

Round 1, The Promise of Green Zones: Focused Investment in Overburdened Communities (Sustainable Development)

Introduction

In recognition of the 20th anniversary of the Environmental Justice Executive Order, EPA Region 9 organized a "Teach-In" on March 6, 2014. Over 150 participants representing non profits, community organizations, academia, state and local government and the EPA Region 9 workforce provided input on three key themes: Sustainable Development and EJ; EJ and the Law; and Tools and Task Forces. Notes were taken by volunteers at each small group discussion table, compiled verbatim by EPA and reviewed for accuracy by all participants. Attribution was not captured unless a commenter included attribution in their edit.

The notes below do not necessarily reflect the views of US EPA.

1. What makes this issue compelling; why should we focus on this issue?

- Resources are scarce.
- It's hard to identify best area to focus investment.
- People are experiencing lack of green; some may not be able to help focus investment due to lack of opportunities.
- People affected by EJ may not be able to speak out, e.g. kids and schools. Or they are near places such as ports.
- Focusing on the community *and* industry—not just one or the other.
- Information hasn't been shared widely—missing opportunities for synergy.
- EJ communities have not received investment for decades—they are starved of positive investments.
- Small communities have challenges obtaining resources to support clean air, water and access to services such as education, health, etc.
- Try to focus strategic investment on resources.
- Need economic development but with emphasis on “green jobs” not necessarily economic development as a hazardous waste landfill.
- Can we define “green job” not a seasonal agricultural worker?
- Poor communities have difficulty speaking out and advocating for themselves.
- This issue affects more disadvantaged communities.
- We need to incentivize investment into disadvantaged communities.
- Cap and Trade in air pollution credits will be coming into concentrated areas.
- City planning needs to have green corridors; look at big picture coming from urban communities.
- Brownfield focus and develop for community.
- Transformational things ready for action now, example distributed solar.
- Green infrastructures.
- Expand community gardens and parks in blighted areas to create vibrant community.

- Border – can see difference of how green we (Mexico) are—better approach, or how behind. We need to determine how to have a level playing field along the border. We need to monitor law. The river in Tijuana ends in San Diego.
- Disparity between borders, e.g. laws, air/water quality, political.
- Define and push green zones, example: compost facility—location, example intercity green space.
- Changes can result in new economies which will lead to financial benefits.
- How to define green zone at city planning level (area, corridor, ecosystem) location is relevant?
- Industrial use greening.
- Project development and positioning.
- Address contaminated areas and create public space, need environmental education in community.
- How to create other opportunities that will focus on polluting facilities such as coal.
- Breaking boom/ bust cycles: what is the transition and what does the training to transition look like? Leave it up to communities to decide what that looks like.
- Need to fulfill immediate needs: drinking water, electricity.
- How to supply in a way that is self-sustaining, i.e. Brownfields - renewable energy; how to use leftover infrastructure in a way that complements community visions; solar development.
- Intergenerational.
- Planning that takes into account native/local knowledge.
- Bottom up approach rather than one driven by energy companies where people don't even know it's happening.
- How to make economically beneficial, hard to prove?
- Redirect funds (i.e. AB32) for immediate infrastructure needs.
- Can see and feel the pollution and how overburdened a community is and how government doesn't pay attention to this (example: West Oakland).
- There is compelling research and statistics on health disparities.
- There is a long history of disinvestment in overburdened communities, which in part contributes to the overburden.
- Democracy and equality are issues.
- Should we control industries/pollution sources or build up communities?
- If you are re-developing, might as well do it green!
- Focus on strengthening the economy and environment in tandem, not separate.
- Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment– overlay those maps to determine sites of future promise zones.
- Overall Health: income comes later on, nice to focus on environment and economy. Link in good nutrition, food deserts.
- Food desert – increase access/transportation.
- Need to build “culturally appropriate pedestrian refuge”.
- Gentrification comes with community investment.
- Pushing data to communities and /or finding data they need to push investments to the right place.

- Massive funds are going to be pushed to communities via AB32.
- Generally need to develop EJ protocols within state to facilitate community participation.
- Use EJ to push cumulative impacts and precautionary principle within community work.
- Need to “fight the bad” and “work the good”.
- So many communities are over burdened.
- It is cumulative.
- This is an environmental justice issue-pollution in the Central Valley.
- What is it? Could be money, people, volunteering, knowledge, local economies, political.
- Focus on the communities is most important.
- Concrete information/data identifying over-burdened communities.
- Public health challenge: mortality statistics.
- Economic disparities.
- Cal EPA EnviroScreen
- Global Community Monitor Program – works in all area (urban, rural, other) for buffer zones or breathing space, community and heavy industry get put together.
- So don’t permit things on top of each other, engage community – take tools and get input, involve them in the process.
- Disconnect in getting all involved (watershed issues), better connection with Federal agencies is needed.
- LACEEN, IVAN – trying to get one started in Tulare.
- EPA enforcement tools.
- In watershed – a top down and bottom up approach worked well.
- There is an issue of leadership and not knowing who to contact? There needs to be a top priority problem solver in the community.
- Accountability isn’t there if the problem solver isn’t an authority.
- Having “buy in” from the top levels e.g. state and federal level.
- Many people are overstretched – stakeholder groups need to be more focused.
- IVAN is a good example for air quality, but might not work for cumulative impacts.
- EPA – lots of focus on urban (like smaller watersheds).
- Call it an Environmental Justice Protection Zone vs. Green Zone which many find confusing – e.g. try to site certain green industries.
- Help businesses get safer and cleaner (e.g. zero emissions fork lift).
- Where does heavy industry go if it must leave the community?
- How to provide carrots and sticks to industry? Could have mixed stakeholder advisory group to help make it happen.
- Face-to-face communication is important.
- Many communities are not represented and or listened to by their representative or county.
- Health issue, executive order, it is part of EPA’s mission and mandate.
- Usually these communities are low income and they don’t have the resources to monitor.
- They possibly have language barriers and lack access to good education.
- By developing a baseline protection for the most vulnerable; we are able to spread that level of protection across all communities for a better society.
- Compel other federal agencies through regulations and review.

- Sierra – mining and forestry resources lead to huge burdens of toxic materials and over planting.
- The biggest problem is how to make rural issues compelling to majority of urban populations.
- Fostering advocates is not effective, litigation and understanding of ecosystems is lacking.
- Current status versus future catastrophic impacts.
- Low population.
- No current documented health risks.
- Elected representatives are not interested in area.
- Tea Party is politically disengaged.
- Major fires will impact air quality and water availability to entire state's population.
- Inequity – acknowledgement and acceptance that every place is not the same.
- People here (state and federal agencies) have the ability to change our land space of inequality.
- Key leaders help communities understand issues in their community.
- Many high impact industries employ people in community.
- Not enough public education.
- Connect social science to research science and then fund research programs.
- Correlate science to impacts in community.
- There is a gap between what data demonstrates and what community experiences.
- Community experience and knowledge is needed on key issues/areas to prioritize.
- With limited resources, how do you identify/prioritize these communities? What tools are available? How accurate/effective are they?
- What characterizes communities? Low-income, immigrant population; all = are over burdened.
- Need to make workplace healthy and safe, especially those establishments that are key economic engines in the community, such as nail salons.
- How to identify needs within these communities? Example: Cal Enviro Screen.
- There are cumulative impacts when one lives in overburdened communities and works with unsafe exposures.
- Inequality/injustice impacts are growing – disparity is great.
- Lack of communication between agencies and inter agencies.
- Common thread between urban, rural and tribal communities is Environmental Health.
- Plans need to be locally and community driven and integrated into local and state plans.
- Identify overburdened communities in terms of achievement, race, poverty, pollution, etc.).
- Help us recognize where impacts are and allocate resources towards “red zones”.
- Impact screening tool and AB1330.
- Poor land use decisions often an underlying cause – issue nationally.
- Land development will continue.
- Tell the story of local community – make compelling. Put a face with the issue.

2. What are we (collectively) doing well about this issue; what can we do better?

- Stafford metal recycling project (\$2m/project) - stakeholder driven project, sponsored by State Water Board with oversight by advisory committee.
- CalEnviroScreen.
- New Green zone laws creating investment into communities.
- Turning burdens into benefits for the community. AB32 Grant.
- Community engagement.
- SB535 (De Leon) CA law requiring 25% of greenhouse gas reduction funds to be invested to benefit EJ communities.
- Functional and descriptive.
- This event.
- More renewable energy.
- Loans for solar panels.
- Provide jobs.
- Agencies need to better communicate who they are working with.
- Give recommendation of on-line communicators.
- EPA liaison for budgetary communications. We know our budget (tribal) but what are other agencies budgets on related issues?
- Coordination of involved agencies.
- Goal: how do we support tribes through their own visions?
- We should not accept higher unemployment than other places.
- Monitoring tools of vulnerable areas (EVA, EJSM, Cal Enviro Screen).
- It's hard to know which tool to use.
- Is zip code too big to use - better to use census tracts for Cal Enviro screen.
- These aren't tools for CEQA.
- Health indicator report for the county (Contra Costa) and can see where there are health disparities and focus there.
- Actively inform and educate community members.
- Better land use decision (more educated).
- OEHHA models vs. UC Davis, etc. managed frequent models.
- Data access is good.
- Focusing on environment and economics is good.
- Challenge: how to bring in services and systems, i.e. bus service/public transportation, in food deserts.
- Need to focus on mixed uses within community – to have all your needs nearby.
- Have your community needs, not pollution.
- Work with community partners; don't just leave work within the agencies/academia.
- Water, especially in under-served communities, needs support (funding technical service).
- Need more tech expertise, e.g. in state agencies.
- Nimble!! Need to be more nimble!
- Linkages, e.g. drinking water and other waters.

- Even when we partner with other agencies, who takes the lead, carries the efforts forward?
- Linking together all the local issues in a community, not just the environmental issues (e.g. getting the food on the table).
- Need more experiential training. Regulatory agencies need this deeper level training (not just “EJ” OR “diversity” training); e.g. Center for 3rd World Organizing.
- EJ communities in LA and Central Valley are coming together with the Center on Race, Poverty and the Environment to share experiences and work together to strategize better outcomes. Similar issues relate to permitting, enforcement and clean-up.
- Local politicians in the Valley are industry-friendly.
- Republicans are not sympathetic to EJ issues.
- Industry has no incentive to do the right thing.
- DTSC is not interested (apparently) or not responsive to EJ issues.
- EPA is one of many partners.
- Cal EPA’s CalEnviroScreen used to pull top 10% impacted communities for targeted inspections and funding.
- Coordinate among state and federal agencies
- Sale of carbon credits are targeted to impacted communities (a portion).
- Help improve EJ screening tools. How to get communities to buy in and help illuminate what’s happening and what is needed.
- Community input should be part of the solution.
- Innovative land use policies.
- Single source of information to support businesses – lower costs.
- Support community-level enforcement.
- L.A. City policy development.
- Community Water Center: two key strategies on investment (1) know where overburdened communities are (lack of information) but what to do when we have no data. (2) Sierra counts – rural = no data; but get people on the ground involved, also get buy in and ownership because state and EPA can’t do it all on their own.
- For investments – competitive process with grant applications, only people with money and power; need more proactive funding method.
- Grant rules are not flexible
- Development of local water sources. Prop 84 funding.
- Santa Susanna Superfund – only talked to the rich people. Concern with coping with concrete – want soil cleaner.
- Loophole – CEQA doesn’t contain environmental justice.
- Superfund exempt from NEPA.
- IRWMP – need to be in touch with EJ communities. Leonitas doesn’t know what an IRWMP is; difficulty in getting the real help.
- Sea level is rising and how it will affect them when housing get to the pollutants.
- The program to reduce vehicle idling made a difference.
- Explain how it will affect the next generation and their kids.
- Regional meetings with local EJ organizations.

- Grants to support local organizations and emerging businesses with good ideas like air monitoring.
- Need better enforcement of industries that are polluting on tribal land. Feds (not just EPA) can work better with tribes to enforce pollution prevention and wetland impacts.
- Some tribal leaders are waiting to be educated on what to do.
- Interim permits for facility dischargers and long-term leases are all combined and the government to government consultation isn't happening in the ideal way.
- EPA staff needs to know tribal policy better. Tribes needs to understand what they can do better.
- So what do tribes really want, better face-to-face communication between tribal staff and EPA staff. Sometimes tribes don't know what to ask for so they don't ask. They don't know who or what to ask. Face-to-face discussions can open communication and increase knowledge.
- Tribes need to update policies – some are old (from 70's). No is time to green-up master plans and Tribes could use help doing so. Council wants to update the document to be more sustainable.
- Cumulative impact advocacy has led to attention on overburdened communities.
- DTSC – “micro granting” of <\$5K. COMMENT: This came from EPA grant to DTSC. Embracing community intelligence.
- Requiring grantees to comply with Title VI.
- Concern that targeted investments (like Kettleman drinking water system) are being used as blackmail to get community members to agree to a new dump.
- Where's CalEnviroScreen for tribes?
- Creating public groups who address issues on the ground level – i.e., Pittsburg Defense Council, who is organizing community and having regular meetings.
- Making a network between cities and groups is good.
- Increasing awareness and making connections.
- What we can do better: State and Federal EPA field reps to be consultants, advisors present (especially at Board of Supervisor meetings), involved in down-wind communities.
- Help communities understand process and laws.
- Central Valley - has a voice.
- No voice in Sierra; where the population's resources come from.
- Focusing on disadvantaged and impacted communities.
- We've identified EJ as a serious issue affecting all communities.
- LACEEN / IVAN: website to report all issues in a community – run by non profits but with assistance from government agencies.
- Need better ways to identify key issues/priorities in communities. Example: collaborative decision making – well funded processes, such as CARE grants but they no longer exist.
- Need to figure out how to scale-up, smaller, local successes.
- Leverage resources available at various government agencies.
- How can we use a sustainability lens to address EJ issues?
- Need more collaborative approaches that involve community health perspective with EPA.
- Need more emphasis on prevention vs. health care services.
- Events like today's

- Grant funding for diverse programs and projects
- Screening tools based upon census data.
- Enforcement is lacking.
- Limited resources – screening tools help target communities with greatest need.
- Need EJ plans at the community levels identifying community values and need (supplemental environmental projects via enforcement work).
- Amortization ordinance – look at expanding this use. Environmental Health Coalition video discusses this ordinance.
- Denmark – national initiative to either relocate communities or industry.
- Community enforcement networks – LA recent successful agency.

3. What specifically can EPA do in this area within the next two years?

1. OVERARCHING COMMENTS

- 1.1. Acknowledge the fact that doing what Executive Orders and laws says may not be enough in overburdened communities.
- 1.2. DTSC needs grant authority to fund local and community organizations.
- 1.3. Identify success and duplicate or scale-up more broadly.
- 1.4. Responsible models, i.e., grant funding projects that not only can be replicated in various communities, but also doing a better job at connecting communities with tools and resources that already exist.
- 1.5. Incremental investments to catalyze engagement from both community groups and external stakeholders to set up small wins up front stage for long lasting change
- 1.6. Need to share burdens across communities.
- 1.7. EPA said they would not allow DPR to do more to address contamination at schools serving Latino populations (in litigation now).

2. EPA SHOULD PARTNER WITH OTHER AGENCIES

- 2.1. More partnering with the health sectors/agencies/groups and public health.
- 2.2. Bring in partner agencies to talk about all issues and community leaders.
- 2.3. Leverage resources – EPA work with community groups but also coordinate with other agencies.
- 2.4. Work more with other federal agencies, e.g., SBA who gives out lots of money and has lots of financial expertise.
- 2.5. Need more collaboration with cities and counties.

3. SUSTAINABLE REVOLUTION!

- 3.1. Invest in a holistic approach when looking at green zones.
- 3.2. Solutions should ultimately have “buy in” or ownership in final outcomes.
- 3.3. Rural toxic issues are unique.
- 3.4. Health is a factor in economic development.
- 3.5. Incorporate EJ communities into climate change discussion.
- 3.6. Additional green zones should be identified.

4. EPA and LAND USE

- 4.1. EPA should help tribes with their land use plans.
- 4.2. EPA needs to have a land use plan of action beyond brownfields.
- 4.3. Potential for forest management: SB535, 25% funds to benefit disadvantaged communities: must be GHG related; EPA should track process: What defines “benefitting” a disadvantaged community; how foresting and forest management is a GHG issue.

5. EPA GRANTS

- 5.1. EPA should direct grants towards EJ areas.
- 5.2. EPA resources should be allocated to identified EJ areas (“red zones”).
- 5.3. EPA should facilitate community interaction with other agencies that have funding or other resources.
- 5.4. Make resources available and accessible early on to communities.
- 5.5. Bring back CARE grant program for community engagement for identifying programs to invest in.
- 5.6. Make funds available to support a community driven, collaborative processes to identify community priorities (example: CARE).
- 5.7. Area-wide planning grants should help concentrate industrial zones away from EJ areas.
- 5.8. EPA should award micro grants.
- 5.9. Make EPA applications less burdensome for funding.
- 5.10. Improve competitive grant selections criteria and increase focus on leveraging funds.
- 5.11. EPA should find funding sources for operation and maintenance.
- 5.12. Make sure investments are informed--based on independent alternative analysis that is developed, shared and reviewed with community.
- 5.13. Build on key model successes: government example is nail salon; working with counties to expand.
- 5.14. Don’t rely on just one grant reducing source of pollution, e.g., reducing diesel emissions, but then allow landfill to expand.

6. OVERSIGHT OF FEDERAL GRANTS FOR PLANNING / LAND USE

- 6.1. EPA should ensure that states and/or grantees comply with Title 6 requirements.
- 6.2. EPA should be specific on what grantees can do (in a non-discriminatory way) to ensure fair and equitable distribution of funds to all communities.
- 6.3. How can agencies develop guidelines to ensure communities are engaged in the funded work? Grant programs should require consultation with affected community?
- 6.4. EPA should push to include traditional EJ considerations within land use, i.e., NEPA review.

7. EPA OVERSIGHT OF STATE AND LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMS

- 7.1. Small communities may need the federal government to step in when local government won’t.
- 7.2. DOT oversight: rail car safety, carrying mislabeled Bakkan Crude; the railcars split apart. Bakkan Crude is not considered (yet) is a high haz-mat product

- 7.3. EPA could use RCRA by rescinding delegation of program as a “hammer” to leverage influence over DTSC to get them to their job.
- 7.4. Good having EPA put pressure on state for safe drinking water.
- 7.5. Use EPA as a backstop for agencies not responding to concerns.

8. PILOT GREEN ZONES APPROACH

- 8.1. Identify division within EPA to carry out green zones programming; pilot this program to prioritized communities for enforcement and investment.
- 8.2. Involve multiple EPA departments for coordination and implementation.
- 8.3. Direct investment to build green zones with EJ groups that lead as part of alliances.
- 8.4. Ramp up community involvement and training in area with land use issues – use Environmental Health Coalition’s work in San Diego as a model.
- 8.5. EPA should send decision makers to stakeholder meetings.
- 8.6. Emphasize economic retention – not to always get rid of industry, trying to clean up underutilized and abandoned areas, should be built upon.
- 8.7. Need a platform to open up to community and educate community to develop their own plans.
- 8.8. Engage the community to contribute, it will empower them.
- 8.9. Help communities build capacity.
- 8.10. Define and push green zones, example: compost facility—location, example intercity green space.
- 8.11. Call an Environmental Justice Protection Zone vs. Green Zone which many find confusing – e.g. try to site certain green industries

9. OUTREACH

- 9.1. Need education modules for communities. Why do some communities “qualify” for more help?
- 9.2. EPA should continue to send people to meetings that can make an impact, getting the buy in (i.e., community enforcement groups such as EJ task forces).
- 9.3. More outreach to municipalities and local organizations.
- 9.4. Outreach more focused to EJ areas; specifically economically distressed area.
- 9.5. Educate the young in the overburdened community.
- 9.6. EPA needs to do a better job explaining all of our programs – better websites for process.
- 9.7. Create website of alternatives solutions for different problems that have been demonstrated in different communities e.g., improved recycling, waste management, waste to energy conversion systems.
- 9.8. Address contaminated areas and create public space; need environmental education in community.

10. HEALTHY HOMES

- 10.1. Indoor air quality is bad, we need to insulate homes and provide better housing for low income communities since they can’t afford to do it; EPA and others (HVD, etc) should heavily invest in this. Some panels to discuss aren’t enough.

11. HEALTHCARE

- 11.1. Need funding for people to have direct access to patient care.
- 11.2. EPA needs patient data and communities need access to clinics and health care, ex: Kern County.
- 11.3. Try to get health insurance to fund home interventions to lower asthma and hospital costs.
- 11.4. Look at issues around health more broadly and include terms, land use, basic community needs.

12. USE OF SCREENING TOOLS TO IDENTIFY AREAS FOR INVESTMENT

- 12.1. Include and /or keep race in CalEnviroScreen.
- 12.2. Put tools (EJSM, EVA and CalEnviroScreen) together and use it for funding decisions.
- 12.3. Fully map urban areas.
- 12.4. Build on existing cumulative impacts tools (especially with new data; cutting edge tools).
- 12.5. Collaborate to ensure tools use the same parameters (race, poverty, etc).
- 12.6. Foster federal / state dialogue on development and use of models; look at EPA and Cal EPA screening models and coordinate with communities.
- 12.7. Focus on regional opportunities in data indices, not just existing concerns and hazards.
- 12.8. Collaborate with communities on existing case studies and data.
- 12.9. Weigh in on rural invisibility; don't use population based formula (population based on where resources come from).
- 12.10. Too broad a treatment of EJ as a label may mean that funds and technical assistance aren't targeted at the communities that need it the most.
- 12.11. Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment – overlay those maps to determine sites of future promise zones.

13. INVESTMENT

- 13.1. EPA needs to better define what they mean by “investment” e.g., specify what technology railroads should invest in; categories?
- 13.2. Invest in future transportation needs.
- 13.3. Invest in clean air technology – both for community monitoring of facility violations as well as community investments for creating clean energy jobs.
- 13.4. Invest in over-burdened communities to prevent health issues.
- 13.5. Issues with the small mutual water companies that don't have access.
- 13.6. Need economic development but with emphasis on “green jobs” not necessarily economic development as a hazardous waste landfill.
- 13.7. Green job does not mean a seasonal agricultural worker.

14. INSPECTION / ENFORCEMENT PRESENCE/ SEPS

- 14.1. Enforcement for industries; more oversight of local industries.
- 14.2. Enforcement – e.g., Allenco.
- 14.3. Use SEPS more to benefit affected communities.
- 14.4. Use penalty money to build more clinics (like in North Richmond). This can be a legitimate mitigation measure in NEPA review or SEP.

- 14.5. Integrate community into regulations, particular enforcement initiatives – Hamilton County, OH – good example.
- 14.6. Compliance assistance for industries should also be there for communities.