

Office of Environmental Justice
Highlights: May 29 – August 7, 2018

Program Developments

- **Public Comment Period for Draft EJ Public Participation Policy** – A 45-day public comment period for the Draft EJ Public Participation Policy opened on Saturday, July 14, 2018 and will close on Tuesday, August 28, 2018. OEJ sent correspondence to the EJAB and 339 of our partners in the three OEJ regions inviting comments on the Draft EJ Public Participation Policy and the EJ Areas Viewer mapping tool.
- **Director of the Office of Environmental Justice Appointed** – DEP Secretary Patrick McDonnell appointed Allison Acevedo as Director of the Office of Environmental Justice on Monday, July 9. Allison will work out of the Southeast Regional Office and direct DEP's environmental justice initiatives.

EJ Policy

- **Hegins Coal Breaker Facility** – Hegins Mining Company operates an anthracite coal breaking facility in Schuylkill County and their permit is set to expire. Hegins Mining Company applied for a new Coal Refuse Reprocessing permit that is being subject to the Environmental Justice Public Participation Policy.

Interviews

- OEJ Director Allison Acevedo participated with the Secretary in an interview about the new EJ Policy by Don Hopey on July 23, 2018 for the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.
- OEJ Director Allison Acevedo participated with the Secretary in an interview on July 18, 2018 for StateImpact about the new EJ Policy.
- OEJ Director Allison Acevedo participated in an interview on July 20, 2018 by Brianna Baker from Green Philly Blog about the new EJ Policy and her appointment to the new position.

Meetings

- **U.S. Steel, Edgar Thomson Works** – Regional Coordinator Alwine met with representatives from North Braddock Residents for our Future on Friday, June 8

to discuss their concerns with the proposed natural gas development on US Steel's Edgar Thomson Works property just east of Pittsburgh. The organization requested a meeting with both US Steel and the operator, Merrion Oil & Gas, however one has not been granted. North Braddock Residents is represented by Fair Shake Environmental Legal Services, whose Executive Director is a member of EJAB.

- **Erie Coke** – Several members of the stakeholders group involved in a DEP-led public involvement process, said that a recent tour of the Erie Coke facility held on May 3 was “eye-opening” and “exceeded expectations”. Stakeholders in the group now feel that they have a direct line of communication with representatives of Erie Coke and are “impressed with their openness”. The Erie stakeholder group met with representatives from the PA Dept. of Health - Division of Environmental Health Epidemiology and the federal Agency for Toxic Standards and Disease Registry on Friday, July 13, 2018 to discuss health concerns possibly resulting from exposure to emissions from Erie Coke. The following week, a Mission Document outlining the mission and expectations of the Erie stakeholder group was distributed to members for review. The document defines the relationship between the Department and members, while clarifying plans for enhanced public participation moving forward. Regional Coordinator Nora Alwine is administering meetings and facilitating planning with the partners in Erie around this matter.
- **Chester Environmental Partnership Meeting** – The Chester Environmental Partnership (CEP) held their bimonthly meeting on Tuesday, June 19, 2018 at 10 a.m. at Faith Temple Holy Church in Chester, PA. Regional Coordinator Brakeall participated in the meeting.
- **Air Quality Meeting in Chester** – Secretary McDonnell and SERO staff hosted a roundtable meeting back on Friday, April 20 in the City of Chester with a focus on environmental justice. Many of the questions from the roundtable involved air quality, so the Air Quality program in SERO has offered to lead a meeting that focuses on air quality permitting, monitoring and funding opportunities available through DEP to improve air quality. A follow-up meeting focused on Air Quality was held on Tuesday, June 26 from 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm at Faith Temple Holy Church, 1007 W. 7th Street, Chester, PA 19013.
- **Meeting with Geisinger** – John Brakeall participated in a meeting on Tuesday, July 17 with Geisinger Health and the Middle Susquehanna Riverkeeper Network to discuss Geisinger's Medicine Take Back program and their community-represented stakeholder group. The group discussed looking at data to explore a possible correlation between opioid abuse and communities that have been identified as EJ Areas.
- **Donora Roundtable** – The Office of Environmental Justice hosted a roundtable on August 1 in Donora, PA. Secretary McDonnell as well as staff from the SWRO

and OEJ attended the event. The event was an open forum for a variety of stakeholders to provide input on current and proposed EJ initiatives, as well as help develop a framework for how the Department can be more effective in community engagement and facilitating communications between the regulated community, local government, and residents.

- **Legislative Visit** – Allison Acevedo met with Rep. Donna Bullock on Tuesday, July 24, 2018 to discuss her interest in supporting EJ work and areas for engagement with OEJ and DEP.
- **Meetings with EJAB Members** – OEJ Director Allison Acevedo started individual meetings with EJAB members to obtain feedback on EJAB's engagement with DEP and work around environmental justice. Meetings were held with EJAB Chair Adam Cutler (7/25), Rev. Dr. Horace Strand (7/26), Emily Collins (8/1) and Allison Robinson (8/1).
- **Meeting with Alice Wright** – OEJ Director Allison Acevedo met with former OEJ administrator Alice Wright on Friday, July 27, 2018 to gain historical perspective of the office and learn about best practices and challenges of the work.
- **Meetings with Community Organizations** – OEJ Director Allison Acevedo and Regional Coordinator Nora Alwine held meetings with several community stakeholders about engagement with DEP and OEJ with communities in the Pittsburgh area.
- **Meetings with DEP Staff** – OEJ Director Allison Acevedo and Regional Coordinator Nora Alwine met with SWRO Director Ron Schwartz and Assistant Regional Director Kevin Halloran about the work and plans of OEJ office and how SWRO can assist EJ Work.

Interagency Collaboration

- **TreeVitalize Grant Review** – The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources' (DCNR) TreeVitalize program administers grants to promote and develop sustainable urban forestry programs throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. OEJ collaborated with the TreeVitalize program to give funding preference to projects implemented in Environmental Justice Areas. John Brakeall in the OEJ participated in grant application review meetings on Monday, July 23 and Tuesday, July 24 and provided feedback regarding projects implemented in EJ Areas.

External Partnerships

- **Capstone Partnership Meeting with Governor's Office** – The Governor's Office is coordinating a Capstone Partnership between state agencies and participating Universities that provides students and faculty the opportunity to engage in agency-driven research projects. The Capstone Partnership is intended to interest young people in working for state government and enable government agencies to obtain research in a key area or for a significant project. The Office of Environmental Justice prepared a proposal in July 2017 that was deferred. OEJ submitted a renewed proposal in August 2018 suggesting a project to identify and analyze research about environmental impacts in specific areas of the state.

Strategy and Planning

- **Vision and Planning Document** – OEJ presented an initial draft of its strategy document for review by the Secretary on July 31, 2018.
- **Meetings with EJAB and Community Partners** (outlined above) – were held to support guidance around strategy development and planning.

Upcoming Events

- **EJAB Meeting on August 28, 2018 in Williamsport, PA**