

SUBCOMMITTEE ON OCEAN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE WEBINAR PUBLIC SUMMARY

On Tuesday, November 2, 2021, the National Science and Technology Council (NSTC) Subcommittee on Ocean Science and Technology (SOST) hosted an Environmental Justice Webinar. This virtual event convened over 350 Federal representatives across 38 agencies to provide foundational information about environmental justice (EJ) and how agencies working on ocean issues can consider EJ in their work. This event was motivated by leadership from the Biden-Harris Administration ([Executive Order 140008](#)) and by interest from members of the SOST and other bodies.

Dr. Jalonnie White-Newsome, founder of Empowering a Green Environment and Economy LLC, provided a background presentation on EJ and facilitated discussion during the event. She explained that “Environmental justice is not just the dirty air, but it’s the policies and practices that feed into the inequities that people experience... Whatever your role is, there’s an opportunity to think about how you can accentuate the justice and equity component of your work.” **Holly Wilson**, Senior Advisor for Community Engagement at the Council of Environmental Quality (CEQ), provided opening remarks on Federal initiatives and groups. She introduced a new resource in development, the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool, saying, “This is going to help agencies across the government answer that question, where are those disadvantaged communities and what is it that they need with regards to environmental and health challenges?”

Marissa Knodel, Advisor to the Director at the Bureau of Ocean and Energy Management (BOEM), shared how EJ can be part of the transformative ocean solutions we need to address climate change with remarks on BOEM’s offshore energy and minerals management. She stated, “We cannot address the challenges of the climate crises if our solutions are not based in environmental justice. As an emerging industry, offshore wind presents the opportunity to incorporate environmental justice early on.” **Hillary Renick**, Tribal Liaison Coordinator at BOEM, spoke to the role of Tribal sovereignty in ocean solutions. Renick emphasized the importance of incorporating Indigenous voices in project development and building two-way relationships, saying, “People want to be heard, they don’t want to be talked at or talked to. True relationships are an important aspect of environmental justice.” **Nicole LeBoeuf**, Assistant Administrator of the National Ocean Service within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), provided insights on the critical need to prioritize EJ in climate and resilience planning. She remarked, “NOAA has always had service at its core, but we are being more intentional about listening for ways we can better address the needs of coastal communities, including the challenges of climate change, in ways that specifically enhance environmental justice.”

All three speakers engaged in a panel discussion on EJ led by Dr. White-Newsome, which included commentary on lessons learned in implementing EJ and how to address systemic barriers to collaboration. This webinar is only one step towards greater understanding of how Federal agencies can apply EJ throughout their work to foster, clean, healthy, and accessible marine waters for all. Establishing common language and learning from the work of others is an important initial action from which individuals, programs, and agencies can build to implementing focused, consistent actions for justice. Prioritizing justice in conversations around ocean solutions enhances the production and delivery of science and helps generate equitable paths forward to address our most pressing ocean issues, including climate change.



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