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**Environmental Justice Assessment Shows California State Agencies  
Need Greater Accountability to Residents**  
*EJ Advocates Assess Nine Agencies and Highlight Four Agencies to Watch*

**Sacramento, CA | June 20, 2019** — Today, the [California Environmental Justice Alliance](#) (CEJA) released its third annual [Environmental Justice Agency Assessment](#) for 2018, revealing that many state agencies are not successfully integrating environmental justice into their decision-making and continually fail to prioritize long-standing health and quality of life needs of constituents. The new report is the only one in the nation to assess how well state regulatory agencies engage, respond, and implement environmental policies and programs in low-income communities and communities of color. [Download the full report here.](#)

“Our state regulatory agencies wield vast power in implementing environmental policies and shaping which stakeholders benefit most from the accompanying state investments. Without strong leadership from our state agencies, the groundbreaking environmental justice policies communities have tirelessly advocated for will not lead to the meaningful reduction of pollution and improved environmental health. We need our state officials to be resolute in fulfilling mandates to protect the public’s health and safety in executing regulatory duties, and to double-down on commitments to do so justly and equitably.”

— **Gladys Limón, Executive Director, California Environmental Justice Alliance**

Using eight principles of environmental justice, the report assesses how well the agencies’ actions conformed with each of the principles. These assessments are made in the spirit of charting a course to improving agency actions, with the ultimate goal of improving conditions that negatively impact our communities, particularly those disproportionately impacted by environmental harms and least enjoy environmental benefits and protections. This assessment will guide both agencies and advocates on areas of improvement for stronger partnerships.

Of the nine state agencies assessed in the report, grades range from A- to F on their performance in implementing or failing environmental policies and programs that impact low-income communities and communities of color. While some agencies demonstrate meaningful community engagement, evident by integration of community expertise into their policy development and implementation, others leave plenty of room for improvement. By engaging with local residents and using that input to shape our state policy, California regulatory agencies can ensure that environmental burdens are reduced and benefits are shared.

CEJA members and partners from across the state responded to the report, highlighting key challenges at several agencies assessed and recommendations for improvement:

“The Division of Oil, Gas, and Geothermal Resources (DOGGR) is an agency that has for too long only focused on supporting the oil and gas industry in extracting California’s fossil fuels at the expense of the health of low-income communities of color. DOGGR can improve by shifting its personnel and practices to center public health and the environment. This shift must include: hiring public health experts, community engagement staff, and interagency collaboration with public health agencies to ensure rigorous health risk assessment of the proximity and density of oil and gas operations near sensitive receptors before granting permits. However, we are encouraged by DOGGR taking steps to work with CRPE on a citizen science project meant to engage communities and build trust, and we look forward to working more closely with DOGGR in the near future.”

— **Alvaro Casanova, Senior Policy Advocate, Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment**

“Last year, the California Air Resources Board demonstrated that it can take bold steps to significantly curb pollution by passing the Innovative Clean Transit rule, which set a statewide goal for public transit agencies to transition to zero emission bus fleets by 2040. However, it’s imperative that they continue to prioritize community health by addressing the substandard air across the state that poses an extreme threat for thousands living with asthma and other respiratory issues. It’s with great urgency for CARB to exercise robust authority over air districts on pollution reduction measures, such as the Community Air Protection Program (AB 617), and be staunch on the regulatory front in supporting the most ambitious timelines and standards for emission reduction measures.”

— **Andrea Vidaurre, Policy Analyst, Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice**

“Efforts to center our energy future around equity are really starting to show results at the California Public Utilities Commission, with tangible progress in considering communities of color and low-income communities on topics ranging from planning for additional clean resources and retiring polluting power plants to requiring utilities to include adaptation in how they think about the future of energy.”

— **Shana Lazerow, Legal Director, Communities for a Better Environment**

“Throughout the Transformative Climate Communities process in Fresno, the Strategic Growth Council has and continues to conduct itself as one would hope a public agency would. Staff were respectful of residents, listened to their concerns and were very responsive. Many staff even built their own relationships with community members and communicated regularly with each other. Unfortunately, we often see governmental bodies not treat the people they serve with the respect they deserve, but it was refreshing to see how well the Strategic Growth Council interacted with residents.”

— **Grecia Elenes, Senior Policy Advocate, Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability**

CEJA’s full 2018 Environmental Justice Agency Assessment is available at: [bit.ly/EJAA2018](https://bit.ly/EJAA2018)

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**California Environmental Justice Alliance** is a statewide, community-led alliance that works to achieve environmental justice by advancing policy solutions. We unite the powerful local organizing of our members in the communities most impacted by environmental hazards – low-income communities and communities of color – to create comprehensive opportunities for change at a statewide level. We build the power of communities across California to create policies that will alleviate poverty and pollution. Together, we are growing the statewide movement for environmental health and social justice.

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