

**MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ADVISORY BOARD**

February 6th, 2026

Attendance

MEMBERS PRESENT in person:

Chair Adam Cutler
Jerome Shabazz
Heather Bedi

MEMBERS PRESENT, Teams

Jennifer Baka
Bobby Hughes
Sophia Lee
Mia Ray
Ramon Johnson
Rafiyqa Muhammad
Rashida Lovely
Curtis Jones
Maurice Sampson

MEMBERS NOT PRESENT:

Jackie Omotalade
Tom Torres

NON-MEMBERS PRESENT:

Trent Machamer
David Hess
Thomas Donohue
Ashley Bahrt
Ikram Mezghani
Erin Portland
Nate Eachus
Jessica S
Emily Zaremba
Ann Vinatieri

DEP STAFF PRESENT IN PERSON:

Fernando Treviño
Jordi Comas
Eli Downie
John Roper

DEP STAFF PRESENT, Teams:

Emily Green
Elspeth Koehle
Jordi Comas
Maria Ocasio
Casey Damicantonio
Lena Smith
Ian Irvin
Amani Reid
Maya Weinberg (Governor's Office of Science
and Technology Fellow with Department of
Natural Conservation Resources DCNR)

Call to Order

Chair Adam Cutler called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. Chair Cutler announced the meeting was going to be recorded and provided the recording appropriate disclaimer. Chair Cutler took roll call and quorum was met. This meeting was held both virtually and in person. Minutes from November 12, 2025 were approved with a motion from Sophia, seconded by Jerome and with a unanimous verbal “aye.”

DEP Updates

Central Office Update

Special Deputy Secretary Fernando Treviño provided an update on the Office of Environmental Justice's Central Office Activities. He share that OEJ concluded 2025 participating in several national working groups, strengthened relationships with other states, and shared best practices to incorporate EJ considerations in the permitting process and other aspects of DEP’s operation.

Fernando continued that in 2025, OEJ reinforced its proactive community engagement program across the Commonwealth. Meeting with community-based organizations, holding meetings with individual stakeholders and community leaders, hosting events, attending partner events, and delivering presentations to promote cross-sector understanding of environmental justice priorities, tools, and policy integration.

Fernando further shared that the Environmental Justice (EJ) Policy was finalized on January 3, 2026, which marked an important step in Pennsylvania’s long-standing commitment to Environmental Justice that goes back decades. This final EJ Policy adoption is the culmination of the DEP adopted Interim Final EJ Policy that updated a 20-year-old policy used by DEP. The EJ Policy expanded environmental safeguards throughout the Commonwealth, guiding protections for communities most vulnerable to environmental challenges.

Discussion

Maurice Sampson asked how the information from PennEnviroScreen is being used by users. Northcentral Environmental Justice Coordinator Jordi Comas responded that OEJ has seen it used by civil society groups, government agencies, and individual industry permittees. Maurice then expressed an interest in being part of a network that is figuring out ways to use the tool. Rashida Lovely shared she has seen PennEnviroScreen used in practical ways, like for some grants.

OEJ 2025 Permitting Summary

Regional Office	Permits in EJ Areas *	Enhanced Public Participation
Southcentral	452	1

Southeast	305	4
Northeast	192	4
Northcentral	127	1
Southwest	526	1
Northwest	247	1
Total	1,849	12
Regional Office	Opt-In Requests	Opted-In Accepted
Southcentral	2	2
Southeast	5	5
Northeast	7	5
Northcentral	0	0
Southwest	3	2
Northwest	10	1
Total	27	15

Chair Adam Cutler asked for a summary and breakdown of opt-in requests and opt-in projects. Fernando Trevino responded that some were Reasonably Available Control Technology (RACT) in EJ Areas and will share the summary and breakdown following the EJAB Meeting.

Review of DEP's Final EJ Policy and PennEnviroScreen

Jordi Comas presented on the changes from the Interim Final EJ Policy to the Final EJ Policy. Jordi discussed that the current update to PennEnviroScreen (PennEnviroScreen 1.1) is a minor update and referred the meeting participants to the methodology document for additional questions. Governor's Science and Technology Fellow for DEP, John Roper, presented a demonstration via screen share on the updated functions and tools of PennEnviroScreen 1.1.

DEP Recommendation Requests to EJAB

Fernando Treviño provided an update on the recommendation request for voluntary advisors to support long-term improvements to PennEnviroScreen, including community experts. Voluntary advisors will include academia, community-based organizations, state and local government representatives, EJ and health stakeholders, EJAB members, and more.

Discussion

Members asked questions to clarify EJAB's role in the PennEnviroScreen informal group.

Break

Adam called for a break at 10:58 am. Meeting will resume by 11:15.

Election of the Vice Chair

The meeting resumed at 11:15 AM.. Adam called a vote for the vacant Vice Chair position between current members Rashida Lovely and Jackie Omotalade. Statements from both candidates were provided prior to the meeting. There were seven votes in favor of Rashida and two votes in favor of Jackie. Adam abstained from voting in case there was a need for a tie breaker. Adam confirmed Rashida Lovely as the new vice chair.

DEP Recommendation Requests to EJAB (Cont'd.)

Adam Cutler provided an update on the Enhanced Public Participation Effectiveness recommendation, and share that the Board is developing final recommendations currently. Adam shared some ideas that the members are considering for this recommendation. Once the Working Group develops a framework, it would be submitted for approval to the larger Advisory Board.

Public Comments

Nate Eachus provided public comment on Public Participation for the Northpoint and Berwick Data Center Projects. He also noted concerns with the EJAB meeting and how members communicate. Mr. Eachus noted concerns around water usage and emissions, and he also suggested real-time emissions accounting in diesel and methane generation in EJ communities, prohibition of diesel backup generators in EJ communities and requirements of zero emissions alternatives, and mandating full public disclosures of water use, emissions, noise, vibrations and odors in EJ communities.

Dr. Erin Portland, from Schuylkill County, provided public comment on Data Center Project Concerns, and requested an official response from the public comments she submitted, and information on where to find them. Dr. Portland noted several projects of concern including proposed and existing data centers, landfills and biosolids facilities, some of which are in violation. Dr. Portland is an active user of PennEnviroScreen, has participated in the community listening sessions, and provided public comments.

Ashley Bahrt from Luzerne County provided public comments regarding data centers, the need for cumulative impact considerations, and requested EJAB members attend a public meeting and hearing being held on February 17th.

Ann Vinatieri, resident of Luzerne County, provided public comment regarding Data Center Project water usage and disturbance concerns, and she requested EJAB to attend public meetings and

hearings. Ms. Vinatieri highlighted her concerns regarding water and water table disturbance within an EJ Area and requested DEP look into the matter.

Jessica S submitted written comments via email, which were distributed to the EJAB members.

Jessica raised concerns with current regulations surrounding Data Center permitting and about gaps between permitting and community impacts. She also brought up concerns associated with the changes that flow rate and water availability will have on both land and aquatic animal and plant life. She expressed concerns about impacts not only to areas that are within the vicinity of the project, but also to areas that are miles away from an actual project.

Wrap up and Next Steps

The Board reviewed upcoming meeting dates, the next scheduled for May 6, 2026. The joint meeting with the Citizen's Advisory Council scheduled for November 10, 2026. The Board discussed changing meeting times and length of meetings to better fit the needs of the meeting and public transportation.

Adjournment

Chair Cutler adjourned the meeting at 12:27pm.