

# Tribal and Environmental Justice Issue Paper: Recommendations

Public Review Draft  
Information Sheet



**Delta  
Stewardship  
Council**

A CALIFORNIA STATE AGENCY

## Introduction

The 2019 Five-Year Review of the Delta Plan adopted by the Delta Stewardship Council (Council) included a recommendation that staff prepare an issue paper to identify “future policy options for the Council to consider” to better address environmental justice concerns in its work. Through the various sources reviewed and interviewed for the issue paper, it became apparent to Council staff that, while there are actions that the Council should consider taking, the issues and actions identified are complex and cannot be addressed by the Council alone.

This information sheet presents the recommendations from the public review draft of the Tribal and Environmental Justice issue paper and includes 1) a summary of the general recommendations relevant to all who work in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and 2) the full 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
- Follow through
- Enhance connections between 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. **Endorse EJ Recommendations.** Identify and present to the Council environmental justice goals, strategies, and actions drawn from this issue paper within the Council's authority and jurisdiction for consideration and potential direction to develop an implementation plan with benchmarks and periodic reporting.
2. **EJ 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 EJ Communities.** Develop a framework to spatially identify California EJ communities affected by Delta policy and management decisions.
4. **Study Delta Water Justice Issues.** Identify and help fund research that improves understanding of the nexus between EJ and Delta water management in communities outside 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.

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.

Strategy 1c: Support and promote representation of 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 EJ 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 (CBOs) to explore tribal and EJ 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 CBOs to inform Council decision-making processes.
5. **Seek Ongoing Advice from Community Experts.** Explore the formation of tribal and/or EJ Advisory Group(s).
6. **Practice Consistent Outreach.** Compile a database of CBOs/NGOs from EJ communities and adopt an agency-wide practice of consistently and appropriately conducting outreach.

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

Strategy 2a: Build and strengthen relationships between tribes and the Council that 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.** Work with the Truth and Healing Council to host listening sessions for tribes and tribal communities to amplify Delta tribal histories and experiences.
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.
5. **Embrace More Ways of Knowing.** Facilitate dialogue among tribes, agencies, and other partners (e.g., NGOs, academics, consultants) to increase the

interweaving of Traditional Knowledges with Western science, including adaptive management conceptual models.

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

1. **Seek Early Tribal Engagement.** Engage early and often with tribes, providing ample advanced notice of Council initiatives, activities, and opportunities for 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.
3. **Lead Inter-Agency Tribal Partnerships.** Continue leading 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 environmental justice in Delta issues through research, policy development, and communications.

Strategy 3a: Establish partnerships that provide ongoing and stable support for community-engaged research that centers 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 EJ Research Network.** Continue building and investing in the Delta Social Science Community of Practice to include and support EJ and tribal knowledge practitioners and researchers.
3. **Promote Science for Communities.** Pair tribes and CBOs with scientists to collaborate on projects that address tribal and EJ-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 in Delta science to ensure that the Council's support of science-based adaptive management and decision-making promotes equitable outcomes.

1. **Identify and Pursue Tribal and EJ Science Actions.** Prioritize science actions, including but not limited to the Science Action Agenda and Delta Science Plan,

that include coordination with tribes and EJ organizations to incorporate EJ and tribal research needs in Delta science.

- 2. Advance Community-Based Collaborative Science.** Advance collaborative, community-based research in partnership with tribal and EJ communities.
- 3. 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 resources for adaptation.
- 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 programs to advance equity.

- 1. Help Tribes and EJ Communities Access Science Funding.** Continue to consult with tribal and environmental justice communities to enhance tribal and EJ communities' participation in science solicitations.
- 2. Establish Proposal Evaluation Criteria for EJ 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.** Set aside a portion of Delta science funding for Tribal and environmental justice research topics to inform decision-making in the Delta.
- 4. Explore a Climate Justice Technical Assistance Grant Program.** Explore the development of a technical assistance grant program in the Delta focused on climate justice outcomes (i.e., EJ issues and climate adaptation strategies).
- 5. Seek Delta-Specific EJ Appropriations.** Identify opportunities to support Delta-specific EJ appropriations to the Legislature and Congress that are targeted toward EJ communities and achieving tribal and environmental justice outcomes in the Delta.

## For More Information

Please email [environmentaljustice@deltacouncil.ca.gov](mailto:environmentaljustice@deltacouncil.ca.gov) or scan the QR code to access the full public draft Tribal and Environmental Justice issue paper.

