



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In California, low-income residents, communities of color, immigrants, and indigenous communities experience a disproportionate burden of environmental pollution and related health problems. These inequitable impacts are caused by living in close proximity to multiple environmental health hazards.¹ Meanwhile, socioeconomic vulnerabilities such as pre-existing health problems, disenfranchisement, poverty, and an inability to afford proper medical care can worsen the negative health impacts of pollution exposure.

In response to these challenges, environmental justice (EJ) groups have pushed state and national agencies to develop more comprehensive approaches for addressing the full range of environmental and socioeconomic burdens that communities face. Through the groundbreaking **California Communities Environmental Health Screening Tool (CalEnviroScreen or CES)** developed by the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA), California has developed a unique tool to target local, state, and regional policies to protect our hardest-hit communities. While much progress still needs to be made, numerous laws, policies, and programs now include explicit commitments or set-asides for these environmentally impacted areas, based on the use of CalEnviroScreen. For examples of how CalEnviroScreen is being used within state and local policy, please see *Table 1, p. 7*.

CalEnviroScreen 3.0 (CES 3.0) is a place-based cumulative impact screening methodology that uses 20 indicators to provide a statewide ranking of California's 8,000 census tracts. In this context, a "**cumulative impact**" assessment examines "multiple chemicals, multiple sources, public health and environmental effects, and characteristics of the population that influence health outcomes."² Areas with high concentrations of these factors have a greater "cumulative impact."³

CalEnviroScreen is an important departure from current environmental policymaking in two ways. First, although communities usually experience pollution from multiple sources, most environmental statutes and regulations address each source from an individual standpoint. CalEnviroScreen breaks free from this single-issue framework by assessing

multiple, combined environmental stressors. Second, CalEnviroScreen considers socioeconomic and health-related vulnerabilities that can aggravate pollution exposure, which are not often included in environmental decision-making. As a result, CES 3.0 provides a scientific assessment that corroborates the lived experience of many Californians. Some communities are exposed to more environmental problems and are more vulnerable to the effects of pollution than others, and these burdens tend to be unfairly distributed along race and class lines.

CES 3.0 provides one clear, accessible, and science-based method for identifying overburdened environmental justice communities or **disadvantaged communities (DACs)** and the particular challenges that they face. It has reshaped what is possible in state and local policymaking. It enables decision-makers to craft and implement policies that target our state's most vulnerable communities, such as programs that direct improvements and investments to under-resourced neighborhoods, and regulations that minimize or avoid harms against already overburdened communities.

Although CalEnviroScreen has received widespread attention for its use in allocation of Greenhouse Gas Reduction Funds, it was developed to help achieve a much broader range of environmental justice goals. It is particularly well suited for strategies that reduce and/or avoid pollution. CalEnviroScreen is readily applicable to land use and zoning decisions, permitting processes in overburdened areas, and regulatory enforcement actions. Decision-makers can utilize its data to reverse uneven environmental enforcement practices, protect sensitive populations, prevent the overconcentration of polluting facilities in vulnerable areas, and direct much-needed capital and public service improvements to under-resourced neighborhoods. The tool is versatile and can also be modified or customized to meet the needs of different geographies, issues, or programs.

In addition, given the nexus between environmental, public health, and socioeconomic issues, CalEnviroScreen is applicable to focus areas that intersect with environmental concerns, such as housing, transportation, and public health. Depending on the public policy, however, other tools may be more appropriate for identifying context-specific burdens and forms of disadvantage. Tools such as the Environmental Justice Screening Method or the California Healthy Places Index can be used in tandem with or instead of CES to inform comprehensive state, regional, and local policies.

To advance the goals of environmental justice and social equity, CEJA recommends the following uses of CalEnviroScreen at the state, regional, and local levels:

- Use CalEnviroScreen to inform the development of environmental laws, policies, and programs, including enforcement actions.
- Integrate CES into land use planning, from General Plans and community plans to siting and permitting decisions.
- Target critical investments and improvements such as accessible affordable housing and infrastructure into underserved and highly impacted areas.
- Use CES to determine how certain programs will meet the needs of disadvantaged communities, provide meaningful and concrete benefits, and avoid producing harms.
- Utilize CalEnviroScreen maps and data to strengthen local grassroots advocacy efforts for EJ.

By adopting CalEnviroScreen, an effective cumulative impact screening tool, California continues to serve as a national leader in environmental policy. CEJA hopes that the state of California will continue to expand its commitment to environmental justice by using CES in innovative ways to address long-standing environmental inequalities. In doing so, we can improve the overall quality of life for communities of color and low-income residents, while creating a healthier California for all.

TABLE 1: CALENVIROSCREEN USES AT THE STATE AND LOCAL LEVELS

STATEWIDE LAWS AND PROGRAMS	
Agency or Department	CalEnviroScreen Policies and Applications
California Air Resources Board (CARB)	<p>SB 535 (De León, 2012) allocates a minimum of 25% of the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF) to benefit disadvantaged communities. CalEPA designated the top 25% highest scoring census tracts in CalEnviroScreen as disadvantaged communities (DACs).</p> <p>AB 1550 (Gomez, 2016) amended SB 535 to require all GGRF investments that benefit DACs to also be located within those communities. The law also requires that an additional 10% of the fund be dedicated to low-income households and communities, of which 5% is reserved for low-income households and communities living within a half-mile of a designated DAC.</p>
California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC)	<p>SB 673 (Lara, 2015) directs the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) to include criteria such as cumulative impact and neighborhood vulnerability when issuing or renewing facility permits. The law provides the DTSC with an opportunity to use tools such as CalEnviroScreen when making decisions on hazardous waste permitting.</p>
California Department of Transportation (CalTrans)	<p>The Active Transportation Program (ATP) aims to enhance public health and advance California’s climate goals by increasing safety and mobility for non-motorized active transportation such as biking and walking. Twenty-five percent of program funds are set aside for ATP projects in “disadvantaged communities” (defined as census tracts within the top 25% of CES scores along with several other options), while an additional 2% is set aside to fund active transportation planning in DACs.</p>
California Energy Commission (CEC)	<p>AB 523 (Reyes, 2017) allocates at least 25% of the Electric Program Investment Charge (EPIC) fund to support technology demonstration and deployment projects located in and benefiting “disadvantaged communities,” and dedicates at least 10% of the fund to activities located in and benefiting “low-income” communities as defined by AB 1550.</p>
California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA)	<p>CalEPA’s Environmental Justice Compliance and Enforcement Working Group has engaged in two cross-media enforcement initiatives that target communities with the greatest burdens in the cities of Los Angeles and Fresno. The selected neighborhoods are located in census tracts that are in the top 5% of CES scores.</p>
California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC)	<p>SB 43 (Wolk, 2013), the Green Tariff Shared Renewables program, enables utility customers to meet their energy generation needs through offsite generation of renewable energy projects. The program requires 100 MW of renewable energy projects to be sited in the top 20% of CES scores based on each investor-owned utility (IOU) service territory.</p> <p>AB 693 (Eggman, 2015) allocates \$100 million per year for 10 years to fund solar installations on multifamily affordable housing. To qualify, a multifamily affordable housing property must be: (1) located in a DAC as defined by SB 535 using the most recent version of CES; or (2) have at least 80% of tenants with incomes at or below 60% of area median income (AMI).</p>
California Strategic Growth Council (SGC)	<p>The Transformative Climate Communities (TCC) program, created by AB 2722 (Burke, 2016), is a GGRF-funded program that supports innovative, comprehensive, and community-led plans that reduce pollution and achieve multiple co-benefits at the neighborhood level. TCC requires that at least 51% of a proposed plan’s geographic area overlaps with census tracts in the top 5% highest CES 3.0 scores. The remaining 49% or less of the project’s geographic area must overlap with either a disadvantaged community or a low-income community as defined by AB 1550.</p>

<p>Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR)</p>	<p>SB 1000 (Leyva, 2016) requires cities and counties with disadvantaged communities to incorporate environmental justice goals, policies, and objectives into their General Plan as a standalone EJ element or integrated throughout. Defines a "disadvantaged community" as: (1) a census tract in the top 25% of CalEnviroScreen scores; or (2) a "low-income area that is disproportionately affected by environmental pollution and other hazards."</p>
<p>LOCAL LEVEL PLANS</p>	
<p>Agency or Department</p>	<p>CalEnviroScreen Policies and Applications</p>
<p>City of Los Angeles</p>	<p>Mobility Plan 2035 is a city of Los Angeles General Plan element that will employ CalEnviroScreen data and other data sets to prioritize transportation decisions that promote safety, equity, environmental justice, public health, social and/or economic benefits, and language and physical access.</p>
<p>City of San Diego</p>	<p>The city of San Diego's Climate Action Plan (CAP) uses CalEnviroScreen to identify the most impacted communities to target for mitigation and investments from the city's Capital Improvement Program. The Climate Action Plan defines "underserved communities" as those in the top 30% of CES scores that may be ranked locally, regionally, or statewide.</p>