

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

May 13, 2025

MEMBERS PRESENT in person:

MEMBERS NOT PRESENT:

Adam Cutler, Chair
Jennifer Baka, Ph.D.
Jackie Omotalade
Mia Ray
Curtis Jones

DEP STAFF PRESENT IN PERSON:

Mariana Fletcher
Justin Dula
Dong Yoon Kim
Andrea Fields

MEMBERS PRESENT, Teams

Horace Strand, Ph.D., Vice Chair
Heather Bedi, Ph.D.
Rafiyqa Muhammad
Lisa DePaoli, Ph.D.
Jerome Shabazz
Sophia Lee
Rashida Lovely
Tom Torres
Ramon Johnson
Bobby Hughes

NON-MEMBERS PRESENT:

David Hess
Kara Spade
Trent Machamer
Megan Dennis
Nate Eachus

**DEP STAFF PRESENT via
Teams:**

Fernando Treviño
Emily Green
Elspeth Koehle
Jada La Fontaine
Naimul Islam
Lena Smith

CALL TO ORDER:

Mariana Fletcher, Director of the Office of Environmental Justice, hosted the Environmental Justice Advisory Board (EJAB) meeting. Vice Chair Strand called the meeting to order at 10:02am.

Director Fletcher announced that the session was going to be recorded and provided the appropriate disclaimer. Director Fletcher and Senior Advisor Justin Dula took roll call and agreed that quorum was met.

Director Fletcher noted that the previous minutes would be accepted. Jerome Shabazz motioned to accept the minutes, and Rafiqqa Muhammad seconded the motion.

Vice Chair Strand moved to approve the minutes, and they were accepted.

DEP UPDATES:

Justin Dula rejoined DEP as Senior Advisor for OEJ. Prior to this role, he served as Director of the Office of Community Support (OCS) within the Environmental Protection Agency's OEJ and External Civil Rights (OEJECR).

Amani Reid, Southeast Regional Coordinator, left her role with OEJ to join DEP's Interstate Water Resource Management Division as Coastal Zone Management Act Special Funding Coordinator.

Jada LaFontaine, joins DEP as the Southeast Regional Coordinator, after almost a year working for EPA's Region 3. Jada is also a veteran of the City of Philadelphia and the Overbrook Environmental Education Center.

Ariana Genna, OEJ's Southcentral Regional Coordinator, left DEP last month to join a local community-based organization in Central Pennsylvania.

OEJ 2025 Permitting Statistics:

Director Fletcher reviewed OEJ's first-quarter permitting statistics for 2025. There were 84 permits in Environmental Justice (EJ) areas across Pennsylvania: Southwest (39), Northwest (15), Southcentral (13), Southeast (10), Northeast (5), and Northcentral (2). Among these, six permits triggered Enhanced Public Participation: two in the Northeast, one in Southwest, one in Southcentral and two in the Northwest. Separately, there were five opt-in requests for EJ review, resulting in three permits officially opted into the Enhanced Public Participation process—all from the Southeast region. No opt-in requests were approved in any other region.

Proactive Community Engagement Statistics:

Director Fletcher presented proactive community engagement statistics for the first quarter of 2025. OEJ engaged with 109 community-based organizations and convened 82 meetings with stakeholders and community leaders. In addition, OEJ hosted 12 events, participated in 33 partner events, and delivered 21 public presentations.

2025 Action Plan:

Director Fletcher reviewed the OEJ 2025 Action Plan and listed the three main action areas:

- ACTION AREA I - INTEGRATE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE CONSIDERATIONS INTO DEP DAILY OPERATIONS
- ACTION AREA II - EXPAND OEJ'S PROACTIVE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT APPROACH
- ACTION AREA III - FOSTER INSTITUTIONAL AND EXTERNAL COLLABORATION

Special Note to Former EJAB Members:

Special Deputy Secretary (DS) Fernando Treviño expressed the appreciation Acting Secretary Shirley and DEP have for Dr. Joylette Portlock and Gary Horton as they stepped down from EJAB.

Open to Question and Answer:

Jerome Shabazz asked where EJAB can find the list of action plans and their corresponding priorities. DS Treviño replied it was emailed to all members.

Tom Torres inquired about a public-facing tracker for project timelines. DS Treviño noted the Permits Trackers are on the Public Participation Strategy Page under "Policy Highlight: Trigger Projects & Opt-In Projects."

Sophia Lee asked if a dashboard could be created to make EJAB more interactive. DS Treviño suggested that this would be a good formal recommendation for EJAB to submit to DEP.

DEP RECOMMENDATION REQUESTS:

Director Fletcher discussed prior DEP recommendations to EJAB, which included forming a PennEnviroScreen working group, developing a method to evaluate Enhanced Public Participation effectiveness, and drafting an internal EJAB working process document. Chair Adam Cutler is

leading efforts to form working groups for both PennEnviroScreen and the internal process. Rashida Lovely recommended a planning meeting before quarterly meetings to discuss desired agenda items and outcomes. Jerome Shabazz noted Chair Cutler's interest in having an EJAB member chair a working group and that a list of potential external advisors is being developed. Rafiyqa Muhammad expressed interest in EJAB creating its own agendas and topics and noted a decrease in community input. Vice Chair Strand raised an issue regarding a local crematory permit, but DS Treviño clarified that DEP cannot discuss permitting matters during EJAB meetings. Rafiyqa Muhammad also brought up the Government-to-Government grant; DS Treviño explained the grant had been withdrawn and closed, but DEP is working with individual groups to complete the process.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Director Fletcher read the public participation disclaimer.

Nate Eachus, from Luzerne County, emphasized the importance of including the Department of Health Environmental Health's indicator mapping tool, which aligns closely with DEP's EJ PennEnviroScreen Tool.

WRAP UP AND NEXT STEPS:

Vice Chair Strand stated that EJAB will meet with Chair Cutler to develop more formal recommendations and suggestions for DEP.

Director Fletcher shared her contact information for any questions that require a formal response. Jerome Shabazz recommended setting dates for additional subcommittee and working group meeting within 10 days. Rashida Lovely seconded the motion and agreed to let Chair Cutler take the lead on scheduling.

ADJOURNMENT:

Vice Chair Strand requested a motion to adjourn the meeting. Rafiyqa Muhammad seconded the motion, and all were in favor. Meeting adjourned at 11:25 AM.