



ADVISORY COUNCIL ON HISTORIC PRESERVATION
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE STRATEGIC PLAN

DECEMBER 13, 2024

Message from ACHP Chair Sara Bronin

I am pleased to present the first Environmental Justice Strategic Plan of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), which has been prepared pursuant to Executive Order 14096, *Revitalizing Our Nation's Commitment to Environmental Justice for All*. In the years since the National Historic Preservation (NHPA) Act of 1966 created the ACHP, the agency has pursued its mission of protecting historic properties through its administration of Section 106 of the NHPA—which requires federal agencies to consider the effects of projects they carry out, license, approve, or fund on historic properties and through its advising of the President, Congress, and state and local governments on preservation policy. This strategic plan provides an opportunity for the ACHP to foreground and plan for the advancement of environmental justice across all of this work, as well as the agency's training and communications.

The historic preservation field can and must play a key role in advancing environmental justice, which is defined in Executive Order 14096 as the just treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of income, race, color, national origin, Tribal affiliation, or disability, in agency decision making and other federal activities that affect human health and the environment so that people:

- are fully protected from disproportionate and adverse human health and environmental effects (including risks) and hazards, including those related to climate change, the cumulative impacts of environmental and other burdens, and the legacy of racism or other structural or systemic barriers; and
- have equitable access to a healthy, sustainable, and resilient environment in which to live, play, work, learn, grow, worship, and engage in cultural and subsistence practices.

Through formally adopted policy statements, the ACHP has recognized the effects of historic and current development practices on communities impacted by environmental stressors. These statements commit the ACHP to embedding environmental justice in its activities, including in its administration of Section 106, which provides opportunities for consultation and community input. The ACHP has also committed to considering environmental justice impacts during the development and advancement of its policies and to collaborating with other federal agencies on the consideration of environmental justice and cumulative impacts. This plan details new opportunities for the ACHP to identify and engage communities with environmental justice concerns impacted by federal undertakings and to develop new methods to expand the ACHP's knowledge of environmental justice challenges.

Building upon the ACHP's agency Strategic Plan, this Environmental Justice Strategic Plan serves as a roadmap for the ACHP to fully and proactively consider how environmental injustices may be remedied through awareness and the integration of environmental justice principles in all the ACHP does.



The Honorable Sara C. Bronin
Chair
Advisory Council on Historic Preservation

Executive Summary

Since the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act in 1966, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation has promoted the preservation, enhancement, and sustainable use of the nation's historic properties¹ as its primary mission. To fulfill this mission, the ACHP has implemented regulatory practices and policies that support, and have the potential to further advance, environmental justice. In this strategic plan, the ACHP renews its commitment to meaningful engagement with all Americans, including consulting with Indian Tribes² and Native Hawaiian Organizations³ (NHOs) where appropriate, regarding human health and the environment as they relate to historic properties by acknowledging the impacts of climate change and environmental risks and stressors, especially in communities with environmental justice concerns. The ACHP further commits to acknowledging and accounting for any potentially adverse impacts of its policymaking, guidance, training, and outreach as it pertains to such communities.

The ACHP is the independent federal agency responsible for overseeing the federal historic preservation review process established by Section 106 of the NHPA (Section 106). Section 106 requires federal agencies to consider the effects of projects they carry out, license, approve, or fund on historic properties and to allow the ACHP the opportunity to comment.

Regulations issued by the ACHP (36 CFR Part 800) specify actions federal agencies must take to meet their legal obligations under the Section 106 process. Section 106 governs tens of billions of dollars of federal investments and 120,000 federal agency actions annually—in turn affecting the nation's housing supply, infrastructure development, homeland security, and land conservation initiatives, among others. As such, the Section 106 review process has sweeping impacts on communities and people across the country. The ACHP is committed to improving its understanding of the impacts of that review process on communities with environmental justice concerns.

The following strategic plan acknowledges the ACHP's past achievements and creates new goals in the areas of policy development and advancement, training, and guidance that the ACHP may provide using newly developed procedures and internal processes that support the incorporation of environmental justice. In particular, the ACHP intends to strengthen its guidance and recommendations to federal agencies, as well as its own efforts to consult with Indian Tribes through its government-to-government relationship. In addition, the ACHP will bolster engagement with NHOs, other Indigenous Peoples, other communities with environmental justice concerns, and the general public in its education programs, during its discussions of preservation policy, and through consultation in Section 106 reviews. Finally, the ACHP will engage in outreach and interagency cooperation pursuant to Executive Order 14096, *Revitalizing Our Nation's Commitment to Environmental Justice for All*. As will be described further below, the ACHP has developed several goals, strategies, and metrics that support the integration of environmental justice into mission-critical areas and across agency offices.

The ACHP will track progress toward meeting its goals by establishing baseline data, where possible, and compiling that data for incorporation into annual implementation reports. The ACHP invites stakeholders and members of the public to review the ACHP's Environmental Justice Strategic Plan and its annual

¹ The ACHP's work is governed by the provisions of the NHPA, which defines "historic properties" as "any prehistoric or historic district, site, building, structure, or object included on, or eligible for inclusion on, the National Register, including artifacts, records, and material remains relating to the district, site, building, structure, or object" (54 U.S.C. § 300308).

² The NHPA defines "Indian tribe" as ". . . an Indian tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community, including a Native village, Regional Corporation or Village Corporation (as those terms are defined in section 3 of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (43 U.S.C. 1602)), that is recognized as eligible for the special programs and services provided by the United States to Indians because of their status as Indians" (54 U.S.C. § 300309).

³ The NHPA defines "Native Hawaiian organization" as any organization that "(1) serves and represents the interests of Native Hawaiians; (2) has as a primary and stated purpose the provision of services to Native Hawaiians; and (3) has demonstrated expertise in aspects of historic preservation that are culturally significant to Native Hawaiians." (54 U.S.C. § 300314(a)).

reports to offer input on efforts to achieve each goal. Please visit the ACHP's [Preservation & the Environment](#) webpage for the current Environmental Justice Strategic Plan, reports, and upcoming events, such as listening sessions and workshops.

Mission Statement

The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation promotes the preservation, enhancement, and sustainable use of the nation's diverse historic resources, and advises the President and Congress on national historic preservation policy.

In furtherance of that mission, the ACHP adopted an [agency-wide Strategic Plan in 2022](#), which guides the agency's actions. That Strategic Plan includes the following cross-cutting objective:

While encouraging efficiencies, collaboration, and consultation, strive to ensure that the national historic preservation program reflects the full American story, engages all constituencies and ethnic communities, promotes equity, and benefits the public.

This Environmental Justice Strategic Plan has enabled the ACHP to further articulate the manner in which it will achieve that objective.

Vision Statement on Environmental Justice

The ACHP is committed to making the United States a nation where all Americans, irrespective of their community or background, benefit equitably from the preservation of our cultural and historic heritage, in ways that respect and reflect our diverse histories, contribute to healthy, sustainable communities, and advance environmental justice, especially in communities that have been overburdened by pollution and marginalized by underinvestment.

Approach to the Advancement of Environmental Justice

The ACHP advances environmental justice through its oversight of federal project review under Section 106, including by consulting with Indian Tribes and NHOs about the human health and environmental effects of federal activities as they relate to historic properties. The ACHP also promotes outreach and inclusion of all communities, including those with environmental justice concerns, in the Section 106 process. In addition, the ACHP advances environmental justice through advising the President, Congress, and state and local governments on matters relating to historic preservation and environmental justice, including through the implementation and advancement of ACHP policy statements. Finally, the ACHP has a number of other relevant initiatives, including enabling and encouraging training and education in the field of historic preservation, at the intersection of environmental justice and communicating and engaging the general public through its communications. The ACHP's major program offices collaborate to support the advancement of environmental justice in these and other ways.

The federal review process under Section 106 is an important planning requirement that supports the preservation of America's historic resources and creates opportunities for advancing environmental justice. The ACHP's Office of Federal Agency Programs (OFAP) oversees the ACHP's administration of and participation in Section 106 reviews, develops and implements program improvement initiatives, provides technical assistance and guidance for Section 106 participants, and works to improve federal agency and stakeholder understanding of Section 106. OFAP administers the ACHP's Section 106 training program and develops guidance to assist internal and external parties who participate in the Section 106 process, including Indian Tribes, NHOs, other Indigenous Peoples, and other impacted communities.

Strengthening the consideration of environmental justice through consultation in its government-to-government relationship with Indian Tribes, and also coordination with NHOs and other Indigenous Peoples, is an important component of the ACHP's responsibilities. The Office of Tribal and Indigenous Peoples advises the ACHP leadership and other ACHP staff on policy and program matters related to Indigenous issues and offers technical assistance and outreach for Tribal and NHO consultation under the Section 106 review process.

In its advisory capacity, policy statements and guidance are integral to the ACHP's mission and provide direction and information for government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and the public regarding the Section 106 process and the societal benefits of promoting the preservation of historic properties. The agency's Office of Policy and Legislative Affairs develops preservation policy recommendations, analyzes legislation proposed at the federal/state/local levels and Executive Branch policy initiatives, and participates in ACHP programs and research related to major national preservation issues. In the development of these policies, the office conducts consultation and engagement with Indian Tribes, NHOs, other Indigenous Peoples, other impacted communities, and the general public.

ACHP efforts to advance environmental justice will be facilitated through its Office of Communications, Education, and Outreach, which creates and conveys the ACHP's message to partners, stakeholders, and the general public via print and electronic media, meets information requests from members of the public and Congress, handles media relations, and manages additional ACHP outreach, including webinars, podcasts, awards, and publications. Partnerships with external organizations that facilitate educational opportunities, such as public planning for Section 106, offer invaluable opportunities.

Past Actions

The ACHP Native American Traditional Cultural Landscapes Action Plan

Landscape-scale historic properties of significance to Indian Tribes and NHOs across the United States are increasingly threatened by climate change and by development. In 2011, the ACHP launched a Native American traditional cultural landscapes initiative and adopted its [Native American Traditional Cultural Landscapes Action Plan](#). The plan calls for the ACHP and the Department of the Interior (DOI) to:

- Promote the recognition and protection of Native American traditional cultural landscapes both within the federal government and the historic preservation community as well as at the state and local levels; and
- Address the challenges of the consideration of Native American traditional cultural landscapes in the Section 106 review process as well as in reviews under the National Environmental Policy Act.

Since issuance of the plan, the ACHP has developed and shared information papers on cultural landscapes and traditional cultural landscapes in the Section 106 process, presented at conferences about this topic, and provided comments to the National Park Service on its proposed update to *National Register Bulletin 38, Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties*. Implementation is ongoing, and the ACHP's long-term goal is to raise the visibility of this critical subject in the broader historic preservation community.

ACHP Plan to Support the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

In 2013, the ACHP formally endorsed a plan to support the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#). The Declaration recognizes that respect for Indigenous Knowledge, cultures, and traditional practices contributes to the sustainable and equitable development and proper management of the environment. Since then, the ACHP has developed general information and guidance about the Declaration and historic preservation, raised awareness about the Declaration within the preservation

community, developed and shared information about the Declaration and its intersection with the Section 106 process, and integrated the Declaration into its policy statements, action plans, and general initiatives.

ACHP Policy Statement on Indigenous Knowledge and Historic Preservation (2024)

The field of historic preservation should ensure the archaeological sites, historic structures, cultural landscapes, sacred sites, and other sites of religious and cultural importance to Indian Tribes, NHOs, and other Indigenous Peoples are equitably considered in decision making. This [policy statement](#) provides principles to support the incorporation of Indigenous Knowledge in historic preservation contexts. The policy statement acknowledges that Indian Tribes, Native Hawaiians, and other Indigenous Peoples have existed as part of their environments for countless generations and have accumulated extensive experiences with, information about, and knowledge of the natural and cultural environment. The ACHP will consult with Indian Tribes, Native Hawaiians, and other Indigenous Peoples to develop guidance and informational resources that promote the full consideration of Indigenous Knowledge and environmental justice in environmental decision making in order to advance the policy.

ACHP Policy Statement on Burial Sites, Human Remains, and Funerary Objects (2023)

Burial sites, human remains, and funerary objects have intentionally and unintentionally been damaged, destroyed, or desecrated by public and private developments. Many burial sites, human remains, and funerary objects are located in communities with environmental justice concerns. This [policy statement](#), intended to be incorporated into Section 106 reviews and state and local guidance, emphasizes not disturbing sites when possible, consultation and deference to descendant communities, and continued educational efforts on these issues. The ACHP is currently seeking data and feedback in an effort to advance implementation of the policy. In 2024, the ACHP invited thought leaders on protecting African American burials to a listening session to identify future actions the ACHP might take to advance use of the policy statement to promote preservation of African American burial grounds.

ACHP Policy Statement on Housing and Historic Preservation (2023)

Communities across America are experiencing housing shortages, especially shortages of affordable housing. The [Policy Statement on Housing and Historic Preservation](#) promotes federal, state, and local action to rehabilitate historic buildings for housing and accelerate permitting and environmental review, including Section 106 review. The policy contains 13 principles, including support for programming by public-serving institutions that assist homeowners (particularly lower- and middle-income homeowners) and small-scale landlords in maintaining, repairing, and weatherizing their historic homes, and reducing their energy costs through renewable energy installation. These efforts help all communities, including those with environmental justice concerns.

ACHP Policy Statement on Climate Change and Historic Preservation (2023)

America's historic properties—important places that help to define and connect people to their communities—are experiencing escalating climate impacts that are increasingly leading to their damage and destruction. This [policy statement](#) addresses how climate change affects historic properties, articulates principles the ACHP will integrate into Section 106 reviews involving climate issues, and advises public-serving institutions on how they may research, plan for, mitigate, and adapt to climate change impacts on historic properties. It acknowledges the importance of engagement with affected communities, including communities with environmental justice concerns. The policy contains 15 principles, in the areas of information gathering, planning for climate change, climate change mitigation, equity, flexibility, education, and collaboration.

Advancing Environmental Justice Through Goal-Setting

The ACHP proposes the following five environmental justice goals, along with their relevant objectives, strategies, and metrics.

Environmental Justice Goals

I. Goal 1: Ensure that Environmental Justice Impacts are Identified and Addressed Through the Effective Section 106 Review of Federal Undertakings

Staff and external practitioners would benefit from greater training on environmental justice in their functional areas and would benefit from opportunities to increase awareness. Per the Section 106 implementing regulations (36 CFR § 800.2), the ACHP will work to expand technical assistance issued to federal agencies with Section 106 responsibility to provide information about and clarify obligations related to environmental justice. The ACHP intends to standardize expectations and outcomes by making the consideration of environmental justice more effective and productive through training external practitioners and internal staff across the agency's major program offices.

Strategies:

- A. Expand internal knowledge and expertise regarding environmental justice issues, Indigenous Knowledge, and cultural humility and/or competency by developing and implementing internal staff training.
- B. Expand external knowledge and expertise by developing and implementing environmental justice, Indigenous Knowledge, and cultural humility and/or competency components for the agency's existing external-facing Section 106 instruction courses for practitioners.
- C. Expand external knowledge and expertise by developing and implementing training that supports Federal Preservation Officers, State Historic Preservation Offices, Tribes, Tribal Historic Preservation Offices, and NHOs, other consulting parties, and the public.
- D. Per the Section 106 implementing regulations, (36 CFR § 800.3(f)), encourage agencies to identify communities with environmental justice concerns and invite their participation in the Section 106 review and, through consultation, to analyze and consider disproportionate and adverse human health and environmental effects and hazards as they relate to historic properties, and to share that information with the ACHP.
- E. Assist agencies with strategies to incorporate early engagement and consultation (as appropriate) with stakeholders.
- F. Identify methods of tracking data regarding Tribal and NHO participation in Section 106 reviews and reach out to federal agencies to ask how information about Tribal and NHO participation in consultation might be shared more consistently and uniformly with the ACHP.
- G. Consider and address environmental justice in the review, development, and decision to adopt any program alternative for tailoring Section 106 review, including during development and implementation of the consultation strategy for the proposed program alternative.
- H. Recommend that federal agencies, to the extent permitted by law, reimburse or compensate Indian Tribes or NHOs for providing technical assistance, providing Indigenous Knowledge or otherwise, via research, survey, monitoring, or other efforts that are the responsibility of the federal agency under Section 106, consistent with the ACHP's [Guidance on Assistance to Consulting Parties in the Section 106 Review Process](#).

Metrics:

- a. Percent of class participants who receive environmental justice, Indigenous Knowledge, and cultural humility and/or cultural competency training in the current Section 106 offerings
- b. Percent of class participants who report back implementation in their day-to-day work
- c. Percent of class participants who report “positive” results from implementation in their day-to-day work
- d. Documented considerations and consultations regarding environmental justice in the development of program alternatives
- e. Documented recommendations for reimbursement or compensation to Indian Tribes or NHOs

II. Goal 2: Ensure that Environmental Justice Impacts are Identified and Addressed During the Development and Advancement of ACHP Policies

Part of the ACHP’s mission is to promote the preservation and sustainable use of the nation’s historic resources. The ACHP issues policy statements designed to not only assist partner agencies and the public with the interpretation of the Section 106 regulations, but also to establish the agency’s objectives and goals. To fulfill this Environmental Justice Strategic Plan, the ACHP intends to strengthen its policy program through a commitment to consider environmental justice during policy and guidance development, implementation, and advancement.

The ACHP will ensure any disproportionate and adverse human health and environmental impacts related to historic properties are identified and addressed during the development and advancement of future policies. It will also advance the implementation of environmental justice-related principles in the ACHP’s recently adopted policy statements. The results of this goal include clarification of the ACHP’s position in consideration of environmental justice.

Strategies:

- A. Ensure ACHP policies recognize the potential environmental and health benefits of preserving historic properties while also addressing any disproportionate and adverse human health and environmental effects of the federal activities at issue.
- B. Develop guidance for federal agencies that supports the implementation of environmental justice-related principles addressed in ACHP policy statements.
- C. Proactively assess the need for engagement with all communities with environmental justice concerns, consultation with Indian Tribes, public outreach, and additional transparency in the development of any agency policy or guidance document related to historic preservation and environmental justice.

Metrics:

- a. Documented considerations and consultations regarding environmental justice in the development of policies and guidance
- b. Number of policy statements that include provisions addressing environmental justice
- c. Number of guidance documents relevant to environmental justice developed
- d. Percent increase in guidance documents relevant to environmental justice developed

III. Goal 3: Promote Consultation Under Section 106 with Indian Tribes and NHOs, and the Participation and Engagement of Other Indigenous Peoples, and Other Communities with Environmental Justice Concerns

The ACHP, as a federal agency, recognizes the government-to-government relationship between the United States and federally recognized Indian Tribes and acknowledges Indian Tribes as sovereign nations with inherent powers of self-governance. Additionally, the NHPA charges the ACHP with the encouragement of public interest and participation in historic preservation. The ACHP will examine methods to minimize barriers to participation in the Section 106 process for all communities with environmental justice concerns, including Indian Tribes, Native Hawaiians, and other Indigenous Peoples. The ACHP intends to identify, notify, and afford communities with environmental justice concerns the opportunity for meaningful engagement and participation in the Section 106 process, including consulting with Indian Tribes where appropriate. These efforts will help increase communication with and educate members of the public with environmental justice concerns about historic preservation.

Strategies:

- A. Enhance and strengthen meaningful consultation with Indian Tribes in the Section 106 process, and engagement and participation of NHOs in the Section 106 process by continuing to implement the ACHP's guidance on the intersection of the Section 106 process and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- B. Expand external knowledge and expertise of communities with environmental justice concerns and the public by implementing Section 106 training with a focus on environmental justice.
- C. Revise existing guidance to encourage federal agencies to more widely use their discretionary power under Section 106 to expand the pool of potential consulting parties.
- D. Expand outreach via social media, the ACHP website, and other communications with communities to encourage the involvement and engagement of individuals and organizations in the Section 106 process.

Metrics:

- a. Percent increase in targeted environmental justice communications
- b. Percent increase in communities reached who have environmental justice concerns
- c. Number of revised guidance documents addressing environmental justice
- d. Documented achievements under ACHP guidance regarding the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

IV. Goal 4: Encourage Training and Education in Historic Preservation for All Americans, Especially Communities with Environmental Justice Concerns

The NHPA charges the ACHP with encouraging, in cooperation with appropriate public and private agencies and institutions, training and education in the field of historic preservation. The ACHP will support this goal by introducing environmental justice into its education and outreach program.

Strategies:

- A. Establish new outreach methods and procedures to help the ACHP identify and engage with communities with environmental justice concerns, including through the use of technologies like EJScreen and the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool.

- B. Post content to the ACHP's website that informs members of the public on current issues in historic preservation and environmental justice.
- C. Explore facilitating conversations on environmental justice and historic preservation by partnering with local community leaders and environmental justice advocates to host roundtables as public venues for discussing challenges and opportunities.

Metrics:

- a. Increase in environmental justice-related programming and an increase in the number of individuals reached with environmental justice concerns
- b. Amount of new or enhanced web content on environmental justice and historic preservation
- c. Number of new outreach avenues or approaches related to environmental justice implemented

V. Goal 5: Engage with Agencies to Provide Guidance on the Consideration of the Cumulative Impacts of Decisions/Mitigation Strategies

The NHPA charges the ACHP with reviewing the historic preservation policies and programs of federal agencies and recommending to federal agencies methods to improve the effectiveness, coordination, and consistency of those policies and programs. The ACHP intends to develop new and update existing guidance documents that address environmental justice issues in the historic preservation context. The results of this goal include a more involved advisory relationship as it relates to environmental justice challenges in historic preservation.

Strategies:

- A. Produce or update one to two guidance documents relevant to environmental justice.
- B. Explore opportunities for inter-agency coordination to align historic preservation benefits with environmental justice goals.
- C. Proactively assess the need for engagement with all communities with environmental justice concerns, consultation with Indian Tribes where appropriate, public outreach, and additional transparency in the development of any agency guidance document related to historic preservation and environmental justice.

Metrics:

- a. Number of guidance documents relevant to environmental justice issued or expanded
- b. Percent increase in organizations reached that address environmental justice concerns

Meaningful Engagement and Consultation on the Development of the Environmental Justice Strategic Plan

The agency took several steps to provide opportunities for meaningful involvement in the development of its Environmental Justice Strategic Plan. Outreach included targeted engagement to communities with environmental justice concerns, as well as the public more generally. The ACHP engaged in one public listening session offering the opportunity for comment following an online session. In addition, per ACHP policy, the agency engaged in two listening sessions with Tribal Chairs, and NHOs. These sessions permitted a 30-day comment period.

Feedback from both Tribal and public listening sessions resulted in substantial and meaningful changes to the ACHP's draft plan, including the development of additional goals and the exploration of implementation methods for later consideration, respectively. The ACHP is considering new approaches to further enhance and continue engagement and consultation on environmental justice issues as this plan is implemented and updated.