

Voyage to Justice



Message from the Under Secretary

By Dr. Rick Spinrad

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SAVE THE DATE

I am pleased to present the second issue of the Voyage to Justice newsletter, a space to learn, raise awareness, and celebrate efforts across our agency to advance environmental justice. Achieving this goal requires investing in and supporting sustainable and resilient communities with underserved and overburdened communities to address the adverse conditions they experience.

Coming off of a summer of climate and weather extremes, there's much work to be done to prepare the public for the growing effects of climate change. This is a key part of how we build a Climate Ready Nation but we must ensure that all communities are receiving the support and information they need to face growing climate threats.

As such, this issue of *Voyage to Justice* focuses on some of the environmental and climate challenges faced by individuals and communities and the work underway at NOAA to provide funding and support for initiatives to address them. It also includes a Save the Date for Voyage to Justice: Equity & Climate Justice Forum on February 14 and 15, 2024, an in-person event that will be focused broadly on the topics of equity, climate justice, and environmental justice.

While more information for this forum is forthcoming, I encourage you to mark your calendars to attend.

Sincerely,
Dr. Rick Spinrad





Department of Commerce (DOC) Climate and Environmental Justice Stakeholder Reception

On September 15th, DOC Deputy Secretary Don Graves hosted the Department's first Climate and Environmental Justice Stakeholder Reception, featuring remarks from The White House Council on Environmental Quality Senior Director for Environmental Justice Dr. Jalonne White-Newsome, NOAA Administrator Dr. Rick Spinrad and FH Faunteroy Community Enrichment Center Executive Director Dr. E. M. Montgomery, who discussed who discussed **Nothing Without Us**, a project funded through **NOAA's Environmental Literacy Program**.

Following the reception, Drs. Spinrad and White-Newsome hosted a roundtable discussion with community leaders to further discuss ways in which NOAA, DOC and the White House can continue to engage communities, address barriers, and foster meaningful engagement to advance environmental justice.

WHEJAC Submit Climate Recommendations to CEQ

On September 20th, The White House Environmental Justice Advisory Council (WHEJAC) submitted its **Recommendations on Climate Planning, Preparedness, Response, Recovery, and Impacts** to The White House **Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ)**. Per Executive Order 14008, the WHEJAC, a public advisory committee, was established and tasked to provide advice and recommendations to the **Environmental Justice Interagency Council** and CEQ on a whole-of-government approach to environmental justice, including climate-change mitigation, resilience, and disaster management. The recommendations address federal disaster preparedness and relief, community climate planning, health impacts, housing, clean energy, and relocation. Per the **Federal Advisory Committee Act**, CEQ will work to review and respond to the recommendations by September 2024.

DID YOU KNOW?

Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class and Environmental Quality, the nation's first environmental justice book, was first released in October of 1990 by professor, author and activist Dr. Robert Bullard.

Dumping in Dixie was the first book focused primarily on documenting environmental injustice in the United States. In the book, Bullard tells the stories of five efforts by communities of color to secure their right to live in a healthy environment.

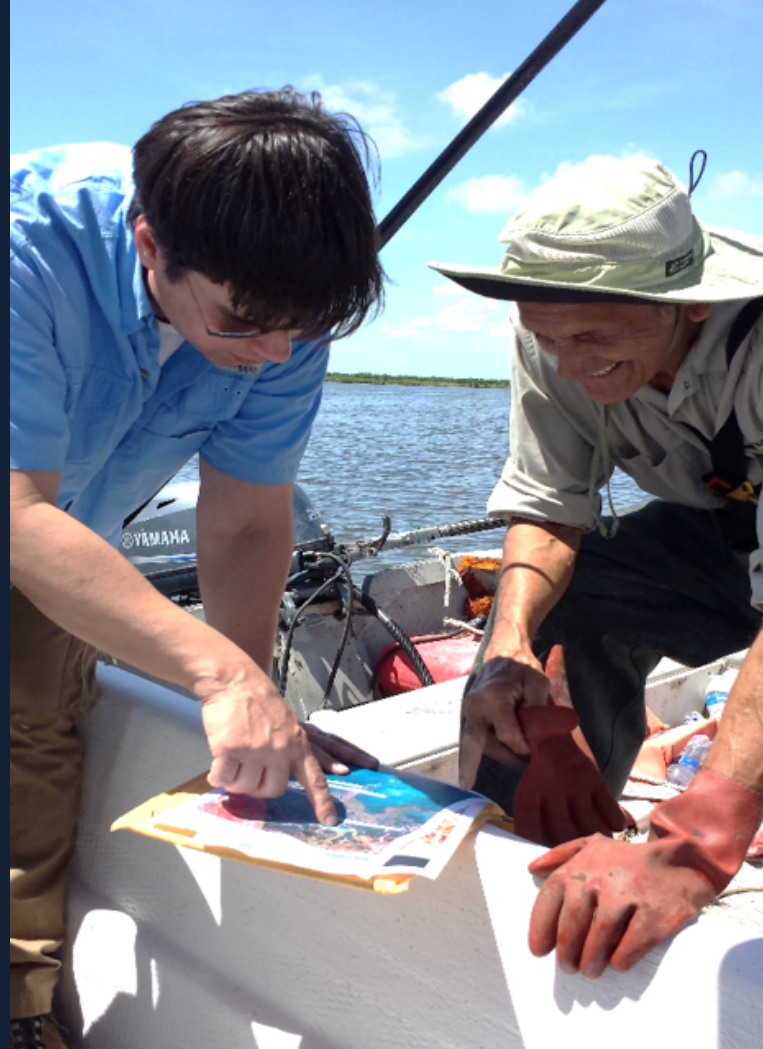
Dr. Bullard, often called the "father of environmental justice," is a distinguished professor of urban planning and environmental policy at Texas Southern University in Houston and currently serves as a member of the White House Environmental Justice Advisory Council (WHEJAC).

Collaborative Mapping for Adaptation Planning with the Pointe-au-Chien Indian Tribe in Louisiana

The rate of coastal land loss and projected sea-level rise are putting unprecedented stress on vulnerable communities in coastal Louisiana. Tribes and other Indigenous communities often have a strong connection to place that helps inspire innovative ideas promoting greater sustainability of vulnerable ecosystems and the communities that depend on them, but absent the institutional support to implement them. Overcoming this barrier requires a better understanding of their perception of the issues and priorities in sustaining their cultures and the ecosystems on which they depend. Better inclusion of their knowledge into applied research is necessary to support these communities in efforts to make sure their way of knowing is recognized, understood, and valued in environmental management applications.

Louisiana Sea Grant collaborated with the Pointe-au-Chien Indian Tribe (PACIT) and the Center for Hazards Assessment, Response & Technology at the University of New Orleans on a study to develop a decision-support tool that aids the PACIT in assessing local ecological change and associated risks to the Tribe's resilience. The research team utilized methods that included semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and participant observation to collect traditional ecological knowledge-based (TEK) information with participating Tribe members. Remote sensing and geospatial datasets were analyzed with geographic information systems processes to develop **results published in 2022** that were used to represent aspects of the Tribe's TEK in an interactive mapping format.

The maps developed reflect local perceptions of landscape features within the PACIT's ecosystem-dependent livelihood base that contribute most to the community's physical vulnerability to coastal hazards. In addition to providing a resource that the Tribe is using to inform its short and long-term local resilience planning, the maps are being used to help communicate their priorities externally to gain support for restoration and protection projects.



Aquaculture & Me! A Collaborative Gullah Geechee Community Science Program

Along the coast of the Carolinas, Georgia, and Florida, you'll find **The Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor**, a federal National Heritage Area designated to preserve the culture of the Gullah Geechee people. Recognizing the importance of Gullah Geechee culture and community science, NOAA's **National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science Aquaculture Phytoplankton Monitoring Network (AQPMN)** has partnered with the **Sea Islands Heritage Academy (SIHA)**, Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor, and Atkins Live Bait & Local Oysters to provide education and training on traditional Gullah Geechee aquaculture practices, water-quality assessment, and harmful algal blooms (HAB) identification.

Through this collaborative effort, SIHA and Atkins Live Bait & Local Oysters, a farm on St. Helena Island managed by Gullah farmers, are working with the Gullah Geechee community in South Carolina to provide enhanced environmental education to middle school students and train students on traditional Gullah fishing and sustainable oyster cultivation techniques.

Aquaculture and Me, a collaborative Gullah Geechee citizen science program for middle school students, engages local youth in activities that improve their understanding and involvement in aquaculture. Through this program, students will visit **NOAA's Hollings Marine Laboratory**, learn about oyster harvesting and ways to recognize environmental hazards and gain hands-on experiences exploring microscopes and testing water quality. Aquaculture and Me kicked off on October 29th. Additional dates are scheduled through December.

This collaborative effort is supported by scientist and AQPMN coordinator Nia Rene, who leveraged funding from the **NOAA Fisheries Office of Aquaculture** to provide the SIHA with microscopes, test kits, life jackets, and educational material to enhance training.



AQUACULTURE & ME!
Learn about our home
on St. Helena Island

Proactive Harmful Algal Bloom Communication Efforts Put to Good Use

Throughout coastal communities of western and northern Alaska, the comprehensive ecosystem-wide use of the marine environment is essential to both food security and the nutritional, cultural, and economic well-being of residents. In this region, blooms of the algae *Alexandrium catenella* can produce toxins that cause paralytic shellfish poisoning and threaten health, fishing livelihoods, subsistence foods, and wildlife.

In response to a 2022 record-breaking toxic algal bloom in the Bering Strait, NOAA's [National Centers for Coastal and Ocean Science Harmful Algal Bloom \(HAB\) Event Response program](#) awarded \$15,000 to [Alaska Sea Grant](#) and the [Norton Sound Health Corporation \(NSHC\)](#) to support proactive communication efforts to inform Bering Strait communities of subsistence food safety risks related to HABs.

As a result, this summer, within days of [Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution \(WHOI\)](#) detecting dangerously high cell counts of *Alexandrium* offshore, a HAB risk advisory on the consumption of marine wildlife resources was sent to the 20 tribal governments in the Bering Strait region, regional health clinics, and local emergency planning committees. It was also printed in the regional newspaper and broadcast over regional radio stations. The advisories provided at-risk communities with timely information needed to make informed food safety decisions, and were co-produced by NSHC, Alaska Sea Grant, WHOI, and NOAA.

November 2023

EJ Reflection: The Jemez Principles

Brittany King, PhD

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Office of the Under Secretary (on detail)*

Before my current position at NOAA, I spent time as a community organizer working with individuals from various backgrounds on social and environmental justice issues. The most impactful lessons I learned as an organizer was the importance of building relationships and letting people speak for themselves, which is often easier said than done. It requires something that is sometimes hard to accomplish: building trust. Just because an organization is interested in engaging communities does not mean all communities are willing to engage back. This is especially true for communities that have experienced negative interactions with environmental organizations and that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in policies and practices that affect their lives.

One guiding tool that I often referred to as an organizer was the [Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing](#). The principles set out to "create common understandings between different cultures, politics, and organizations." According to the Jemez Principles, engagement requires being inclusive beyond tokenism, reaching out to new constituencies at all levels (not just at the top), ensuring relevant voices are heard, building strong relations by incorporating the goals and values of others, treating others with justice and respect, and a commitment to self-transformation.

The Jemez Principles remind us that while it is great to talk about commitments to environmental justice, equity, and underserved communities, a true commitment requires us to put actions, time, and respect behind our words. It requires that we show up, work together and be open to different ways of knowing.

I encourage you all to take a few minutes to read the Jemez Principles and reflect on how you can incorporate them into your work. As they say in the final principle, we must be willing to "walk our talk."

There is always room for growth!



SAVE THE DATE!



VOYAGE TO JUSTICE

Equity & Climate Justice Forum

Feb 14 & 15, 2024

The Office of the Under Secretary will host the Voyage to Justice: Equity & Climate Justice Forum on February 14 and 15, 2024.

This two-day in-person event will take place at the Civic Center in Silver Spring, Maryland, and will focus broadly on the topics of equity, climate justice, and environmental justice. The goals of the Forum are to:

- Highlight and showcase relevant equity, climate justice and environmental justice work across NOAA
- Provide a space for learning that enhances connection with partners and practitioners
- Promote opportunities for engagement, collaboration, and partnership for future work.

[REGISTER HERE](#)



Environmental Justice Training
2pm - 4pm ET

The Office of the Under Secretary will host a Environmental Protection Agency led Environmental Justice Training on Wednesday, November 8, 2023.

During this two-hour virtual training participants will learn the meaning of environmental justice, the historical events that sparked the environmental justice movement, and what constitutes a community with environmental justice concerns.

Participants will hear about best approaches for working with environmental justice communities of concern, different levels of community engagement, and examine realtime examples of on-going work on the ground. [Click here to join the live stream!](#)