



CALIFORNIA
ENVIRONMENTAL
JUSTICE ALLIANCE

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE 2019

AGENCY ASSESSMENT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



CEJA is proud to release our fourth annual *Environmental Justice (EJ) Agency Assessment* — the only report in the nation that examines how state agencies perform on environmental policies that impact low-income communities and communities of color.

For 2019 we assessed eight state agencies and highlighted four “agencies to watch,” according to our members’ eight EJ Principles (see reverse). We selected these 12 agencies because our members and allies deeply engaged in their proceedings.

While our 2019 *EJ Agency Assessment* shows strong progress among most agencies, there

is still much room for improvement. Agencies collectively scored a “C” average, reflecting mediocre performance and inexcusable levels of pollution. However, five out of seven agencies improved their scores from 2018, and we are optimistic to be moving in a better direction under the Newsom administration. Continued progress is even more essential during the coronavirus pandemic, since communities most impacted by pollution are also most impacted by the virus.

We hope this assessment serves as a resource to hold our state agencies accountable to the people they serve, and to provide tangible ways to make their work more equitable.

Name	2018 Assessment Grade	2019 Assessment Grade
California Air Resources Board	C-	D
California Coastal Commission	B-	B
California Department of Food and Agriculture	Not Assessed	D-
California Department of Pesticide Regulation	D	C
California Department of Toxic Substances Control	D	C-
California Geologic Energy Management Division	F	C
California State Water Resources Control Board	B	B+
California Strategic Growth Council	A-	A-
California Department of Water Resources	To Watch	To Watch
California Energy Commission	To Watch	To Watch
California Natural Resources Agency	Not Assessed	To Watch
California Public Utilities Commission	B+	To Watch

Green = Grade improved in 2019

Red = Grade worsened in 2019

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE PRINCIPLES

CEJA and our members developed the following principles to assess whether agencies are effectively integrating environmental justice into their policy implementation and regulatory proceedings.

- 1. Prioritize and value prevention, human health, and improved quality of life:** Human health and well-being must be given full weight in decisions, and not overlooked in favor of business interest or “cost-effectiveness.”
- 2. Do no harm:** Decisions must not do further harm to environmental justice communities.
- 3. Prioritize environmental justice communities:** Decisions must confront the historic legacy and ongoing disproportionate siting of polluting sources in environmental justice communities, as well as the trend of disinvestment in those neighborhoods. Programs and investments should prioritize environmental justice communities.
- 4. Meaningful community engagement:** Decisions must be informed by residents of environmental justice communities, which means decision makers should be proactive and culturally relevant in soliciting input and ideas on actions to improve health, responsive to community concerns, and transparent in their work to ensure continued engagement and accountability.
- 5. Be proactive:** Decision makers should not wait for communities to approach them with solutions, but proactively reach out to impacted community groups for ideas and feedback.
- 6. Take an intersectional approach:** Environmental justice communities are systematically disinvested in economically and impacted by patriarchy, racism, and state violence. To be more inclusive, we must partner to advance intersectional solutions that creatively address the multiple crises Californians are facing.
- 7. Be responsive:** Decision makers have a responsibility to be responsive and accountable to community concerns when addressed. Offices should make follow-up and continued discussion on issues a priority, and should keep working on an issue until it is fully resolved.
- 8. Respect community expertise:** Environmental justice communities are experts in what is happening in their communities, and know the solutions that they want to see. Too often, however, community voices are ignored or invalidated, which prevents or delays effective actions to address harms. Decision makers should turn to community leaders for input, and trust what they tell them as truthful and valid data to be used to help inform more equitable policy.



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About California Environmental Justice Alliance (CEJA)

The 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 pollution and poverty. Together, we are growing the statewide movement for environmental health and social justice.

Contact Information

1820 Jefferson St.
Oakland, CA 94612
ceja@caleja.org
www.caleja.org

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