

You might ask, “What is environmental justice?” The term was forged from people and communities seeking protection from disproportionate risks and



cummulative impacts of environmental hazards affecting peoples’ quality of life.

Environmental justice means that all people, regardless of race, culture, national origin, or income, are able to enjoy equal environmental protection.

Everyone is entitled to high levels of protection from environmental hazards, and should be able to enjoy the benefits of a healthy and safe environment in which to live, work, play and learn. Historically, groups such as the poor, communities of color, and inner-city inhabitants, have been excluded from the setting of environmental policy.

Without a voice in the decision-making process, these communities may experience low levels of enforcement of environmental regulations and requirements. As a result, these communities may bear a disproportionate impact from one or more environmental hazards. Environmental justice provides a framework to address inequities of environmental protection in all communities.

## Environmental Justice

### FACTS AND BACKGROUND

#### U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY DEFINITION:

*“The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. Fair treatment means that no group of people, including racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic group should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, municipal, and commercial operations or the execution of federal, state, local, and tribal programs and policies.”*

#### ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE MEANS:

- Supporting communities so everyone is able to live healthier lives as well as enjoy the benefits of a clean and safe environment
- Diversifying the decision-making process by calling for involvement of all people and communities
- Encouraging a more equitable distribution of economic benefits
- Empowering communities themselves to take action towards improving their environment
- Increasing awareness, understanding and effective cooperation within and among communities
- Ensuring the right of all people to equal treatment under the laws and regulations of the United States

## Environmental Justice

### PROGRAM GOALS

An Environmental Justice Workplan has been developed that outlines a two-tiered approach to addressing Environmental Justice within the Program. The first tier outlines a long-term planning process that will:

- Develop environmental justice goals and objectives
- Establish an overall environmental justice strategy for the Program to achieve the goals and objectives
- Develop annual plans to implement the strategy

The second tier addresses short-term goals to be addressed while long-term strategies are developed. These goals include:

- Effective strategies for meaningful public participation (including workshops and workgroups)
- Inclusion of environmental justice criteria in all upcoming project solicitation proposals
- Adequate consideration of social and economic impacts in environmental documentation
- Environmental justice training and education for agency and program staff
- Collection and analysis of new demographic information and data
- Adequate staffing and financial resources
- Compliance with all relevant federal and state orders and statutes
- Expertise to help communities build up environmental justice resources

The CALFED Program and its participating agencies are committed to seeking fair treatment of people of all races, cultures, and incomes, such that all segments of the population shall enjoy the benefits of the CALFED Program activities, and none shall bear a disproportionately high or adverse health, environmental, social or economic impact resulting from CALFED programs, policies, or actions. The CALFED Program's Solution Principles relate directly to the principles of environmental justice: reduce conflicts in the system, be equitable, be affordable, be durable, be implementable and have no significant redirected impacts.

The CALFED Program held environmental justice training in cooperation with the US EPA to advance the understanding of environmental justice. Working in cooperation with the Environmental Justice Coalition for Water, CALFED held a series of regional workshops, geographically dispersed across the state, to hold discussions and gain input on environmental justice issues related to Program actions.

In December, 2001, the Bay-Delta Public Advisory Committee convened the Environmental Justice Subcommittee as a formal advisory subcommittee to work to achieve the goal of integration of environmental justice into all CALFED Program elements.

Any public or private party with an interest in environmental justice, or would like information on the Environmental Justice Subcommittee or environmental justice within the CALFED Program, can visit the Program web site at <http://calwater.ca.gov> or contact:

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