to guide Council actions and resources targeted toward environmental justice communities.
4. **Study Water Justice Issues in Communities Outside the Delta.** Identify and help fund research that improves understanding of the nexus between environmental justice and Delta water management in communities outside of the legal Delta. Use research findings to identify subsequent actions the State of California—including the Council—can take to address identified issues.

Strategy 1b: Create a more inclusive workplace through creative and equitable recruitment and retention, building staff capacity and literacy on equity and tribal and environmental justice, and using inclusive language.

1. **Lead by Example.** Foster a work culture that values diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging, where all employees feel empowered to advance tribal and environmental justice in their work.
2. **Learn More About Tribal and Environmental Justice.** Increase opportunities for staff to continually build their understanding of tribal and environmental justice related to the Council's mission.
3. **Enable Career Pathways to the Council.** Strengthen career pathways to the Council through new partnerships and increased organizational visibility.
4. **Support Community-Based Learning.** Support K-12 schools, institutions of higher education, and community-based organizations' programs that mentor and support youth and young adults from tribal and environmental justice communities pursuing careers in policy, science, and engineering.

5. **Define and Update Inclusive Language.** Identify and use inclusive terminology that is respectful and encourages meaningful engagement with staff and external partners. Regularly update staff guidance as needed.

Strategy 1c: Support and promote representation of tribes and tribal and environmental justice communities in Delta governance and decision-making.

1. **Improve Access to Council Decisions.** Address barriers to historically underrepresented communities participating in Council decision-making processes.
2. **Empower Tribal and Environmental Justice Voices.** Actively promote openings on Delta decision-making bodies to tribes and community organizations to increase representation.
3. **Offer Tribal and EJ Perspectives to the Delta Plan Interagency Implementation Committee (DPIIC).** Consult with tribes and community-based organizations to explore tribal and environmental justice representative participation options in DPIIC. Utilize the DPIIC subcommittee structure to include tribal and EJ communities in DPIIC-led initiatives.
4. **Identify/Develop Partnership Models.** Explore potential contract mechanisms and resources for tribes, community members, and community-based organizations to inform Council decision-making processes.
5. **Seek Ongoing Advice from Tribal and Community Experts.** Explore the formation of tribal and/or environmental justice advisory group(s) to provide expertise on specific Council initiatives and activities.
6. **Practice Consistent Outreach.** Compile a database of community-based organizations and nongovernmental organizations from environmental justice communities and adopt an agency-wide practice of consistently and appropriately conducting outreach.

Goal 2: Expand opportunities for tribes to practice their subsistence and cultures, and recognize tribal rights in the Council's work.

Strategy 2a: Build and strengthen respectful relationships between tribes and the Council that practice reciprocity and recognize, honor, and promote tribal interests in the Delta.

1. **Build on Ongoing Tribal Efforts.** Support and engage in partner agency efforts to strengthen Delta tribal access and use of the Delta, co-stewardship and co-management with partner agencies, ancestral land return efforts, protection of tribal data, protection of tribal cultural resources, and partnerships.
2. **Amplify Tribal Histories.** Consider recommendations from the California Truth and Healing Council's final report (expected to be released in 2025) to identify

opportunities to promote and acknowledge the importance of each tribe's unique history and world views related to the Delta.

3. **Host Tribal Roundtables.** Regularly invite tribal representatives to present at Council meetings to increase direct Councilmember interaction with tribes.
4. **Be Humble and Ask Questions.** Provide cultural humility training for Council members and staff that addresses tribal issues and engagement best practices.

Strategy 2b: Conduct proactive and early tribal consultations on Council initiatives and activities and facilitate and support meaningful tribal consultation.

1. **Seek Early Tribal Engagement.** Engage early and often with tribes, both before Council initiatives and activities begin and throughout their development, by providing ample advance notice of opportunities for consultation and engagement.
2. **Set and Uphold Tribal Consultation Expectations.** Evaluate the Council's Tribal Consultation Policy at least every five years and update it as needed to reflect these recommendations and ensure best consultation practices are incorporated.
3. **Lead Inter-Agency Tribal Partnerships.** Continue facilitating inter-agency partnerships that identify and address tribal needs and barriers for engaging in Delta science and planning.

Goal 3: Promote visibility and understanding of tribal and environmental justice in the Delta through research, policy development, and communications.

Strategy 3a: Establish partnerships that provide ongoing and stable support for tribal- and community-engaged research that centers tribal and community identities, capacities, needs, and issues.

1. **Be a Trusted Partner.** Participate in and partner with existing tribal and environmental justice networks to build trust, increase understanding, and improve outcomes.
2. **Create an Environmental Justice Research Network.** Continue building and investing in the Delta Social Science Community of Practice to include and support environmental justice and tribal knowledge practitioners and researchers.
3. **Promote Science for Communities.** Pair tribes and community-based organizations with scientists to collaborate on projects that address tribal and environmental justice-related science and community needs and issues and publicly highlight successful collaborations.

4. **Respect Data Ownership.** Develop a data management protocol for data collected through Council-sponsored tribal and community-engaged research that respects tribal data and community ownership of its own data.
5. **Safeguard Human Research Subjects.** Ensure that Council-funded human subjects research projects undergo applicable ethical review and approval.

Strategy 3b: Embed equity and the appropriate interweaving of Traditional Knowledge—in partnership with originating tribes—in Delta science to ensure that the Council’s support of science-based adaptive management and decision-making promotes equitable outcomes.

1. **Embrace More Ways of Knowing.** Facilitate dialogue among tribes, agencies, and other partners (e.g., nongovernmental organizations, academics, consultants) to increase the interweaving of Traditional Knowledges into the Delta science enterprise (with fair compensation provided to tribes).
2. **Identify and Pursue Tribal and Environmental Justice Science Actions.** Prioritize science actions, including but not limited to the Science Action Agenda and Delta Science Plan, that include coordination with tribes and environmental justice organizations to incorporate environmental justice and tribal research needs in Delta science.
3. **Advance Community-Based Collaborative Science.** Advance collaborative, community-based research in partnership with tribal and environmental justice communities.
4. **Share Findings Together.** Develop and host accessible and relevant science communication and knowledge exchange events, outreach, and products in partnership with interested tribes and community organizations.

Strategy 3c: Enhance environmental justice communities’ understanding of environmental and climate risks by improving data communication and transparency.

1. **Communicate Risk.** Apply the Council’s communication resources to share flood, water supply, water quality, and climate risks, and to promote adaptation policy options as identified in the Council’s Delta Adapts Adaptation Plan.
2. **Communicate Data and Synthesis.** Make Council-sponsored data and synthesis publicly available, accessible, and useable.

Goal 4: Explore ways to address funding inequity in communities that historically have seen the least investment.

Strategy 4a: Review, adapt, and enhance the Council's funding to advance equity.

1. **Promote Opportunities that Inform and Help Tribes and Environmental Justice Communities Access Science Funding.** Continue to consult with tribal and environmental justice communities to enhance tribal and environmental justice communities' participation in science solicitations.
2. **Establish Proposal Evaluation Criteria for Environmental Justice Issues.** Create a framework for Delta science funding applicants and reviewers to consider how projects address environmental justice issues in relevant research.
3. **Dedicate Delta Science Funding for Tribal and Environmental Justice Research.** Explore the potential for Delta science funding for tribal and environmental justice research topics to inform decision-making in the Delta.
4. **Explore an Environmental Justice and Climate Technical Assistance Grant Program.** Explore the development of a technical assistance grant program in the Delta focused on environmental justice issues and climate adaptation strategies.
5. **Seek Delta-Specific Environmental Justice Appropriations.** Identify opportunities to support Delta-specific environmental justice appropriations that work to address the issues and recommendations identified in this issue paper to the legislature and Congress.

For More Information

To read the Delta Stewardship Council's Tribal and Environmental Justice issue paper or find more information about this effort, visit deltacouncil.ca.gov/environmental-justice or scan the QR code to the right.



Please email questions to environmentaljustice@deltacouncil.ca.gov.

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