

Office of Environmental Justice
Highlights: November 5, 2018 – January 15, 2019

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENTS

New Regional Coordinator – Justin Dula started on December 24 as the Eastern Regional Coordinator for the Office of Environmental Justice covering the Northeast and Southeast regions. Justin's office is located in the SERO.

ENGAGEMENT WITH EJAB:

Environmental Rights Amendment Workshop – OEJ participated in a workshop hosted by Carol Parenzan and the Middle Susquehanna Riverkeeper Association in Williamsport on Thursday, November 29, which focused on the Environmental Rights Amendment.

EXTERNAL MEETINGS:

Meeting with PennFuture – OEJ met with representatives from PennFuture on Monday, November 5 to discuss environmental justice issues.

Meeting with Braddock Borough Council President – OEJ met with Tina Doose, Braddock Borough Council President, on Monday, November 5 to discuss next steps on the Merrion Oil & Gas permit process, as well as review Braddock Water Authority's requirements following the recent lead exceedance.

Meeting with EPA – OEJ met with representatives from EPA's Office of Environmental Justice to discuss internal EJ Coordination efforts and other initiatives. EPA has offered to provide training opportunities to DEP staff, as well as additional support as OEJ continues to integrate EJ principles into the Department's various programs.

NEJAC Conference Call – The National Environmental Justice Advisory Council (NEJAC) convened a public teleconference on Wednesday, November 28. OEJ participated in the meeting that was used to discuss a new initiative on the reuse and revitalization of Superfund and other contaminated sites and to discuss EJ concerns that were raised during the NEJAC public meeting on August 14 – 16, 2018.

Meeting with Ebony Griffin – Allison Acevedo met with Ebony Griffin from The Public Interest Law Center on Thursday, November 29 to discuss EJ issues.

Anthracite Region for Progress Meeting – The Anthracite Region for Progress hosted meetings on Monday, December 3 and January 7 in Shamokin, PA. OEJ participated in the meetings and Randy Farmerie from the Environmental Cleanup and Brownfields (ECB) program delivered a presentation on Brownfields and available funding sources for Brownfields redevelopment.

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Geisinger Quarterly Meeting – OEJ participated in Geisinger’s quarterly Medicine Take Back Program meeting on Thursday, December 13.

Tour of PFAS Impacts with Horsham Officials – Director Allison Acevedo and Regional Coordinator Dula attended a tour of held Horsham focusing on PFAS treatment and community impact led by the Horsham Land Redevelopment Authority on Tuesday, January 8.

Public Health 3.0 Meeting – Regional coordinator Brakeall participated in the Public Health 3.0 meeting on Thursday, January 10.

Conference Call with DVRPC – Regional coordinator Dula had a call with Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) on Monday, January 14 to discuss environmental justice issues.

Brownfields Site Visit – OEJ will attend a meeting on Thursday, January 17 with a team of Shamokin officials to attend a site visit in Bethlehem, PA with the Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation to learn best practices around sustainable community economic development.

APA-PA Conference Call – Regional coordinator Dula will join a call with the Engagement Committee of the PA Chapter of the American Planning Association, Southeast Section (APA-PA-PA) on Friday, January 18.

INTRERNAL MEETINGS:

Aggregate Advisory Board – OEJ Director Allison Acevedo presented an overview of the EJ Policy at the Aggregate Advisory Board meeting on Wednesday, November 7.

EJ Internal Work Group Meeting – OEJ hosted an EJ Internal Work Group meeting on Thursday, November 8 to solicit feedback on the draft EJ Policy and other OEJ initiatives.

EJAB Meeting – The Environmental Justice Advisory Board held a joint meeting with the Citizens Advisory Council on Tuesday, November 13.

EJ POLICY:

Policy Review Process – OEJ is currently drafting a Comment-Response document and revising the policy based off of the comments received. Both documents will be reviewed internally throughout January, reviewed by the Internal Work Group in February, and by the EJAB in April. OEJ anticipates final release of the EJ Public Participation Policy in May 2019.

EDUCATIONAL ENGAGEMENT:

Partnership Engagement and Environmental Education – OEJ is working with the Communications Office in development of a November 15 webinar for the Environmental

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Education Center Grants Program Package which was released on November 2. OEJ will assist in promoting the grants in EJ communities.

Environmental Education Webinar – OEJ worked with the Communications Office on the development of a webinar for the Environmental Education Center Grants Program Package which was released on November 2. OEJ has assisted in promoting the grants in EJ communities and helping community partners register for the webinar.

Newsletter – OEJ distributed the 1st edition of its quarterly newsletter, *EJ News: Your Environment Your Voice*, on Tuesday, November 13. The newsletter was delivered to 370 recipients with a 32% open rate. 23% of recipients opened hyperlinks embedded in the newsletter to find out more information about the office, outside research, the EJAB, as well as other grant opportunities and resources.

PUBLIC MEETINGS:

Bruce Mansfield Public Hearing – OEJ participated in a public hearing on a draft NPDES permit for Bruce Mansfield Power Plant and Little Blue Run Impoundment on Wednesday, November 28 in Hookstown, Beaver County. Approximately 30 people attended and nine individuals presented testimony requesting stricter conditions in the permit.

Senate Democratic Policy Committee Hearing – OEJ attended the Senate Democratic Policy Committee Hearing on Climate Change on Wednesday, November 28 in Pittsburgh. Deputy Secretary Hartenstein provided testimony describing the efforts made by the Department to combat the effects of climate change on Pennsylvania.

PFAS Hearing – OEJ staff attended the PFAS Action Team Public Hearing in Harrisburg on Friday, November 30, 2018.

Amerikohl Revtai GFCC Public Hearing – OEJ participated in a public conference and hearing on Wednesday, December 12 in Saltlick Twp, Fayette County. Approximately 35 people attended, including many Mountain Watershed Association staff members. DEP received testimony from 15 individuals. Concerns centered around potential water loss and deteriorated water quality due to the proposed mining and reclamation activities.

Heritage Coal Shaw Mine Refuse Site – Regional coordinator Alwine is in the process of distributing materials to organizations in Summit and Elk Lick Twps, Somerset County, which describe activities expected at a proposed refuse site, ahead of two public meetings the applicant will be attending.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

State of the Environment Meeting – Allison Acevedo testified at the State of the Environment hearing hosted by Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds the City of Philadelphia on Thursday,

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November 29. The purpose of the meeting was to solicit feedback on the City’s proposed “Environmental Justice” legislation.

ENGAGEMENT WITH FUNDERS:

Sun Club – OEJ had a conference call with the non-profit organization Sun Club, which was created as philanthropic arm of Green Mountain Energy and uses profits from Green Mountain Energy to fund non-profits in developing solar, renewable energy and education projects. OEJ will inform our EJ stakeholder groups about Sun Club’s robust quarterly grant program.

Brownfields Grant – DEP’s Environmental Cleanup and Brownfields (ECB) program and OEJ partnered with Northumberland County Planning and Economic Development to apply for an EPA Small Communities Grant. The grant would be utilized for training, capacity building and inventory of sites associated with brownfields redevelopment.

Meeting with Philadelphia Foundation – Director Acevedo met with the Philadelphia Foundation on January 3 to discuss EJ funders and nonprofits in the region.

Conference Call with The Forbes Fund – Director Allison Acevedo had a conference call with the Forbes Fund to discuss EJ resources and collaborations on Thursday, January 10.