



## ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE TASK FORCE

Meeting Minutes – June 22, 2020

Virtual Only

### Task Force members present:

Victor Rodriguez

David Mendoza

Stephanie Celt, alternate for Cassie

Bordelon

Michael Furze

Millie Piazza

Tomas Midgal

Laura Johnson

Allison Camden

Emily Pinckney

Rowena Pineda

Peter Godlewski, alternate for Gary

Chandler

Judy Twedt

Larry Epstein

### Task Force members absent:

Ignacio Marquez

John Stuhlmiller

Sonia Bumpus

### Task Force staff present:

Elise Rasmussen, Project Manager

Hannah Fernald, Administrative Coordinator

Esmael Lopez, Community Engagement

Coordinator

Lindsay Herendeen, State Board of Health  
Staff

### Guests and other participants:

Richard Gelb, Presenter,  
Public Health Seattle &  
King County

Danny Cullenward,  
Presenter

Katie Valenzuela,  
Presenter, California  
Environmental Justice  
Alliance

Oriana Magnera,  
Presenter, Verde

Christy Curwick Hoff, State  
Board of Health

Farah Mohamed

Sarah Vorpahl,  
Department of Commerce

Megan MacClellan,  
Department of Ecology

Alison Beason

Paul Tabayoyon

Ashley MP

Bill Bennion, Washington  
State Department of

Transportation

Cristian Canseco

Dana Coggon

Emily Knudsen

Esther Min

Joseph Tovar

Julia Havens, Department  
of Commerce

Kaitlyn Donahoe, State  
Board of Health

Kate Suzanne Peterson

Marlando Redeemer,  
Shiloh Baptist Church

Micaela Razo, Latino

Community Fund

Michael Breish,

Department of Commerce

Renee Codsí, University of

Washington School of

Public Health

Sameer Ranade, Front &  
Centered  
Sedonic  
Scott O'Dowd

Sunrise  
Susan Cozzens  
Leah Wood

Marquis W, Community  
Health Board  
Wesley Loven  
Glenda Roberts

Victor Rodriguez, Task Force Co-chair, called the public meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and read from a prepared statement (on file).

## **1. CALL TO ORDER & WELCOME**

Co-Chair Rodriguez called the meeting to order, and invited staff and members to provide introductions.

## **2. RACISM, POLICE BRUTALITY, & ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH DISPARITIES**

Co-Chair Rodriguez linked systematic racism and health outcomes, reminding members of previous conversations the Task Force has had about the role of racism in perpetuating environmental health disparities. He asked the group to reflect on how systematic racism plays out in WA communities as well as to share their thoughts on the role of this Task Force in undoing systemic racism.

Public Participants commented in response:

- That racism is systemic, and something that must be addressed as a community.
- Suggested looking at Harvard's "Implicit Bias" website
- Highlighting the importance of discussing the connection between racism and environmental health as part of this Task Force, and the importance of having this type of venue to make connections, navigate this complex system, and move this work forward in solidarity.
- That COVID has also illustrated systematic neighborhood and geographic disparities, and that it is important to acknowledge the layers of different community members, and to recognize the layers of systems at work.
- Tribal members need allies and help undoing systems AND recreating systems that will help people be happier, healthier, and have the same access.
- We have to hold our institutions and people in power accountable.

Member Madrigal discussed the operationalization of actions recommended by Seattle's Black Lives Matter movement. He read the list of eight specific demands to invest in community provided the movement. He proposed that the Task Force consider how the Office of Equity house or act on all or some of these proposals. He stated that this Task Force could also consider including some of these actions in their recommendations to operationalize principles based on what people in communities are asking for.

Member Furze thanked the group for creating and holding this space. He stated that the work going forward will be difficult because it requires people to think about the work and to work differently.

Member Camden shared her personal experience talking about racism with her children, and the importance of this work.

Member Celt stated her appreciation for the Task Force's process and her hope that it will lead to very powerful recommendations.

### **3. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Co-Chair Mendoza stated that the Task Force values centering their work on community and opened public comment.

Pastor Malando Redeemer from Shiloh Baptist Church thanked the Task Force for discussing the intersectionality between Environmental Justice and racism and COVID. He stated that many people of color do not recognize these intersectionalities and other injustices experienced in communities. He stated that many people are fighting for other things, and that people may not think about EJ among other inequities. He shared that Shiloh Baptist Church and the Tacoma NAACP used the WTN Disparities Map to see where the most disparities were in Pierce County and that the tool sparked a lot of conversation. He noticed that there are not very many disparities in areas where there are not very many people of color. He said that Tacoma is one of the most diverse cities in Washington with 12% Black population (compared to Seattle at 6%). Even though Seattle is more populous, it is less diverse. He shared that it was mind-blowing to see the disparities in Tacoma- from high infant mortality rates to high asthma rates. He shared that it made the group think about what actions need to be taken in these areas to hold local and state leaders responsible for the environmental injustices experienced in our neighborhoods. He recommended that the City of Tacoma use these maps to make an active financial investment in areas that have high pollution and inequities, and that these are the very same areas with high numbers of positive COVID tests. He said that there is a direct link between environmental conditions and respiratory symptoms and conditions. He stated that "I Can't Breathe" has another meaning as well- people of color can't breathe in their communities because of the condition of the air. Less diverse communities do not have these concerns.

Ms. Rasmussen, staff, shared a public comment the Task Force received via email from Jeanie Murphy-Ouellette from the Seattle Parks Department about the conditions of parks in South Park (on file). The comments are available in member packets.

Esther Min provided comments about the response and recovery from COVID and the links to cumulative environmental health disparities. She talked about distributive and geographic injustices.

*There was a concurrent discussion happening using the Zoom (teleconference web platform) In Meeting Chat function. The majority of comments came from the public. Below are comments related to public comment:*

- “ How is this work being done at the same level as King Co elsewhere in the state? How are these initiatives paid for? How can we prioritize this type of "look" at the rest of the state?”
- “We have had great success in ‘educational’ sessions with progressive funders pushing other funders to consider more grassroots, justice-oriented work. I would strongly consider reaching out to those allies to help facilitate that discussion with potential new funders”
- “How do you define community? Does it include businesses or only people-centric organizations?”
- “I interpret it as people-centric. However, I do believe in engaging a broad range of stakeholders on every aspect of this type of work including business, labor union, tribal governments and others.”
- “Tribal Relations is paramount in crafting any set of state-wide goals. Consider RCW-43.376 (Government to Government Relationship with Indian Tribes).”

#### **4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**Motion:** The Task Force approves the June 22, 2020 agenda.

**Motion/Second:** [Judy Twedt/Michael Furze](#). Approved unanimously.

#### **5. ADOPTION OF MAY 18, 2020 MEETING MINUTES**

**Motion:** The Task Force adopts the May 18, 2020 meeting minutes.

**Motion/Second:** [Allison Camden/Judy Twedt](#). Approved unanimously.

#### **6. PANEL DISCUSSION: EJ MEASUREABLE GOALS & MODEL POLICIES**

Staff introduced panelists, including Katie Valenzuela, Danny Cullenward, Richard Gelb and Oriana Magnera. Panelists then took the opportunity to introduce themselves and their work in more detail.

Staff asked the panelists what their experiences were with the creation and implementation of EJ policies in their jurisdictions, and how WA can learn from their experiences.

Panelist Magnera shared the process of getting community-based energy policy enacted, and that while there is a lot of work still to do, they are optimistic.

Panelist Gelb said that that it is important to measure success of healthy equity work, and if disparities are not being reduced, we need to adjust. He hopes that emerging policies will speak directly to reporting on these disparities, and that there should be a standard for how to present these data, including burden reduction and increasing environmental benefits.

Panelist Cullenward shared his experience from other states like California including the strength of a formal regulatory structure that include EJ advocates. He also said that open data is important to make it easier for people without money or power to have access to data, and suggested that the EJTF works with a wide network of individuals.

Panelist Valenzuela echoed previous panelist comments on disparity reduction and data, citing that the ability to track injustices at a very detailed level has been critical to success. She said that enforceability is a big issue in California, including jurisdictional compliance, and that identifying who has the authority to implement and enforce EJ laws is vital. She said that California is considering an income-based tax to fund EJ laws, and that identifying clear goals leads to meaningful policy.

Staff asked panelists what effective goals might look like, effective ways to measure these goals, and how to hold government accountable these goals.

Panelist Gelb said that goals need to be shaped to each actual condition, and that making goals measurable vs. idealistic is important. The action and the outcome need to be seen together to determine the level of effect, and the amount of resources that agencies have will help set goals of each area. He said that King County has a pilot program that plots the relationship between actions and goals, and is done in an open data format so that anyone has access. He encouraged the Task Force to build in trend information over temporal and spatial measures.

Panelist Valenzuela shared a link to measurable goals in California in the agriculture and transportation sectors. She said that it is hard to make any recommendations without goals, but that finding allies in agencies has led to movement towards implementation of goals.

Panelist Cullenward said that for some outcomes, like air quality, are difficult to measure. He advocated for more open data in order to show the impact of actions.

Staff thanked the panelists and opened the floor to Task Force members with questions.

Members asked about costs and ways to mitigate this work, and panelists said:

- Increasing industry fees, as well as the general fund and other general investments.
- Focusing on an open data system is a way to drastically reduce costs.
- Well-designed fees, finding accountability mechanisms, increasing tax revenue, and taking into consideration where money is going are all vital pieces of funding.

Staff asked that anyone with any other questions email directly to provide answers, and thanked the panelists for their time.

The Task Force took a break at 11:05 a.m. and reconvened at 11:15 a.m.

## **7. DISCUSSION: MEASUREABLE GOALS & MODEL POLICIES ADDRESSING ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH DISPARITIES – POSSIBLE ACTION**

Co-Chair Mendoza introduced draft recommendations and policies through the slide deck (on file), and said that he will stop after each proposal, and ask Task Force members for feedback based on four prompts.

#### Measureable Goals Recommendation 1:

Members had the following feedback:

- What would working with community look like, do these recommendations interact, and should they?
- We need to consider how we will proactively engage tribal communities in setting goals.
- Making goals achievable will be a challenge, and Results WA is a good resource.
- We need to understand the relative effort this would take related to impact to make sure that this is a place that we want to focus energy.
- How these recommendations will or could be applied differently for cabinet agencies vs. agencies under other areas (like DNR)

Member Piazza said that we might consider using health indicator outcomes from Results WA, and we need to elevate known disparities. She suggested that the Task Force needs to better understand Results WA metrics, and how they are applied before approaching for help/guidance.

#### Measureable Goals Recommendation 2:

Members had the following feedback:

- Having centrally developed tools is important and makes sense, could save costs, and could be tweaked for specific agencies.
- There will need to be partnership between agencies and timely and accurate reporting. Furthermore, rearranging thinking around goals to be responsive to what is actually happening on the ground is important.
- Goals should focus on what state agencies have control over.

#### Model Policies Recommendation 1:

Members had the following feedback:

- For this person to be successful, all senior leadership would need to have training to support. Focus on training for executive leadership is important, and having a group of leaders vs. one person is important.
- Ensure agencies invest the proper resources to address these issues.
- Consider where the biggest impact could be made, and training executive leadership may not be the most effective way to get things done. This recommendation has the potential to be very effective, but more refinement is needed.

- The person in this position must have a deep understanding of EJ, in addition to equity.

*There was a concurrent discussion happening using the Zoom (teleconference web platform) In Meeting Chat function. The majority of comments came from the public. Below are comments related draft measureable goals and model policy recommendations:*

- “Collaborate across agencies to meet goals here is key, we can shape this recommendation to be toward having the State office of Equity be responsible for this alignment and for the governor to fund the State office of Equity from Emergency Operations funding that is becoming available, and that instead of suggesting a separate group, for EJ recommendations to live within that structure. to reframe Environmental Justice goals by cross walking them into Health Equity and Health Justice goals to be upheld by the office of Equity that was established.”
- “Who/which agency would conduct the evaluation? Would this agency also provide recommendations to help make progress for the next reporting period? Or would the agency just evaluate the performance and then wait until the next evaluation period to see if there has been a change? Is Results Washington only about Environmental Justice or is Results WA more robust?”
- “Results Washington does not currently address Environmental Injustice.”
- “I think it should be a position. Need executive leadership supporting EJ. They absolutely need to have decision making power in the agency. Until there are EJ experts in positions of power issues of EJ will continue to be under prioritized and misunderstood.”

The Task Force took a break at 12:09 p.m. and reconvened at 12:45 p.m.

## **8. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT UPDATE**

Mr. Lopez, Task Force staff, said he has been working in communities to build relationships with community partners. He told the Task Force about the community engagement work he has been doing, and why he has chosen to use a mixed methods approach to collect this data. He shared that we cannot erase hundreds of years of racism and injustice easily, but we can start doing better by making real connections in the pursuit of healing. He hopes that community engagement can continue like this as we move forward.

Co-Chair Rodriguez said that this is an opportunity to think about relationships with people and community in different contexts and encouraged Task Force members to remember this work while thinking about recommendations moving forward.

## 9. DISCUSSION: INCORPORATING ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE INTO WASHINGTON'S COVID-19 RESPONSE & RELIEF WORK – POSSIBLE ACTION

Co-Chair Mendoza read from a presentation (on file) asked the Task Force for feedback.

Members shared these thoughts:

- We need to think about distribution of resources equitably, and this needs to be articulated specifically.
- Concerned if this is within the scope of the proviso.
- Consider changing the phrase from 'impact' to 'burden' to remind that this is not a neutral position.

Member Furze said that he thinks this recommended statement is premature, and thinks we should spend more time thinking about how it fits in with what the legislature directed.

Member Celt said that the Task Force should present a recommendation like this now because of the timeliness of the situation. She said that she thinks it may be negligent to not send anything out.

Members discussed framing the COVID-19 response as a subsection of emergency response:

- Broadening to be all emergencies is a good idea, and that the opening sentence could be strengthened - limiting to pollution seems too narrow.
- This is an opportunity to include what EJ means in emergency situations, and that we don't have time to wait to share a recommendation around decision making for those most vulnerable.
- This is not just the right thing to do, but the strategic thing to do.
- Consider issuing a letter to the governor like the one the Equity Task Force sent.

Co-chairs clarified that the chairs will not submit anything without the Task Force members' approval and that the letter would be from co-chairs, not the Task Force as a whole.

*There was a concurrent discussion happening using the Zoom (teleconference web platform) In Meeting Chat function. The majority of comments came from the public. Below are comments related to the COVID-19 response discussion:*

- "Is [name redacted] saying that organizations that actually work with the community members get some or all of the funds, instead of having the money all go to businesses that serve the community members in their role as customers?"



- “As a community member, I think that the recommendation could include language like ‘environmental emergencies, such as COVID-19, wildfires, etc.’
- “As a community member, I think that the recommendation would include language [names redacted] have been mentioning plus environmental emergencies that have also been raised by the tribes in the state. Do they have anything they'd like to include in the language?”

**Motion:** Co-Chairs will finalize a letter with feedback from Task Force members to the Governor, the Legislature and Safe Start Advisory group regarding use of the EHD map and COVID relief/response efforts and other environmental health emergencies. The letter will come from the Co-Chairs, not the Task Force.

**Motion/Second:** Tomas Madrigal/Stephanie Celt. Peter, Michael, Alison, vote no. No abstention. Passes.

## 10. DISCUSSION: WASHINGTON ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE DEFINITION – POSSIBLE ACTION

Staff previewed the EJ definition document (on file)

Public Participant asked how we could incorporate age and gender or immigration status.

Members responded with caution against expanding the definition beyond the original roots of racism, and added their thoughts:

- Expanding will make it too long and it'll never be complete.
- Definition as it stands is sufficient.
- There should be two definitions, one for government use and one for community members.
- Discomfort with this definition because it feels like it communicates that there is something lacking in the community.

*There was a concurrent discussion happening using the Zoom (teleconference web platform) In Meeting Chat function. The majority of comments came from the public. Below are comments related to the draft EJ definition discussion:*

- “This is a floor definition that identifies and names those excluded rather than the perpetrators of harm. A useful definition would name the perpetrators and address the reduction of the harm that they cause and limitations of their activities and movement.”

**Motion:** The Task Force tentatively approves the statewide definition for environmental justice with the caveat that the Task Force would revisit the social groups listed in the definition.

**Motion/Second:** David Mendoza/Michael Furze. Approved unanimously.

## 11. DISCUSSION: DRAFT STATEWIDE EJ PRINCIPLES – POSSIBLE ACTION

Co-chair Rodriguez opened the discussion by walking through the draft principles, asking Task Force members for feedback and approval of these principles.

*There was a concurrent discussion happening using the Zoom (teleconference web platform) In Meeting Chat function. The majority of comments came from the public. Below is a comment related to the draft EJ Principles discussion:*

- *“There should also be a draft model policy recommendation that looks at evaluating the rules and their ability to meet EJ goals and values. Agencies also conduct Health Equity Reviews of Bills during legislative session, there might be room to suggest that EJ principles be considered by bill review in each agency.”*

**Motion:** To approve the bolded bullet points 1-5 and clarify in future work.

**Motion/Second:** Tomas Madrigal/Laura Johnson. Approved unanimously.

The Task Force took a break at 2:47 p.m. and reconvened at 2:55 p.m.

## 12. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUBCOMMITTEE PRESENTATION – POSSIBLE ACTION

The Community Engagement Subcommittee shared key recommendations for community engagement. The Subcommittee developed 7 recommendations in response to the Task Force’s request for high level guidance. They asked that members think about responses and feedback following each recommendation.

Recommendation 1: Each agency develops a community engagement plan.

The Task Force tentatively approved this recommendation during the last meeting, and no further discussion occurred here.

Recommendation 2: Agencies use a consistent process to evaluate their services and programs for community engagement.

The Subcommittee is still working to clarify this recommendation, and welcomes additional feedback from members. No further discussion occurred here.

Recommendation 3: When agency decisions have potential to impact a specific community, agencies work with representatives of that community to identify outreach and communication methods.

Co-chair Rodriguez stated that he supports the idea of incorporating community into decision-making, and suggested that the Subcommittee consider how to change the wording to address the fact that community engagement in State government is often reactionary. There needs to be some recommendation about developing a process that facilitates government power-sharing with community member around budget and policy decisions.

Mr. Lopez, staff, said that it is important to consider community involvement in actual decision-making and in deciding when a decision needs to be made, not just engaging in discussion when state government deems a decision need to be made.

Member Madrigal stated that “representatives of community” needs to be defined so that it is not just lobbies, corporations, special interests, etc.

Recommendation 4: Agencies use equity-focused hiring practices and inclusion-focused professional development to build and support internal staff that represents the cultural and racial make-up of the population they serve.

No further discussion occurred here.

Recommendation 5: Agencies consistently integrate tribal engagement into their outreach work.

Members shared the following feedback:

- State Formal Government-to-Government consultation in this recommendation.
- Important to acknowledge the existing protocol and requirements as well.

Recommendation 6: When agencies ask for representation from a specific geographical or cultural community, agencies actively support such representation.

Member Camden stated that this would probably require some need to change laws to allow agencies to spend money this way. She asked if this is included in the recommendation language.

Recommendation 7: Agencies integrate compliance with existing laws and policies that guide community engagement into the budgets of their services and programs.

Members discussed the importance of this recommendation 7 and had the following feedback:

- Compliance is never enough to improve the conditions of the community.
- Perhaps this recommendation could help clarify what compliance means. That may be upholding court rulings, etc. Simply integrating compliance may not address environmental justice.

- This recommendation could be modified to state what community engagement should look like with an environmental justice lens instead of what is just written in law.
- Asked if there is also a way to address gender. For example, male representation may be more common in some communities, and that role and bias should be acknowledged.

### **13. CONTINUING DISCUSSIONS ON DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS – POSSIBLE ACTION**

Co-Chair Mendoza stated that this is an opportunity to continue conversations about model policies that were discussed in the morning.

Convening a permanent EJ interagency workgroup that also includes members representing overburdened communities.

Co-Chair Rodriguez supported the idea of establishing this type of group where EJ work could have a continuing platform and group to move this work forward. He expressed concern that creating this type of engagement can lead to government feeling that all work on this issue is addressed by having the Task Force.

Co-Chair Mendoza echoed concerns and stated that creating a new group may not make a lot of sense, but having a body that oversees long-term EJ work is important. He stated that it is important to give the group enough authority that they can hold agencies accountable to this work.

Agencies shall make achieving EJ and equity part of its mission and strategic plans.

Co-Chair Rodriguez asked if there was a way to gauge the level of awareness of different agencies and their understanding of the impact of their work on environmental justice. He wondered what type of support agencies would need to act on this.

Members said that for many agencies, environmental justice is important and understood by entire executive team. However, they understand that this differs by agency, and that capacity may especially be difficult for smaller agencies.

Provide adequate financial support for community engagement by amending RCWs touching procurement of goods and services.

No further discussion occurred here.

Agencies contract with trusted community organizations that have policy expertise in developing legislative and regulatory policies with community input.

Co-Chair Rodriguez stated that it is implied that this should include authentic representation from communities. He stated there is a lot of variation on how government defines or views community. He suggested that the report should outline a meaningful process to identify community organizations and individuals that are trusted and representative of the community. Important to provide guidance for agencies to navigate this process.

Mr. Lopez, staff, stated that this is really a broader issue. For example, how is an agency deciding who to hire to conduct community engagement. How do you gauge if that individual really has relationships with trusted organizations? Do we bring in the person with the real training and real skillset and then train them in other aspects of working with state government?

One member said that the Task Force needed to be careful especially related to agency rules about that and concerns about lobbying, etc.

#### Dedicated revenue for overburden communities.

Member Godlewski asked who this money would be going to within this recommendation. Co-Chair Mendoza clarified that it wouldn't be community groups only, but could be to agencies that are making investment in community.

Member Furze stated that this feels like a request for a new revenue source and asked if Co-Chair Mendoza could provide an example of how an existing funding source could be used for this work. He gave an example that MTCA funds could be reprioritized to communities with greatest burden of environmental toxics.

Co-chair Mendoza also shared two emerging policy ideas that have come up in dialogue with community:

1. Add environmental justice goal to Growth Management Act.  
Members shared that Ruckelshaus and UW Urban Design and Planning is going to be doing some work to carry on these recommendations. The funding for some of the recommendations was vetoed in the Governor's Budget due to COVID.
2. Create a statewide Reparations Task Force.

Member Furze stated that his initial reaction was that this feels outside the realm of the EJ Task Force. He stated he would need to understand the potential impacts on the seven items outlined in order to make a decision.

Co-Chair Mendoza stated that Co-Chairs and staff will be working on these recommendations over the next few months and interested in continued feedback from members.

#### **14. TASK FORCE BUSINESS: REVIEWING FINAL REPORT OUTLINE, TIMELINE, & NEXT STEPS**

Did not discuss Agenda Item 14.

#### **15. NEXT STEPS & REFLECTIONS**

Members suggested that at a future meeting, the Task Force should discuss EJ in COVID Recovery Plans, there are examples of this in the United Kingdom.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Victor Rodriguez, Task Force Co-chair, adjourned the meeting at 4:37 p.m.

To request this document in an alternate format or a different language, please contact Kelie Kahler, Washington State Board of Health Communication Manager, at 360-236-4102 or by email at [kelie.kahler@sboh.wa.gov](mailto:kelie.kahler@sboh.wa.gov) TTY users can dial 711.

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