

**Office of Environmental Justice**  
**Highlights: November 5, 2018 – March 12, 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.

**OEJ Intern** – Belmin Kalkan, a Senior Political Science Major from Shippensburg University, started on Tuesday, January 22 as an intern with the Office of Environmental Justice (OEJ). Belmin’s work space is located in Rachel Carson State Office Building.

**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.

**EPA Small Communities Grant** – OEJ partnered with DCNR, PA Western Conservancy and Urban Erie Community Development Corporation (UECDC) to help UECDC apply for an Environmental Justice Small offered through the EPA. The grant supports and empowers communities working on solutions to local environmental and public health issues. The proposed project focuses on providing training and education about benefits of trees and proper tree maintenance. EJAB member Gary Horton is the CEO of UECDC.

**Johnstown Roundtable Organizational Meetings** – OEJ staff has been working with EJAB member Clea Hollis and other planning committee members to plan an Environmental Justice Roundtable on April 23.

**Philadelphia Roundtable Organizational Meetings** – OEJ staff has been partnering with EJAB member Jarome Shabazz and others to plan an Environmental Justice Roundtable on April 12. Planning partners include are elected officials including Representative Morgan Cephas.

**OEJ INITIATIVES:**

**Workforce Development** – OEJ staff has been working to develop a workforce development initiative to support a pathway for people enter drinking water and wastewater operator careers. DEP is partnering with Delaware County Community College (DCCC) and William Penn School District to develop an initiative which will engage students, and potentially parents, from the District to offer Certified Operator Training in these fields. OEJ staff has been meeting with School District representatives, DCCC staff, and the Education Committee of the William Penn School Board about the initiative. The superintendent, school board members, and others in attendance were all enthusiastic about the opportunity to develop the program. OEJ intends this initiative to be a pilot for a statewide workforce development program for drinking water and wastewater operators.

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**Interagency EJ Engagement** – On Friday, March 8, OEJ convened representatives from DOH, Agriculture, PennDOT, and DCNR to discuss the current inclusion of EJ-related programs and policies within their work, increasing awareness of EJ principles, and considering how to formalize EJ processes within the commonwealth.

**RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT/PARTNER 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 Meetings** – OEJ has participated in monthly meetings for the Anthracite Region for Progress in Shamokin, PA. In the January 7 meeting, OEJ and Randy Farmerie from the Environmental Cleanup and Brownfields (ECB) program delivered a presentation on Brownfields and available funding sources for Brownfields redevelopment.

**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.

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

**Office of Environmental Justice**  
**Highlights: November 5, 2018 – March 12, 2019**

**Brownfields Site Visit** – OEJ attended a meeting on Thursday, January 17 with a team of Shamokin officials to visit a site 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 participated in the Engagement Committee of the PA Chapter of the American Planning Association, Southeast Section (APA-PA-SE) calls, the group seeks to diversify the planning profession through outreach.

**Capital Region Water Meetings** – Regional coordinator Brakeall attended the Capital Region Water (CRW) monthly meetings.

**Meeting with WURD** – Director Acevedo met with representatives of ecoWURD a new environmental initiative of African-American talk radio station WURD, on Wednesday, January 23 to discuss environmental justice issues, community engagement and collaboration.

**PIHET Meeting** – OEJ staff attends monthly meetings of the Pennsylvania Interagency Health Equity Team (PIHET) meetings as DEP's representative.

**Senator Hughes EJ Policy Forum** - Regional Coordinator Dula attended an EJ Forum hosted by Sen. Vincent Hughes on Friday, January 25 in Ambler to discuss environmental justice issues and policy.

**Meeting with Delaware Riverkeeper Network** – Director Acevedo and Regional Coordinator Dula met with the Delaware Riverkeeper Network regarding the Environmental Rights Amendment and Environmental Justice policy on Tuesday, January 29.

**University of Pittsburgh Environmental Carcinogens Symposium** – Regional Coordinator Alwine attended *Cancer and the Environment: Priorities for Research, Policy and Clinical Practice* on Tuesday, January 29. Presenters discussed a variety of risks from carcinogens in the environment and identified action items including participating in public comment and policymaking processes.

**Healthy Communities Initiative** – Regional Coordinator Dula attended *The Impact of Racism and Trauma and Learning How to Work with People Who Have Been Traumatized* on Wednesday, January 30, and orientation call on Tuesday, February 26 for the Health Communities in PA initiative.

**Committee BoRit Community Advisory Group Meeting** – Regional coordinator Dula participated in the quarterly Ambler CAG meeting on Wednesday, February 6.

**Future Forces Work Group Meeting** – Regional Coordinator Dula participated in the Future Forces Work Group of the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC), which identifies forces which will affect the future of the Philadelphia region. These meetings were on Friday, February 15 and Friday, March 8

**Office of Environmental Justice**  
**Highlights: November 5, 2018 – March 12, 2019**

**Philadelphia Office of Sustainability** – On February 15, Director Acevedo and Regional Coordinator Dula met with Philadelphia Office of Sustainability to share updates on work and learn about new initiatives from that office and discuss the Philadelphia EJ Commission. Regional Coordinator Dula also met with the office on Friday, March 8 to discuss ideas for the upcoming Environmental Justice roundtable.

**Chester Environmental Partnership Meeting** – OEJ participated in the Chester Environmental Partnership's (CEP) bimonthly meeting on Tuesday, February 19.

**Clean and Green Harrisburg Meeting** – OEJ participated in a planning meeting on Thursday, February 21 for the next Great Harrisburg Litter Clean Up event.

**Black Environmental Collective** – Director Acevedo participated in two meetings of the Black Environmental Collective, which is a group of 90 black environmentalists. The group was recently created in Pittsburgh with broad outreach and research ambitions.

**INTERNAL 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.

**EJ POLICY:**

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

**EDUCATIONAL ENGAGEMENT:**

**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.

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**PRESENTATIONS AND LECTURES:**

**University of Pittsburgh Environmental Law Conference** – OEJ participated in the 2019 Energy Law and Policy Institute Environmental Conference hosted by the University of Pittsburgh on Tuesday, March 5. OEJ Director Acevedo was a panelist in an Environmental Justice Panel Discussion.

**EJ Presentation at the Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education** – OEJ Director Allison Acevedo delivered the 8th Annual Richard L. James Lecture on February 7 at the Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education. The presentation is titled *Environmental Justice in Pennsylvania - A New Vision*.

**EJ Panel at Widener Law** – OEJ Director Acevedo served on a panel about Environmental Justice at Widener Law Commonwealth on February 13.

**DCNR DEI Meeting** - OEJ Director Acevedo presented about the Office of Environmental Justice and community engagement at DCNR's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee meeting on March 11, 2019.

**PUBLIC MEETINGS:**

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

**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.

**Office of Environmental Justice**  
**Highlights: November 5, 2018 – March 12, 2019**

**Specialty Granules LLC. Public Meeting/Hearing** – Regional coordinator Brakeall participated in a public meeting and hearing on Wednesday, January 30 regarding a noncoal surface mine permit application submitted by Specialty Granules LLC.

**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, 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.