



## ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE TASK FORCE

Meeting Minutes – January 14, 2020  
Vancouver Community Library

### Task Force members present:

Michael Furze  
Allison Camden  
Ignacio Marquez  
Tomas Madrigal  
Emily Pinckney

Victor Rodriquez  
David Mendoza  
Millie Piazza  
Larry Epstein

### Task Force members absent:

Cassie Bordelon  
Laura Johnson  
Sonia Bumpus  
Rowena Pineda

Gary Chandler  
Judy Twedt  
John Stuhlmiller

### Task Force staff present:

Elise Rasmussen, Project Manager  
Hannah Fernald, Administrative  
Coordinator

Esmael Lopez, Community  
Engagement Coordinator

### Guests and other participants:

Christy Curwick-Hoff, Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities  
Lauren Frelander, Department of Health  
Audrey Miller  
Jake Garcia  
Heather Tischbein, Friends of Clark County  
Terrence Hamptow  
Joanne Hampton, The Noble Foundation  
Alice Prejean, The Noble Foundation  
Lindsey Wis  
Junior Flores-Perez  
Jordy Ramirez  
Vidal Ramirez  
Jasmine Tolbert, NAACP  
Christian Canselo, LULAC  
Gac Seans  
Jen Wyld  
Quantessa Cash  
Karen Morrison, Odyssey World International Education Services  
Keri Syonberry  
Ana Siyveuts, YWCA  
Nicolette Nelson, Washington State University Vancouver

Aemri Marks, NAACP  
Megan MacClellan, Department of Ecology  
Shurvon Butler, The Noble Foundation  
Amanda Fugleberg, The Noble Foundation  
Essence Brown Etherly, The Noble Foundation  
Elizabeth Delahoussaye, The Noble Foundation  
Lori Benton, Sierra Club  
Bridgette Fahnulleh, NAACP  
Sunrise O'Mahoney, Watershed Alliance of SW WA  
Rian Sallee, Department of Ecology  
Sammi Grieger, SW WA Sunrise Movement  
Diana Perez, LULAC  
Danielle Jolala, SW WA Sunrise Movement  
Dale Nelson  
Alex Pederson  
Mike Ellison, Vancouver for Peace  
Kay Ellison, Vancouver for Peace  
Leila Guitron, LULAC  
Ricardo Rodriguez, The Noble Foundation  
Douglas Nobel, The Noble Foundation  
Alyn Noble, The Noble Foundation  
Yessenia Martinez, LULAC  
Liliana Salazar, LULAC  
Orlandria Prejean, The Noble Foundation  
Lexi Bongiorno, The Noble Foundation  
Ophelia Noble, The Noble Foundation  
Hannah Aoyagi  
Adam Cole, Recreation and Conservation Office  
Linn Gooding, Department of Ecology

David Mendoza, Task Force Co-chair, called the public meeting to order at 1:07 p.m. and read from a prepared statement (on file).

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

David Mendoza, and Victor Rodriguez, Task Force Co-chairs, asked Task Force members to introduce themselves and to review the Task Force Community Agreements (on file). The Co-Chairs also reviewed this meeting's goals (on file).

## **2. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Bridgette, Citizen and NAACP representative, talked to Task Force members about the NAACP's environmental justice department, that department's leader, and the messages they promote to members. She had some suggestions for the Task Force to educate state government: 1) Contact agencies and let them know what bills the NAACP supports. 2) Attend the monthly EJ NAACP webcast 3) Contact the NAACP branches when communities need support, and when agencies need support.

Sunrise O'Mahoney, Watershed Alliance of SW WA, commented on how nonprofits like hers need more grant money and support from state government. Additionally, she spoke about how she would like to see a grant program and funding based on the Washington Tracking Network's Health Disparities Map. Victor Rodriguez, Co-Chair, responded to this comment and said that aligning processes with funding streams is necessary in order to implement environmental justice priorities, and the Task Force is interested in prioritizing investments.

Diana Perez, League of United Latin American Citizens, asked that the Task Force continue to support this part of the state, teach community members how to advocate for themselves, and teach leaders how to read and translate environmental justice-focused maps.

Danielle, member of the public, stated that the best way to engage in community is to be present. Secondly, she shared that we need to stop thinking along lines of arbitrary borders and more with natural, cross county, cross state borders to be successful. Third, she knows that this Task Force is coming from a place of public health and makes the connection between health and economic justice. She stated that people who live in poverty have greater health risks proportionate to their poverty, so thinking about environmental justice also includes economic alternatives. She stated that we have to provide comprehensive justice that touches on all of those things.

### **3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**Motion:** Approve the January 14, 2020 agenda.

**Motion/Second:** Allison Camden/Michael Furze. Approved unanimously.

### **4. ADOPTION OF NOVEMBER 25, 2019 MEETING MINUTES**

**Motion:** Adopt the November 21, 2019 meeting minutes.

**Motion/Second:** Allison Camden/Ignacio Marquez. Approved unanimously.

### **5. APPROVAL OF TASK FORCE MEETING DATES**

Co-chair Mendoza, presented the proposed meeting dates.

**Motion:** Approve the May 18, 2020 meeting date.

**Motion/Second:** Allison Camden/Michael Furze. Approved unanimously.

**Motion:** Approve the June 22, 2020 meeting date.

**Motion/Second:** Michael Furze/Allison Camden. Approved unanimously.

**Motion:** Approve the August 7, 2020 meeting date.

**Motion/Second:** Michael Furze/Allison Camden. Approved unanimously.

Co-Chair Rodriguez encourages members to give meeting venue location feedback as well as any connections to the community.

### **6. BRIEFING ON TASK FORCE & SUBCOMMITTEES WORK PLANS**

Elise Rasmussen, Task Force Manager, reviewed the timeline, process, and deliverables handout (on file). Task Force members discussed the current process for

community feedback. Tomas Madrigal, Member, discussed creating a structure for community members to engage with the Task Force and be accountable to community organizations (e.g. community advisory boards).

The Task Force took a break at 2:21 p.m. and reconvened at 2:45 p.m.

## **7. MAPPING SUBCOMMITTEE WORK TO DATE – POSSIBLE ACTION**

Ms. Rasmussen said there are two Subcommittees that support the Task Force. The Mapping Subcommittee is looking at recommendations for how to use the Environmental Health Disparities mapping tool (EHD map), which is available to the public.

Millie Piazza, Member, said the Subcommittee wants to explore how agencies have used the Washington Tracking Network Information by Location mapping tool, and specifically the EHD map layer. She introduced Adam Cole, guest presenter, to discuss how the Recreation and Conservation Office uses the Washington Tracking Network in their grantmaking process.

Adam Cole, Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO), shared that RCO is a small agency of about 60 employees responsible for statewide planning around recreation and conservation. Much of their work focuses on managing the fifth largest capital budget in the form of competitive grants to organizations and state, local, and federal governments. He shared that public need for a park or recreational space is the highest rated criteria for RCO grants, and prioritizes regions that are underserved in some way by asking applicants to report on the region's income, percent people of color, percent of people with disabilities, and the region's average Body Mass Index (BMI) compared to the state average. The Legislature directed RCO to have a more flexible match requirement based on the status of underserved populations in a given area, informed by the Washington Tracking Network map, and decided to use income as a proxy for other social determinant indicators. Instead of a one-to-one match, RCO contributes a larger share of funds for low-income areas. RCO helped to produce a map that measures the opportunity for recreation in any given community (e.g. Measures the number of ball fields per resident in a region), and compares those measures across communities to evaluate the recreational need in different areas of the state.

Sunrise O'Mahoney, local nonprofit leader, stated that the grantmaking process does not feel equitable because the grant application process is so onerous, and there needs to be more evaluation and discussion around a grant's impact on neighborhoods.

Tomas Madrigal, Member, said there is a constituency in Tacoma who wants the Task Force to consider how displacement and gentrification impact disproportionate health outcomes. He thanked Mr. Cole for sharing an example of how agencies are thinking about using the Washington Tracking Network. He shared examples of communities that have been driven out by beatification efforts to address blight that also resulted in driving away low-income communities and communities of color that could no longer afford to live there or anywhere else in the area. He said that displacement or other adverse long term effects for vulnerable populations happens if the map is used without thinking about long term effects. Millie Piazza, Member, said increased risk of gentrification and displacement happens every day when the government does a

cleanup without retaining a community connection. She stated that the Task Force needs to hold true to the proviso language and its intent, and it's unclear to her how we scope the work we do to respect and value these important issues that also meet what they need to accomplish in the limited time and resources they have. She then introduced the next guest speaker, Lynn Gooding from the Department of Ecology to speak about how that agency uses the EHD map to inform its Public Participation Grants program.

Lynn Gooding, Department of Ecology, works with the competitive Public Participation Grants (PPG) at the Department of Ecology. She stated that they brought in an outside auditor to look into their grant process to make it more equitable, and found that Ecology needed an objective scoring matrix to evaluate scoring applications. As a part of this process they created an advisory committee to evaluate adding new priorities, including an environmental justice focus and prioritizing organizations who have not yet received funding. She also discussed how they used the Washington Tracking Network's Health Disparities Index in the last funding cycle, and are using the EHD Map during the current cycle now. Ms. Gooding stated that they are doing outreach in low-income communities and limited English-proficient communities.

Emily Pinckney, Member, asked if the PPG program has organizations led by communities of color and if there is a diverse range of grantees and applicants. Ms. Gooding stated that they did a lot of outreach on public participation grants process and that the shift in criteria focus has led to a more diverse applicant pool, and listed names of recent grantees from communities of color.

The Task Force transitioned to providing guidance on their required outcome to recommend measurable goals for reducing environmental health disparities and ways in which state agencies may focus their work toward meeting those goals. Members had the following guidance and suggested inquiries for the Mapping Subcommittee to explore:

- What investments are being made by agencies in highly impacted communities?
- Measurable goals should be connected to drivers of these outcomes (e.g. economic justice, access to jobs/housing, and other elements that protect communities from environmental and social problems).
- Identify measures of enforcement in existing RCWs and WACs to show what is not being enforced (e.g., pesticide drift is enforced more where lots of people live, but not in labor camps where farmworkers live).
- How do you pinpoint which data to use, especially to inform projects in communities of color or projects that will impact much of the state?
- Identify a connection between areas where agencies have influence to have a better sense of cause and effect over the short and long term.
- Connect these measurable goals to the proposed Office of Equity's purpose in supporting other state agencies to be accountable to equity-related goals.

Millie Piazza, Member, shared that the Mapping Subcommittee is also working on recommendations to state agencies on how to use the EHD map. The Subcommittee is working on identifying a way to package future recommendations and create a scope that makes sense across diverse agencies represented on the Task Force. To do this,

they have identified 11 cross-cutting agency activity categories. These are activity categories that exist across most state agencies. Ms. Piazza asked for feedback on these categories:

- Grants/loans
- Public engagement
- Strategic planning
- Monitoring
- Policy development
- Contracting
- Rulemaking
- Emergency response
- Site assessment

Ms. Rasmussen shared the proviso language around developing model policies. She said the Mapping Subcommittee has interpreted this as researching model policies and synthesizing and/or developing recommended policies or protocols that direct the use of mapping to address environmental justice and health disparities. Millie Piazza, Member, asked if Task Force members representing agencies know of policies or protocols that support agencies prioritizing highly impacted communities and reduce environmental health disparities. Victor Rodriguez, Co-Chair, spoke about the City of Tacoma using the Equity Index mapping tool, and are working to expand to countywide. He also stated that the Subcommittee should also consider processes that are used to focus on highly impacted communities, in addition to policies and protocols. Emily Pinckney, Member, stated that the Pierce County Health Equity Map helped push policy.

## 8. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUBCOMMITTEE WORK TO DATE – POSSIBLE ACTION

Ms. Rasmussen and Emily Pinckney, Member, provided an update on the Community Engagement Subcommittee’s work to date. The Subcommittee has met twice, and has compiled a list of barriers to participation (more detailed list on file).

### *Barriers to Participation:*

- Access
- Apathy/Burden
- Communication
- Potential for influence
- Representation
- Process
- Resources
- Sovereignty
- Trust
- Types of knowledge

Task Force Members ranked the top three most prevalent barriers to public participation for their agencies and/or communities they represent (on file). She also asked members to share if there are other barriers that they’ve identified. Tomas Madrigal, Member, added the barrier “systems of oppression.”

Community members present at the meeting also provided input on this list:

Karen Morrison, community member and Founder of Odyssey World Educational Services, said she works with immigrants, refugees, and other populations in Clark County and Vancouver and stated that it is extremely hard to have other people come from different places tell her about the challenges her community faces, and then make decisions that affect her community without really knowing her community.

Carrie Stanbury, Clark County community member and community health worker, said mistrust is a huge barrier. She said she's seen community members voice concerns to City Council, and nothing happens because those who provide services do not live in the community. She also stated that she's received no reimbursement or payment for providing lived experience and expertise that she provides.

Rian Sallee, Department of Ecology employee, wanted to make a point about the "apathy" barrier. She shared that in her experience often people in state government think that people don't care about what's happening in their communities. She stated that there are so many examples of people of color caring the most about environmental justice, yet agencies often think white people care more about the environment.

Ms. Rasmussen transitioned to discussion about how we measure community engagement. The Community Engagement Subcommittee has found information about formal evaluations and informal methods and provided international, national, state, and local evaluation examples. Emily Pinckney, Member, asked members if their organization or agency has evaluated community engagement and if so, what does that look like and what did they learn? And if not, what could this kind of evaluation look like?

Megan McClellan, Community Engagement Subcommittee Co-Chair, spoke about survey fatigue in communities. She stated that people are investing their time taking surveys, but are not seeing what happens with their input, or an organization or agency is using survey data in unintentionally harmful ways. She stated that we need to think critically about how we use community's information. Michael Furze, Member, spoke about the state employee engagement survey's question about agency efforts and successes with incorporating customer feedback. The Department of Commerce is embarking on process to be more responsive to customer feedback, and said he will share more information as this work progresses. Tomas Madrigal, Member, discussed how important key informant debriefs and interviews are with a community health worker or organizer comes back into the office after engaging with community. He also spoke about power mapping as a planning and problem solving strategy. Last, he shared the importance of having people's tribunals so communities can share their testimonies in a confidential and protected way where their grievances are brought forward to accountable decision makers. Ignacio Marquez, Member, asked the Task Force and Subcommittee to think more about what agencies without a formal outreach program should do to evaluate how well they engage with communities, and how these evaluations might look different when engaging with businesses versus community members. Allison Camden, Member, shared that WSDOT does a lot of engagement around their products, and are required to have an engagement plan. WSDOT also did an assessment of their plan, and are thinking more critically about how to measure success. They currently do interviews at community events, follow up phone calls, email surveys, and sometimes door-to-door engagement, but they do not have a quantitative way to evaluate success and is hoping the Subcommittee can look into that. Victor Rodriguez, Co-Chair, said that we need to take a mixed methods approach to evaluating whether or not communities feel engaged. This methodology includes outputs (e.g. how many people attended or participated) and outcomes (e.g. quality of engagement), and how engagement translates to improving people's lives. He stated that we should think about engagement as a larger concept, not just how people are engaged with each agency, but how engaged we are as a society.

The Task Force took a break for dinner at 5:15 p.m. and reconvened at 6:00 p.m.

## **9. COMMUNITY WELCOME**

David Mendoza, Co-Chair, welcomed community members that came for the evening portion of the meeting. He shared information about Vancouver's rankings on the EHD map, and said that the Vancouver area had the highest number of census tracts with hazardous waste sites in the state. He shared information about the Task Force and its roles and responsibilities, as well as what the Task Force worked on earlier in the day. He said that the goal for the remainder of the meeting for Task Force members is to listen to experiences from those in the community.

## **10. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Heather Tischbein, Friends of Clark County, shared her experiences around the implementation of Growth Management Act (GMA). She said that getting involved with GMA work is a good opportunity because that is when the rules of the game are created.

## **11. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT UPDATE**

Esmael Lopez, Community Engagement Coordinator for the Task Force, reported on the voices and the stories that he heard from the people he has met with but could not be here today. He shared information about immigration and how people do not want to engage with government agencies when they do not feel safe. He said the community feels like they are alone and neglected and the state is too focused on Seattle and the Puget Sound region. He also talked about the importance of trust. People have shared that they feel they are being economically coerced because they do not see how regulations are helping those who are most impacted. Community members shared that they have witnessed business and industry out of compliance with environmental regulations because it is cheaper for the businesses to pay the fines that change their systems. Communities want to trust that someone is monitoring the water and air and looking out for their health. He also shared that community wants ongoing Task Force presence in communities in order to build relationships. He shared how the EHD map could inform people thinking about where to move about risks when making their decisions.

## **12. COMMUNITY PRESENTATIONS**

Sameer Ranade, Front and Centered, shared information about how Front and Centered has been learning from community groups around the state prior to each Task Force meeting. He shared what community members in Yakima discussed (on file) during a listening session prior to November's Task Force meeting in Yakima. He said community members were particularly concerned about the agricultural industry, and more specifically, water quality issues and pesticides that stem from agriculture. Yakima community members shared that farmworkers and their families live in fear due to anti-immigrant sentiment. Community members recommended that government needs to be more proactive and work towards are multijurisdictional and multisector solutions for



environmental justice, more quality assurance checks, and measure progress toward environmental justice.

Three youth from the local NAACP and LULAC chapters presented to the Task Force.

Leila Guitron, 16 years old, Lulac Youth Council, shared how she and her grandparents are currently homeless and staying at a hotel paid for by donations. She connected her experiences as a houseless family to environmental justice issues. She shared that when her family sleeps on the streets, their asthma and seizures get worse. Her grandmother has COPD and needs a CPAP machine, which is impossible to use when they are forced to live in a van. She also shared how cold air and polluted air are triggers for her asthma, and that it's difficult to take her inhaler in the morning. She stated that there is a great need for temporary housing, and that rent prices cannot continue to rise without providing long-term community housing. She ended by saying that being homeless has become her new normal, and that is not okay.

Aemri Marks, NAACP, shared takeaways from the community listening session that Front & Centered hosted the week prior to this Task Force meeting. She said DSHS provides a number of services and programs but they are still flawed. WIC, SNAP, TANF often do not provide nutritious foods and recipients of these programs have to sacrifice quality of food for quantity of food. Many students on Free or Reduced Lunch cannot choose more nutritious options because those options do not exist, and students are being punished for going off campus to purchase food. She also presented some solutions: Donate leftover food to school food pantries, cancel student debt, provide food services during summer breaks, and address barriers to receiving these services (e.g. language barriers).

Jorge Coya, LULAC, shared how environmental justice is deeply connected to everyday actions: the food we harvest and consume, clothes we buy and wear, land we build houses on, and sources of clean water. Capitalism and exploitation of natural resources for individual gain has destroyed relationships we have with nature, food, and our neighbors. He defined environmental justice as fighting against institutionalized systems of criminalization. He discussed how corporations have lawsuits but continue to pollute, but he might face jail time if he does not have enough money to pay for a ticket. He asked: How can we trust the government when we are continually criminalized? He concluded by sharing some solutions: Change government forms and processes to have safe and welcoming words that affirm humanity regardless of immigration / legal status, demand more transparency in the government, clearly communicate with communities, hold wrongful corporations accountable, hire and pay trusted community members to share their experiences and expertise, local organizations should fund underrepresented communities. Many layers and steps and it starts by recognizing the damage and providing adequate care.

After these youth presentations, Mr. Lopez introduced Lexi Bongiorno from the Noble Foundation.

Lexi Bongiorno, Noble Foundation, SW Washington Communities United for Change, said that these organizations partner to empower communities and center the voices of Black people, Indigenous people, and people of color (BIPOC) by bringing community

members and community health workers together. She said historically environmental clean up efforts have excluded marginalized communities. She brought up issues of diesel pollution, cost of organic food, mold, and the lack of funding for environmental clean ups. She presented some solutions for best practices for community engagement: demonstrate cultural humility, spend a day a month visiting community to build lasting relationships, go directly to community of color, and work with organizations and institutions that have pre-established relationships with communities. She looks forward to working together to build a healthier community.

### **13. COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS**

Task Force and community members spent the remaining portion of the meeting in group discussions about what environmental injustices community members have experienced, and what changes they would like to see in their communities. Task Force staff will be compiling notes from community conversations for all Task Force meetings to inform Task Force recommendations (on file). Task Force members asked pointed questions around how the state can adequately conduct meaningful community engagement and address the environmental justice issues in Vancouver.

### **14. TASK FORCE MEMBER COMMENTS & REFLECTIONS**

David Mendoza, Co-Chair thanked Task Force members for their contribution and time and stated what to expect in the coming months.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

David Mendoza, Task Force Co-Chair, adjourned the meeting at 8:08 p.m.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE TASK FORCE**

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Victor Rodriguez, Task Force Co-chair  
David Mendoza, Task Force Co-chair

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