



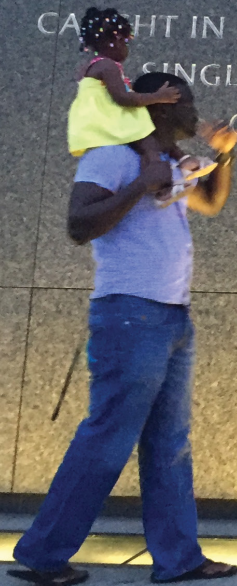
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Strategic Plan to Advance Environmental Justice



INJUSTICE ANYWHERE IS A THREAT TO JUSTICE EVERYWHERE. WE ARE
CAUGHT IN AN INESCAPABLE NETWORK OF MUTUALITY, TIED IN
A SINGLE GARMENT OF DESTINY. WHATEVER AFFECTS
ONE DIRECTLY, AFFECTS ALL INDIRECTLY.

ALABAMA, 1963



On the cover:

Middle row, from left to right: Dancers take the stage at Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge's Environmental Justice Community Day. Photo courtesy of FWS; Fisherman at Seedskadee National Wildlife Refuge in Wyoming. Photo by Tom Koerner; Accessibility at Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming. Photo courtesy of NPS; Hula Dancers Perform. Photo courtesy of NPS.

Bottom photo:

Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial. Photo by Barbara Becker.

Table of Contents photo:

Bison in Snow at Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming. Photo courtesy of NPS.

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Dineh Tah' Navajo Dancers. Photo courtesy of NPS.

I. Introduction

The mission of the Department of the Interior (Department) is to protect and manage the Nation's natural resources and cultural heritage; provide scientific and other information about those resources; and honor its trust responsibilities or special commitments to American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, and affiliated island communities. Centering equity and environmental justice is a key part of the Department's mission.¹ This priority serves as a conduit for impactful work with communities with environmental justice concerns and Tribal Nations.²

The Department is responsible for managing the Nation's public lands and minerals, including more than 500 million acres

1. As defined in Executive Order 14096, Section 2(b), "Environmental justice' means 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: (i) 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 (ii) 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."

2. In this Environmental Justice Strategic Plan, communities with environmental justice concerns means those communities that may not experience environmental justice.

of public lands, 700 million acres of subsurface minerals, and nearly 3.2 billion acres of the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS). The Department is the steward of 20 percent of the Nation's lands, including national parks, national wildlife refuges, and other public lands; manages resources that supply 23 percent of the Nation's energy; manages, develops, and protects water in the 17 Western States; supplies 17 percent of the Nation's hydropower energy; and upholds Federal trust responsibilities to federally recognized Tribes.

The Department has a vast mission. Among other priorities, the Department is responsible for migratory bird and wildlife conservation; historic preservation; endangered species conservation; surface-mined lands protection and restoration; legacy pollution cleanup; mapping; geological, hydrological, and biological science; Indian education; and financial and technical assistance for insular areas and the Native Hawaiian community.

The Department is a multifaceted organization comprised of 11 distinct Bureaus, each with a unique mission, and several offices within the Office of the Secretary. The Bureaus are the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Indian Education, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Bureau of Reclamation, Bureau of Safety and Environmental



A Bureau of Indian Education teacher is all smiles with her students standing and sitting beside her. Photo courtesy of BIE.

Enforcement, Bureau of Trust Funds Administration, National Park Service, Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and U.S. Geological Survey. The Department employs 77,070 dedicated and skilled employees to carry out its mission and fulfill its roles and responsibilities.³ Along with its employees, 280,000 volunteers contribute their time and energy in support of Bureau missions, bringing unique local knowledge to park operations, assisting in recovery from natural disasters, and participating in environmental education, among other activities.

Executive Order (EO) 14096, titled “Revitalizing Our Nation’s Commitment to Environmental Justice for All,” issued in April 2023, advances the Federal Government’s efforts to deliver measurable progress on environmental justice.⁴ EO 14096 builds on and supplements the foundational efforts of

3. DOI Office of Human Capital FY 2023 data.

4. As defined in EO 14096, Section 2(b), ‘Environmental justice’ means the just treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of income, race, color, national origin, Tribal affiliation, or agency decision-making and other Federal actions that affect human health and the environment so that people (i) 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 (ii) 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.”

EO 12898, titled “Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations,” and charges Federal agencies to exercise leadership and immediately strengthen their efforts to address environmental injustice. The Department and all Federal agencies are directed to develop and implement an environmental justice strategic plan. To maximize transparency, this Environmental Justice Strategic Plan (Strategic Plan) will be publicly available on the Department’s [environmental justice website](#).

II. The Department’s Environmental Justice Strategic Plan

1. Executive Summary

The goals, objectives, and associated actions outlined in this Strategic Plan provide a framework through which the Department will continue to advance environmental justice. The work of the Department encompasses more than 500 million acres of public lands, 700 million acres of subsurface minerals, and nearly 3.2 billion acres of the OCS. The Department therefore has many opportunities within its areas of responsibility to advance environmental justice.



National Public Lands Day Cleanup Event at Fort Dupont Park, Washington, DC. Photo courtesy of the Department.

The Strategic Plan was informed by input and feedback from communities with environmental justice concerns, Tribal Nations, Native Hawaiian Organizations, Alaska Native corporations, and Departmental employees. The Department hosted five listening sessions in November and December of 2023 to gather feedback, including one with Tribal Nations, Native Hawaiian Organizations, and Alaska Native corporations; three for the general public; and one for employees. This Strategic Plan was structured in accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality’s [guidance and template](#).

Additionally, the Department [published](#) its draft goals and objectives in the Federal Register in November 2023 and requested public review and comment.⁵ The Department also issued an employee survey to receive input on advancing environmental justice. After extensive public review and employee feedback, the Department held topical, internal focus group sessions to refine priority actions and measures that correspond with each objective. The Department evaluated the feedback when finalizing the goals and objectives for this Strategic Plan.

The goals, objectives, and corresponding priority actions and measures will guide the Department’s environmental justice priorities over the next several years. This plan sets out five goals with corresponding objectives, priority actions, and measures. The goals and objectives reflect the Department’s key priorities and areas of focus.

2. Agency Environmental Justice Vision Statement

The Department protects and manages much of the Nation’s natural resources and cultural heritage; provides scientific and other information about those resources; and honors the Nation’s trust responsibilities or special commitments to Ameri-

5. 88 FR 78061, Document Number 2023-24937.

can Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, and affiliated island communities.⁶ The Department’s environmental justice vision is to provide outstanding management of the natural and cultural resources entrusted to it in a manner that is sustainable, equitable, accessible, and inclusive of all populations, including communities with environmental justice concerns and Tribal Nations.

3. Overall Approach to Advancing Environmental Justice

Given the Department’s role as the Federal Government’s principal land management entity and its critical role in the advancement of science and research—as well as its trust responsibilities to Tribal Nations—the Department and its various Bureaus and Offices (referred to as Bureaus throughout this plan) have a significant role in advancing environmental justice.

a. Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance

The Department’s Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance (OEPC), located within the Office of the Secretary, is responsible for providing guidance and leadership for the Department’s efforts to advance environmental justice and implement related EOs, regulations, and policies. In addition to other responsibilities, OEPC is charged with developing and publishing the Department’s Strategic Plan and collecting information for the Department’s [Environmental Justice Scorecard](#).

b. Environmental Justice Coordinators

Each relevant Bureau has a primary Environmental Justice Coordinator who works directly with OEPC in carrying out the Department’s environmental justice activities. This coordinator helps to integrate environmental justice throughout a Bureau.

c. Environmental Justice Intra-agency Coordination

The Department’s Environmental Justice Steering Committee (Steering Committee) consists of senior leaders (or their designees) of the Bureaus; OEPC; Office of Insular Affairs; and Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Civil Rights. Additional offices may also participate, as appropriate. The Steering Committee serves in an advisory capacity to the Department, the Department’s Environmental Justice Officer, and the Director of OEPC. It is particularly focused on the Department’s efforts to advance and implement EO 14096, EO 12898, and other relevant Executive orders, policy, and guidance. It also reviews the Department’s effectiveness in addressing environmental justice issues more broadly.

6. Affiliated island communities include areas under the jurisdiction of the Office of Insular Affairs—the territories of American Samoa, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, as well as the three Freely Associated States of the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau.



Accessibility at Glacier National Park in Montana. Photo courtesy of NPS.

Among its responsibilities, the Steering Committee periodically reviews the Department’s environmental justice strategic plans and policies, supports the Department’s Bureaus in their implementation of such policies, and evaluates opportunities for collaboration among the Department’s Bureaus and other Federal agencies in advancing environmental justice.

The Steering Committee coordinates the development and implementation of the Department’s policies, programs, and initiatives that support the Department’s efforts to advance environmental justice. The goal of the Steering Committee is to ensure that environmental justice considerations are embedded into agency decision-making processes at all levels and to integrate environmental justice into all aspects of the Department’s work. The Environmental Justice Coordinators serve in an advisory capacity to the Steering Committee members who, in turn, serve as leaders on the environmental justice work that is occurring within and across the Department’s Bureaus. The Steering Committee reports to and receives direction from the Department’s Climate Task Force. The Climate Task Force is comprised of the Department’s Assistant Secretaries and Bureau and Office heads and is chaired by the Department’s Deputy Secretary.



Youth maintenance crew at Theodore Roosevelt National Park in North Dakota. Photo courtesy of NPS.

d. Environmental Justice Interagency Coordination

The Department participates in the [White House Environmental Justice Interagency Council](#) (IAC), which President Biden established in 2021 through [EO 14008](#), titled “Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad,” and later expanded in 2023 through [EO 14096](#). The IAC supports a whole of Government approach to advancing environmental justice, and this Strategic Plan was informed by the work of IAC.

The Department also participates in the National Science and Technology Council’s (NSTC) Environmental Justice Subcommittee, as directed by [EO 14096](#). The purpose of the Environmental Justice Subcommittee is to address the need for a coordinated Federal strategy to identify and address gaps in science, data, and research related to environmental justice. The Environmental Justice Subcommittee issued a [report](#) in July 2024 to address these needs and gaps.

4. Environmental Justice Goal Development

The Department’s Strategic Plan reflects the Department’s key priorities and areas of focus and guides the Department in the advancement of environmental justice. This Strategic Plan sets out five goals, with corresponding objectives, priority actions, and measures. To inform the Strategic Plan, the Department held an employee environmental justice symposium, conducted five listening sessions, and held three topical focus group sessions with subject matter experts. The Department also issued a [press release](#), published its draft goals and objectives in the [Federal Register](#) for public review and comment, and transmitted informational flyers to engage stakeholders.⁷

The Department conducted the five listening sessions in November and December of 2023; one listening session with Tribal Nations, Native Hawaiian Organizations, and Alaska Native corporations (40 participants); three public listening sessions (244 total participants); and one employee listening session (266 participants). In addition to the virtual feedback sessions, the Department provided an opportunity to submit written comments on the goals and objectives in the Strategic Plan. The Department received 25 written comments from organizations, Tribal Nations, and individuals. The Department revised the goals and objectives and developed the accompanying metrics based on the feedback and input provided at these sessions.

The Department also issued an employee survey in the Fall of 2023 to receive internal input on advancing environmental justice and held topical internal focus group sessions to refine priority actions and measures that correspond with each objective. Development of the measures, outlined below, allows the Department to track progress and success that accompany each priority action.

7. 88 FR 78061, Document Number 2023-24937.

In November 2022, the Steering Committee’s Policy Subcommittee oversaw the effort to update this Strategic Plan. In addition, the Steering Committee formed a Policy Subcommittee to spearhead the update efforts. The subcommittee consists of representatives from across the Department’s Bureaus. The subcommittee developed the draft Strategic Plan goals and objectives, which were informed by the following plans, policies, and directives:

- Relevant Executive Orders
- Interior’s [2022- 2026 Strategic Plan](#)
- Interior’s [former Environmental Justice Strategic Plan](#)
- Interior’s [Equity Action Plan](#)⁸
- Interior’s [Climate Adaptation Plan](#)⁹
- Interior’s [Sustainability Plan](#)
- Interior’s [Department Manual Chapter on Environmental Justice](#)
- [Federal Guidance for Federal Departments and Agencies on Indigenous Knowledge, 2022](#)
- [The Department’s Indigenous Knowledge Policy](#)
- [White House Environmental Justice Advisory Council Recommendations](#)
- [National Science and Technology Council’s Environmental Justice Science, Data and Research Plan](#)

a. Environmental Justice Goals and Objectives

The goals and objectives outlined below support the advancement of environmental justice at the Department, including implementation of core policy charges from [EO 14096](#). The Department’s environmental justice goals reflect the methods and opportunities to advance environmental justice highlighted in [EO 14096](#).¹⁰ These goals support work and partnerships to advance environmental justice with non-Federal entities.¹¹

For each environmental justice goal, the Department identified four objectives that reflect the outcome or management impact the Department is trying to achieve, as well as steps it must take to make progress on its mission to advance environmental justice. The objectives are designed to deliver outcomes that build and uphold the broad, long-term environmental justice goals established by the Department.

8. The Equity Action Plan includes environmental justice and the Justice40 Initiative.

9. Climate change can exacerbate environmental justice issues. Some communities experience disproportionate and adverse climate impacts because of existing vulnerabilities, historical patterns of inequity, socioeconomic disparities, and systemic environmental injustices. The Department incorporates environmental justice considerations throughout its Climate Adaptation Plan.

10. See [EO 14096](#) Sections 3(a), 4(c), and 5(b).

11. See [EO 14096](#), Section 3(a)(v), (viii), (xii)-(xiv), and Section 4(c)(i)-(iii).

b. Priority Actions (or Strategies)

For each environmental justice objective, the Department identifies a series of priority actions that the agency may take to advance its environmental justice goals and objectives. The priority actions align with the Department's overarching vision, goals, and objectives. They seek to address barriers inhibiting the advancement of identified environmental justice goals and are designed to achieve the environmental justice objectives.

c. Measures (including Metrics and Activities)

For each priority action, the Department identifies a measure that can be used to assess progress and success. Measures may either be a metric or an activity that the Department undertakes to advance the priority actions. In addition, some priority actions may be individual or shared. Some priority actions do not lend themselves to metrics. In those instances, the Department provides an explanation for how it plans to assess

its progress towards that priority action. Priority actions and measures apply to each of the objectives, though some priority actions are shared across objectives.

The goals, objectives, and priority actions in the Strategic Plan incorporate the Federal Governmentwide metrics used in the Environmental Justice Scorecard. The Environmental Justice Scorecard highlights the Federal Government's efforts to advance environmental justice, with metrics on the Justice40 Initiative, environmental and civil rights protection, centering environmental justice in decision-making, and institutionalizing environmental justice within the Federal Government.

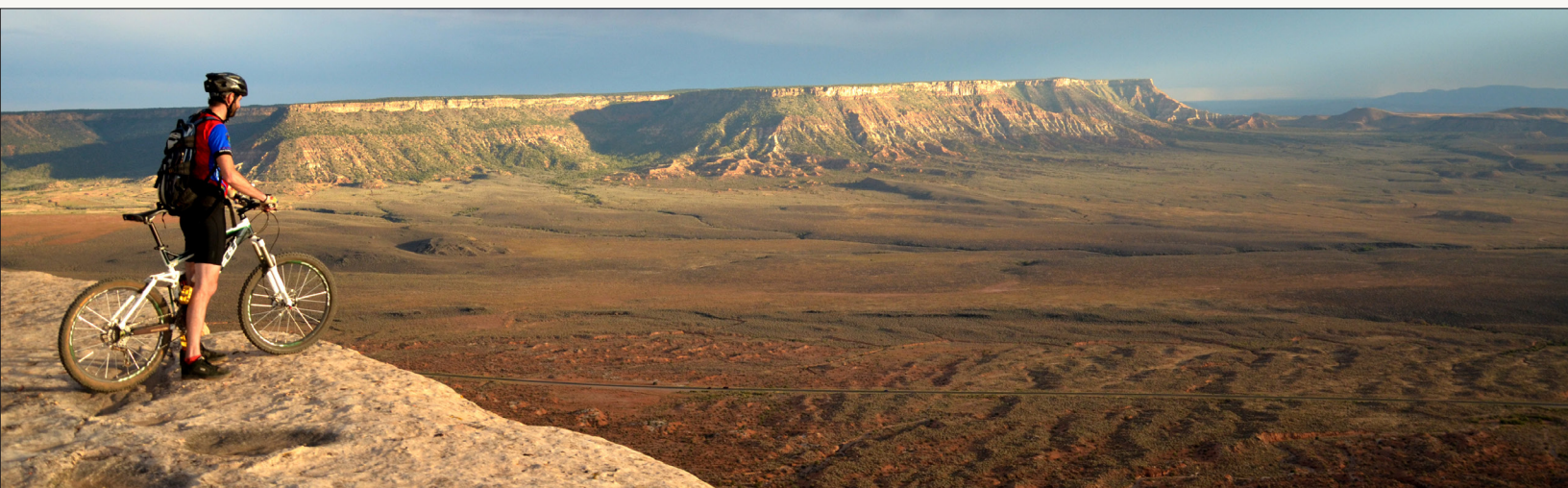
The table below is organized by each of the five goals. Corresponding with each goal are the objectives, priority actions, and measures used for each objective. Measures listed in **bold** correspond to Environmental Justice Scorecard metrics.



An intern from the Alaska Native Science Engineering Program participates in an inspection. Photo courtesy of BSEE.



FWS Maintenance and Infrastructure Fellowship Program participants gather at their program orientation. Photo courtesy of FWS.



A cyclist admires Gooseberry Mesa National Recreation Trail in Utah. Photo by Iris Picat.

Strategic Goals, Objectives, Priority Actions, and Measures

STRATEGIC GOAL 1

Institutionalize environmental justice within the Department by integrating and applying environmental justice considerations in policies, budgeting, decisions, activities, and processes, including establishing accountability for decision makers and practitioners to advance environmental justice.

1.1—Increase our employees’ awareness and understanding of environmental justice and injustice.

Priority Action: The Department and its Bureaus provide access to environmental justice training opportunities and resources to all employees, including on Federal Governmentwide and Department environmental justice policies, as well as on examples where communities with environmental justice concerns or Tribal Nations have highlighted harms and historical trauma linked with the Federal Government’s actions, or related policy, resources, and tools.

Measures

- (Activity) The Department develops a training development plan that includes an update to the Department-wide environmental justice training. Once updated, the Department will establish a goal for number of employees that take the Departmentwide training each year.
- (Metric) % of Bureaus that have Bureau-specific environmental justice training development plans.
- **(Metric) # of employees trained on environmental justice.**
- **(Metric) # of environmental justice training opportunities.**
- **(Metric) # of tools or resources.**

1.2—Make use of existing legal frameworks, update relevant policies, and cultivate an enabling environment (embedded in the culture of the Department) for employees to advance environmental justice.

Priority Action: The Department and its Bureaus modify existing policies to incorporate environmental justice considerations.

Measures

- (Activity) The Department updates its Environmental Justice Implementation Policy (525 DM 1).
- (Metric) % of Bureaus that have an environmental justice implementation plan.
- (Activity) The Department and its Bureaus identify policies that need to be updated.
 - (Metric) Once identified, % of policies updated.

1.3—Expand Department employees’ capacity and skillsets to advance environmental justice through their work.

Priority Action: The Department and its Bureaus facilitate and strengthen knowledge through internal training and engagement.

Measures

- (Metric) % of Bureaus that have a community of practice to facilitate learning opportunities and to develop skillsets in environmental justice.
- **(Metric) # of new or strengthened programs on environmental justice.**
- **(Metric) # of internal agency environmental justice working groups, committees, or partnerships.**

STRATEGIC GOAL 1

1.4—Ensure that employees at all levels are evaluated on their progress and achievements in advancing environmental justice and are recognized for their efforts and collaborative work with other agencies.

Priority Action: Include environmental justice in employee performance and appraisal plans (EPAPs).

Measures

- (Activity) Beginning in Fiscal year (FY) 2024, environmental justice considerations were incorporated in all Senior Executive Service (SES) EPAPs. The Department will continue to include environmental justice in SES EPAPs in upcoming FYs.
- (Activity) Environmental justice is incorporated into staff-level EPAPs beginning in FY 2026, as appropriate.

Priority Action: Use awards and other mechanisms to recognize employees.

Measures

- (Activity) Continue to recognize employees through the Department's Environmental Justice Achievement Awards, which includes environmental justice as a category for recognition. The Department will evaluate opportunities to raise awareness of the nomination process with the goal of increasing submissions.
- (Activity) Bureaus evaluate and implement opportunities to recognize employees for their contributions to advancing environmental justice and for building relationships with communities with environmental justice concerns and Tribal Nations.



Environmental Justice Community Day at Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge in New Mexico. Photo courtesy of FWS.

STRATEGIC GOAL 2

Engage early and often with communities with environmental justice concerns and Tribal Nations to build trust; support meaningful involvement and equitable decisions; better inform Departmental activities; and proactively address/involve environmental justice concerns.

2.1 Expand the Department's capacity to maintain and deepen unique, tailored relationships and partnerships with communities with environmental justice concerns and Tribal Nations, recognizing the significance of Tribal sovereignty and self-determination; historical harms and ongoing power dynamics; and cultural differences that affect community engagement.

Priority Action: The Department and its Bureaus formalize partnerships with communities with environmental justice concerns and Tribal Nations, to provide opportunities for community and tribally driven outcomes.

Measures

- (Metric) # of co-stewardship agreements with Tribal Nations and Native Hawaiian organizations.
- (Metric) # of partnership agreements that address environmental justice.

Priority Action: The Department and its Bureaus create opportunities for communities, and Tribal Nations to meaningfully engage and formulate decisions.

Measures

- (Metric) # of new/existing Federal advisory committees related to environmental justice.
- (Metric) # of public processes related to environmental justice.
- (Metric) # of Tribal consultations related to environmental justice.
- (Metric) # of Tribal listening sessions, where applicable.

2.2 Build skills and capacity among our employees to deliver intentional, anticipatory, respectful, collaborative, and culturally sensitive engagement rooted in transparency and accountability to achieve a bottom-up approach that empowers communities with environmental justice concerns and Tribal Nations to define their needs and goals.

Priority Action: Provide resources on community engagement and Tribal consultation related to environmental justice.

Measure

- (Activity) The Department and Bureaus develop tools to support community engagement, including a Departmental community engagement toolkit that provides employees with tools and best practices around meaningful engagement and relationship building.

Priority Action: Provide training opportunities on community engagement and Tribal consultation related to environmental justice.

Measures

- (Activity) As part of the Department's training development plan (Goal 1, Objective 1.1), the Department includes trainings to develop skills and understanding around meaningful engagement, relationship building, facilitation, Free and Prior Informed Consent, and cultural sensitivity.
- (Metric) # of Tribal consultation trainings related to environmental justice.
- (Metric) # of employees trained on Tribal consultations related to environmental justice.

STRATEGIC GOAL 2

2.3 Remove barriers and provide opportunities for communities with environmental justice concerns and Tribal Nations to engage and raise issues with the Department.

Priority Action: Identify and remove barriers to enhance engagement with communities with environmental justice concerns and Tribal Nations.

Measures

- (Activity) The Department and its Bureaus evaluate opportunities, including modifying existing policy and guidance or creating new policy and guidance, to the extent allowable by law, to address barriers to participation.
- (Metric) # of actions undertaken to remove barriers to community engagement.

2.4 Maintain and model a transparent, regular, collaborative, open, and ongoing dialogue with communities with environmental justice concerns and Tribal Nations about how their input is incorporated into our decisions – and increase equity through collaborative decision-making processes.

Priority Action: The Department and its Bureaus provide timely and forthcoming information to communities with environmental justice concerns and Tribal Nations on how, and the reasons why, their input was or was not incorporated.

Measure

- (Activity) The Department and its Bureaus assess and implement tools and resources to track stakeholder engagement and response.



Students plant trees at a reclaimed surface mine site in Kentucky. Photo courtesy of OSMRE.

STRATEGIC GOAL 3

Identify, prevent, and mitigate environmental injustices, including adverse human health or environmental effects, in collaboration and coordination with communities with environmental justice concerns and Tribal Nations.

3.1 Adjust and improve flexibility in actions, policies, programs, and program implementation to better account for environmental justice considerations raised by communities and Tribal Nations.

Priority Action: The Department and its Bureaus evaluate impacts to, and meaningfully engage with, communities with environmental justice concerns and Tribal Nations as part of the decision-making process.

Measures

- **(Metric) # of project/action modifications where environmental justice concerns were raised during the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process, as applicable.**
- **(Metric) # of employees that the agency trained on how to consider environmental justice during NEPA reviews.**

3.2 Actively address the impacts of historical environmental and health injustices in a manner that relies on community-based metrics of success among communities with environmental justice concerns and Tribal Nations.

Priority Action: The Department and its Bureaus track and incorporate community-based metrics of success in Departmental actions to the extent practicable and appropriate.

Measure

- **(Metric) # of actions from the Department that use community-based metrics.**

3.3 Support the Department's Strategic Plan Goal 1: "Promote Well-Being, Equity, and Justice for Tribes, American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, and Insular Communities."

Priority Action: The Department and its Bureaus expand opportunities and support Tribal sovereignty through Department actions.

Measure

- **(Metric) Acreage of co-stewarded or managed lands.**

3.4 Employ a whole-of-Government approach to maximize benefits to, and reduce burdens on, communities and Tribal Nations.

Priority Action: Engagement with communities with environmental justice concerns and Tribal Nations is tracked, as appropriate, and assessed, as applicable.

Measures

- **(Metric) % of Bureaus with tools to track engagements.**
- **(Metric) # of engagements with communities and Tribal Nations related to environmental justice concerns.**
- **(Metric) # of Department actions, as applicable, concerning communities and Tribal Nations focused on reducing burdens.**



Research site in southern California. Photo courtesy of BOEM.

STRATEGIC GOAL 4

Leverage funding, training, educational and professional opportunities to build and sustain healthy, environmentally sound, and economically sound communities and Tribal Nations.

4.1 Identify and remove barriers that prevent communities with environmental justice concerns and Tribal Nations from accessing and executing opportunities, particularly in the grant application, allocation, and administration processes.

Priority Action: Consistent with the Department's legal authorities, the Department and its Bureaus identify and remove barriers in funding opportunities and in training, educational, and professional opportunities for communities with environmental justice concerns, U.S. territories, and Tribal Nations.

Measures

- (Activity) The Department and its Bureaus identify barriers to be removed.
 - (Metric) % of identified barriers that are removed.
- (Activity) The Department supports economic activities aligned with the cultures and values of communities with environmental justice concerns, Tribal Nations, and Native Hawaiian organizations.

4.2 Expand and improve technical assistance to communities with environmental justice concerns, Tribal Nations, and community-based and Tribal organizations.

Priority Action: The Department and its Bureaus actively evaluate opportunities to provide additional technical assistance, as applicable within Bureaus, with the goal of increasing applications from communities with environmental justice concerns and Tribal Nations.

Measures

- **(Metric) # of technical assistance events.**
- (Metric) # of technical assistance resources.

4.3 Create new and amend existing opportunities to increase funding, training, and professional opportunities that benefit communities with environmental justice concerns and Tribal Nations and ensure that other funding opportunities are managed equitably.

Priority Action: The Department modifies existing funding opportunities, to the extent allowable by law, with the goal of increasing benefits going to communities with environmental justice concerns and Tribal Nations.

Measures

- (Activity) The Department creates best practices around including environmental justice considerations in Notices of Funding Opportunities (NOFOs).
 - (Metric) Once best practices are developed, % of NOFOs that include relevant environmental justice considerations.
- (Activity) The Department creates best practices around including IK in NOFOs.

Priority Action: Pursuant to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, the Department and its Bureaus ensure that recipients of Federal financial assistance do not discriminate based on race, color, or national origin.

Measures

- **(Metric) # of Title VI compliance reviews or resolution agreements closed.**
- **(Metric) # of Title VI trainings.**
- **(Metric) # of employees trained on Title VI.**
- (Metric) # of Title VI resources provided to the public.

4.4 Work with Tribal Nations to identify and collaboratively deliver desired opportunities, including Tribal economic development, job creation, sustainable revenue streams, and self-administration of grants (PL 477 and corresponding implementation plans).

Priority Action: Include Tribal economic development/job creation/sustainable revenue streams and self-administration of grants (477 laws).

Measure

- (Metric) % of Tribes that have 477 Plans.

STRATEGIC GOAL 5

Consider environmental justice principles in the Department's production, collection, and use of data, science, and research to better inform our decision-making.

Note: The Department strives to implement all relevant recommendations in the NSTC's Environmental Justice Science, Data, and Research Plan. Some of the recommendations are highlighted below, so that the Department can create measures for implementation.

5.1—Identify and address existing data gaps and engage communities with environmental justice concerns and Tribal Nations, as well State and local governments, to define relevant, high-priority data for collection.

Priority Action: The Department evaluates, enhances, or supplements existing data sets and tools to account for environmental justice considerations and ensures inclusion of environmental justice when developing new data sets.

Measures

- (Activity) The Department and its Bureaus evaluate existing data sets, or new data sets that need to be developed, to address environmental justice considerations.
 - (Metric) # of data sets evaluated or created.

Priority Action: The Department works with Tribal Nations, territorial governments, other Federal agencies, and State and local governments to establish and strengthen practices for data.

Measure

- (Activity) Include populations from Insular areas of the United States in relevant science, data, and research tools and activities (NSTC Environmental Justice Science, Data and Research Plan, Recommendation 12).

5.2—Employ diverse qualitative and quantitative data sources, methodologies, and perspectives, including IK, across the Department's activities, and apply related findings in the Department's decision-making.

Priority Action: The Department modifies existing policies and develops new policies and implementation processes that incorporate environmental justice considerations in data and research development.

Measures

- (Activity) Create an inventory of existing policies that need to be modified and identify new policies that need to be developed.
- (Activity) Bureaus have a timeline and work plan established for developing a Bureau-specific IK policy and guidance (301 DM 7).

5.3—Expand community and participatory science, community-owned and -managed data and science, and community-based research data and make the Department's research/data available and accessible to Tribal Nations, communities with environmental justice concerns, and State and local governments, as appropriate.

Priority Action: In collaboration with communities, Tribal Nations, and other Federal agencies, the Department develops new opportunities for citizen science that address environmental justice data gaps and needs.

Measures

- (Metric) % of applicable Bureaus that have and maintain a crowdsourcing and citizen science action plan.
- (Metric) # of citizen science opportunities provided on the Federal Crowdsourcing and Citizen Science Catalog (citizenscience.gov) that address environmental justice.
- (Metric) % of data sets that are open for public use and place-based inquiry on <https://datainventory.Department.gov/>.

Priority Action: The Department prioritizes data privacy, security, and sovereignty.

Measure

- (Activity) Existing practices for privacy and confidentiality protections and ethical standards associated with science, data, and research activities are provided for public awareness on Departmental and Bureau websites (NSTC Research Plan, Recommendation 3.1).

STRATEGIC GOAL 5

5.4—Abide by respectful, ethical research and data practices, including confidentiality, data sovereignty, and acknowledging potential biases in Federal data.

Priority Action: The Department increases public awareness of existing practices for privacy and confidentiality protections and ethical standards associated with science, data, and research activities.

Measure

- (Activity) Existing practices for privacy and confidentiality protections and ethical standards are provided for public awareness on Departmental and Bureau websites (NSTC EJ Science, Data and Research Plan, Recommendation 4).

Priority Action: The Department follows the FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable), CARE (Collective benefit, Authority, Responsibility, and Ethics), and TRUST (Transparency, Responsibility, User focus, Sustainability and Technology) principles for the ethical considerations around Indigenous and community data to the extent allowed by law.

Measure

- (Activity) Develop a Departmentwide training on the FAIR, CARE, and TRUST principles to raise awareness by employees. Once established, the Department establishes a goal for number of employees that take the training each year.

Priority Action: The Department provides information and resources, such as training opportunities, for employees, communities, and Tribal Nations on Freedom of Information Act requirements and implications for the data confidentiality and sovereignty.

Measure

- (Activity) The Department maintains a public webpage to share information, trainings and resources.



Headwaters Forest Reserve in California. Photo courtesy of BLM.



Performance at Teepee Village in Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming. Photo by Jacob W. Frank.

5. Meaningful Involvement: Agency Efforts to Offer Opportunities for Stakeholder Engagement in Development of the Strategic Plan

The goals, objectives, and measures in this Strategic Plan were originally refined internally by the Steering Committee. The Policy Subcommittee spearheaded the update efforts and ensured meaningful involvement and outreach with communities with environmental justice concerns and Department staff. Through the listening sessions, the Department evaluated the feedback from Tribes, Native Hawaiian Organizations, and Alaska Native corporations, the public, and Department staff.

Based on feedback from each of these sessions, the Department refined the goals and objectives and established measures for assessing the Department's progress toward the goals and objectives. The Strategic Plan incorporates the following themes identified through the engagement process. Please note that this list is not exhaustive.

- ✦ Recognize privileges and positionality of Department staff when planning meaningful engagement.
- ✦ Focus on the experiences of communities with environmental justice concerns.

- ✦ Recognize opportunities for IK to influence decision making.¹²
- ✦ Update the Department's training, and emphasize the importance of data sovereignty and Title VI requirements.
- ✦ Evaluate existing data sets that need to be adjusted, or new data sets that need to be developed, to address environmental justice considerations.
- ✦ Modify funding opportunities to improve communities' ability to advance applications, allocations, and administration priorities.
- ✦ Improve accessibility and accommodations for communities with environmental justice concerns; for example, be mindful of a potential lack of internet access.

a. Environmental Justice Symposium

In May 2022, the Department held a 3-day symposium to gather feedback from Department employees and Federal partners to inform the Department's efforts to advance environmental justice through science, policy, and engagement. The symposium hosted 32 sessions, including a guest

12. For example, Order No. 3206, American Indian Tribal Rights, Federal-Tribal Trust Responsibilities, and the Endangered Species Act



New Melones Lake and Reservoir in California. Photo courtesy of the Bureau of Reclamation.

appearance from the Secretary of the Interior and 2 separate meet-and-greet sessions—one with Tribal Liaison Officers and the other with Environmental Justice Coordinators. The symposium was made accessible to individuals with disabilities by providing American Sign Language/Communication Access Real-time Translation services during the main events. During the Symposium, training needs and recommendations were discussed, which informed the development of this Strategic Plan.

b. Listening Sessions

In November and December 2023, the Department solicited feedback from Tribal Nations, Native Hawaiian Organizations, Alaska Native corporations, the public, and Department employees on its draft environmental justice vision, goals, and objectives through a series of virtual listening sessions. Interested parties were also invited to provide written comments. See the table, below, for information on these events, their dates, and number of attendees at each event.

Audience	Date(s)	Number of Attendees
Tribal Nations, Alaska Native Corporations, and Native Hawaiian Organization Listening Session	November 27, 2023	40
Public Listening Sessions	November 30, 2023 November 30, 2023 December 1, 2023	244
Internal Department Listening Session	December 11, 2023	266

In addition to the virtual feedback sessions, the Department provided an opportunity for any interested party to submit written comments on the goals and objectives in the Strategic Plan. A notice of the comment period was posted in the [Federal Register](#) (previously referenced), and invited comments. By the close of the public comment period the Department received written comments from 25 unique organizations, Tribal representatives, and individuals.

c. Topical Focus Group Sessions

To identify priority actions and performance metrics that can be implemented over the next several years, three topical focus



Four Dineh Tah' Navajo Dancers partaking in a Ribbon Dance Great Sand Dunes National Park in Colorado. Photo courtesy of NPS.



Taos Pueblo Tribal Visit in New Mexico. Photo courtesy of BIA.

groups with Department subject matter experts were conducted January 10-12, 2024, to gather feedback on:

- ♦ Data and Science
- ♦ Finance and Investments
- ♦ Meaningful Engagement

The topic areas were selected based on priorities outlined in the draft goals and objectives. The topical focus group sessions were held after the listening sessions in order to refine priority actions and performance metrics. Topical focus groups provided an opportunity for the Department to hear from internal subject matter experts on priority actions and performance metrics for achieving the goals and objectives in the Strategic Plan. The Department selected participants based on their

expertise in data and science (Goal 5), investments and finance (Goal 4), and meaningful engagement (Goal 2), respectively. Prior to the focus groups, participants were invited to an informational session where Department staff provided the background and context for the Strategic Plan.

During the focus groups, participants were provided with an overview of the goals and objectives and a preview of the feedback received to date, with a particular emphasis on three focal areas: (1) data and science; (2) finance and investments; and (3) meaningful engagement. The focus groups were particularly helpful in refining measures under relevant goals and objectives developed in the Environmental Justice Symposium and listening sessions. Participants were asked to brainstorm how the Department could achieve its goals and objectives using the following questions:

- ♦ What needs to happen to reach the desired outcomes?
- ♦ What are the current barriers, challenges, and pain points to achieving goals?
- ♦ What actions can be taken?
- ♦ How can we measure progress?
- ♦ What are the performance measures or milestones?
- ♦ What are the resources needed?

d. Interagency Collaboration on Listening Sessions

The Department also collaborated with its Federal agency partners to organize joint listening sessions to reduce barriers to engagement and create greater efficiencies for the public.



Fa'asamoa, the Samoan way of life, has tied the people of these islands to their natural world for centuries. Photo courtesy of NPS.

One was held at the National Congress of American Indians on February 13, 2024, and one was held at the National Environmental Justice Conference and Training Program on April 16, 2024. At the listening sessions, agencies presented on the Strategic Plan draft goals and objectives and requested feedback from participants. A key theme expressed was the desire for meaningful engagement with communities with environmental justice concerns and for Federal employees to come from the communities in which they serve.

III. Conclusion

Environmental justice is a cornerstone of the Department's mission. The goals, objectives, activities, and measures outlined above demonstrates this commitment, moving the Department's efforts forward in pursuit of this priority. The Department will continue to engage early and often with communities with environmental justice concerns and Tribal Nations while implementing this Strategic Plan, including regularly revisiting and assessing accountability in our measures.



A child fills a water bottle at Grand Canyon National Park in Arizona. Photo courtesy of NPS.



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
STRATEGIC PLAN TO ADVANCE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE