

**Public Meeting of the Vermont Interagency Environmental Justice (EJ) Committee
(IAC)
Virtual Meeting Minutes
June 24, 2025**

Note to reader: These draft minutes were compiled by staff from the Agency of Natural Resources. If you would like to see any changes to these draft minutes, please reach out to anr.ejcoordinator@vermont.gov

Meeting Information:

Date: June 24, 2025

Meeting Time: 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM EST

Attendees:

Interagency Committee: Karla Raimundi, Collin Smythe, Bob Donohue, Abbey Willard, Gabbie Wray, Elizabeth Schilling, Claire McIlvennie, Amy Redman, Janet Hurley, Xusana Davis

State of Vermont: Juliet Birch, Kim Barrett, Marcella Dent, Grace Vinson, Jenny Ronis

1:00 PM

Welcome & Introductions

- Consent to [Community Agreements](#)
 - Agreements read and consent obtained. No comments.
- Approve [March 7, 2025 Meeting Minutes](#)
 - Minutes approved. No comments.
- Approve [June 24, 2025 Meeting Agenda](#)
 - Agenda approved. No comments.

Icebreaker

1:15 PM

Vermont Environmental Justice Law Updates

- Kim B.: Provides update on the Environmental Benefits Spending Guidance (EBSG):
 - EBSG public comment period: July 1 – August 11, 2025
 - Comments can be submitted via online form OR
 - Public comment meetings:
 - Virtual: July 11, @ 12 PM

- In person: July 14, @ 4:30 PM at the Brooks Memorial Library, Brattleboro
 - In person: July 16, @ 12 PM at the Vermont History Museum, Montpelier
- Kim B.: Asks that IAC members engage in targeted outreach to bring in commenters for the public comment period. CREJU could use support in processing comments as they are received during the public comment period
- Kim B.: Provides update on the Environmental Justice Mapping Tool GIS Contractor Selection:
 - Selection committee has been formed: CREJU, 1 IAC member, 2 AC members, 2 people from the Agency of Digital Services, and 1 staff member from the Climate Action Office
- Kim B.: Provides update on the Community Engagement Request for Proposal Process: RFP is in a good place, looking for opportunities to consult with the AC
- Claire M.: Is the Community Engagement RFP just for the Mapping Tool?
- Kim B.: Yes, the Community Engagement RFP will procure a contractor to support the development of the mapping tool by helping ensure data is accurate and data gaps are filled by bringing community into the process
- Janet H.: What is the time frame on the Community Engagement RFP?
- Kim B.: Timeframe is not set in stone but ideally the RFP will be released around end of July or early August depending on AC consultation
- Janet H.: How long will this RFP be open?
- Kim B.: We have received guidance to have the RFP open for longer than the typical 30 days in an effort to make sure a wider variety of firms have an opportunity to submit proposals
- Karla R.: Notes that the first review of the GIS bids is blind in an effort to respond to AC concerns. Identifying information has been redacted from the proposals. Notes that the effort to consult the AC on the Community Engagement RFP must also ensure that the procurement process remains fair and impartial, and so CREJU is working with the legal team to find ways to share the RFP with the AC in ways that maintain the fairness and impartiality of the process

1:40 PM

Civil Rights (CR) and Environmental Justice (EJ) Complaint Summary Reports

- Juliet B.: Summarizes the deliverable: The CR and EJ Complaint Summary Report is intended to summarize any complaints received under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and any complaints received relating to environmental justice, as well as how those complaints were addressed
- Juliet B.: Summarizes timeline:

- Covered agencies submitted CR and EJ Complaint Summary Reports on March 15, 2025
- Advisory Council submitted response on May 15, 2025 – this response came only from Rich Holschuh and Mariana Sears
- IAC has until August 15, 2025 to provide a response to the AC
- Acknowledging that strategizing on implementing the AC's recommendations will need more time and discussion in the future
- Janet H.: What constitutes as an EJ complaint is a question that should be discussed in a public meeting. Human-centered approach comment from Rich may be hard to adequately address due to obligations set by the legislature
- Amy R.: Why did only two AC members come together to create this response? Noting that the 2025 AC response letter doesn't have much of a change or a lot of substance to respond to.
- Juliet B.: In March, the AC met and part of the agenda was originally to discuss the development of the 2025 AC response, but other topics caught their interest and we did not get a chance to discuss it during that meeting. To ensure they still had time to organize around this, CREJU hosted two optional office hours, which only Mariana Sears and Rich Holschuh attended, and they decided to create a response together
- Kim B.: AC was offered the opportunity to participate if they had the time and interest. IAC members are welcome to collaborate with individual AC members if they are interested in connecting more
- Karla R.: Would be helpful to get feedback from the AC on what an environmental justice complaint entails. Once we have this information, covered agencies can stand up structures to support members of the public in the environmental justice complaint process. Civil rights complaints are clearly defined by the federal government, environmental justice complaints are not. This feedback is needed from the AC.
- Elizabeth S.: Did other agencies attempt to define an EJ complaint in their report?
- Jenny R.: LURB came up with a policy on how to identify potential EJ complaints
- Abbey W.: Agency of Agriculture did not attempt to define an EJ complaint. Are we still pursuing creating a unified complaint intake system according to the AC's recommendation? If so, we need to make a plan to implement this. Without implementation starting, Agency of Agriculture may not make progress between this and next year. Compiling our approaches into one uniform approach could be a good place to start.
- Janet H.: Supports the idea that we should collaborate on this during another public meeting. Notes that creating a unified intake system may require additional funding.

- Karla R.: ANR has tried to answer the question internally about what constitutes as an EJ complaint utilizing the internal EJ Network. ANR still needs more information from the AC to develop a robust process around this.
- Claire M.: Sounds like a workplan is needed in order to address this. Without a timeline/deadline, this project may not advance. We cannot move forward with this in silos.
- Jenny R.: How are other agencies organized to take in complaints?
- Claire M.: Take in complaints about utility-related matter that has a lot of structure for this
- Abbey W.: Agency of Agriculture created an environmental justice complaint form but got no EJ complaints. Need to ensure that people know what an EJ complaint is and where to direct it.
- Amy R.: VDH policy team is hesitant to do anything about taking EJ complaints on as an individual agency without regulatory power. VDH is interested in having a unified intake process. Workplan is a good idea – reviewing existing intake forms could be a good place to start. State of Colorado could be a good example.
- Karla R.: Agrees that a unified intake process would need financial and strategic support from the central administration
- Juliet B.: Workplan by August 15 deadline would require another public meeting. Could be helpful to have a joint meeting to explore the world of possibilities for the unified intake process, comparing what is feasible to covered agencies with what is desired/needed by AC
- Karla R.: August 15 for a workplan is not possible, but a longer term workplan is possible.
- Janet H.: Maybe we can set the next reporting deadline as a target goal for having established a workplan by then – we could get the AC's response to the workplan in addition to the reports
- Claire M.: We need to commit to a date, set a goal
- Abbey W.: AC gives feedback based on what is needed, and their role is to push us to do more. We should not delay progress because we want to have a conversation with the AC before we have anything for them to react to/anything to show for ourselves after having received their response.
- Juliet B.: Sounds like we're having 2 conversations: 1) long-term how are we going to stand up structures to implement improvements according to AC recommendations 2) short-term what are we going to say in the August 15 response. Redirect attention to the August 15 response
- Karla R.: ANR has been making progress on complaint intake. Want to consult AC first in order to avoid making assumptions, want to center AC in the

development as opposed to creating something presumptive for the AC to react to. We should start with consulting the AC and then move forward

- Claire M.: Agencies should not act individually as silos without working together to establish common understandings or definitions. Also, feels limited in the ability to connect with AC members outside of public meetings.
- Juliet B.: Public meeting cap of 12 meetings per year creates a big limitation for collaboration

Public Comment

- No comments.

Break

2:35 PM

Civil Rights (CR) and Environmental Justice (EJ) Complaint Summary Reports (continued)

- Juliet B.: How does the IAC want to organize around creating a response by the August 15 deadline? In the past, we have formed small working groups that meet outside of meetings.
- Elizabeth S.: We should recommit to our commitments from last year, commit to working on a definition of EJ complaints, and a commitment to how the covered agencies will work collectively on implementing AC recommendations. Would be willing to support drafting a letter
- Karla R.: We should highlight specific actions we'll take: Assessment of agency actions (intake mechanisms, how each agency approaches complaints), determine a uniform approach according to assessment, consultation with the AC, meeting dedicated just to this topic. Karla happy to develop workplan and collaborate with Elizabeth on development of a letter response.
- Karla R.: Directed to Xusana, is there a way to strategize around getting central administration support for this initiative?
- Xusana D.: An impact assessment would help make a compelling financial case for why this is necessary. Will the AC members be satisfied with this as a good faith demonstration that we're working on this?
- Janet H.: Important to reiterate in the response letter that we agree with the AC's recommendations

2:55 PM

Introduction to Community Engagement Plan (CEP) Deliverable

- Kim B.: Introduces Community Engagement Plan deliverable:

- What is Community Engagement
 - Opportunities to connect and interface with community members – it is important to have diverse perspectives present in the policy and programming process to make our work as meaningful and impactful as they can be.
 - Meaningful engagement: ensures that community members have opportunities to inform and participate in decision-making.
- Why is community engagement important for covered agencies to do?
 - Community engagement is essential to ensuring that our work aligns with the needs of the public we serve. Community engagement promotes effective and efficient outcomes.
 - There are two ways that community engagement is legally required for covered agencies:
 - Civil Rights – Civil rights requirements require that members of the public can meaningfully engage with and access all our programs, benefits, and services. Community engagement invites communities to interface with our work directly
 - Civil rights requirements come from the federal government. As recipients of federal financial assistance, covered agencies must comply
 - Environmental Justice – The principles of environmental justice affirm the right to self-determination for all peoples. One of the ways we implement EJ in State of VT is through robust community engagement to allow members of the public to meaningfully participate in decision-making
 - The Vermont Environmental Justice Law (Act 154 of 2022) sets a state-level mandate to implement environmental justice in VT
- Juliet B.: Summarizes Community Engagement Plan statutory requirements:
 - Describe how the covered agency will engage with EJFPs as it evaluates new and existing activities and programs
 - Describe how the covered agency plans to provide meaningful participation in compliance with Title VI
 - Be informed by the Core Principles of Community Engagement
 - Be developed in consultation with the Advisory Council
 - Statutory deadline: July 1, 2027
- Juliet B.: Quick review of the Core Principles of Community Engagement. Available on the EJ Public Resource Library

- Juliet B.: Want to share the goals of the ANR CEP to help spur strategy and synergy across covered agencies. Goals of the ANR CEP:
 - To capture existing practices across the agency
 - To enhance technical support for staff who do community engagement
 - To ensure uniformity and compliance across the agency
- Kim B.: When done right, community engagement:
 - Empowers community members to engage in decisions that impact their quality of life
 - Creates new relationships and builds trust between communities and government
 - Identifies gaps in our services and addresses unmet needs
 - Improves the quality and level of satisfaction with our work
- Kim B.: Poses discussion questions:
 - What does community engagement mean in the context of your agency's work?
 - In what ways could your agency improve its community engagement practices?
 - What are some questions that your agency's CEP could answer?
- Karla R.: ANR had a lot of internal conversations to quell anxieties across staff around what this work will entail. Emphasizing that this work is about optimizing the quality of the work.
- Janet H.: LURB is in a period of substantial change, implementing a new framework for the jurisdiction of Act 250 – public input is heavily involved in this process. The Community Engagement Plan for LURB will need to address this, and reflect the new orientation of the LURB as more public facing than it previously was
- Abbey W.: There is a State of Vermont Community Engagement Community of Practice.
- Juliet B.: Community Engagement Community of Practice has been extremely helpful and may have some great resources we could draw on to support the development of our CEPs.

Public Comment

- No comments.

Break

3:15 PM

Covered Agency Community Engagement Plan Strategizing

- Kim B.: Introduces unfacilitated discussion questions:

- What successes are you having in this work?
- What obstacles are you facing? Are there shared obstacles between covered agencies?
- What outstanding questions do you have about this work?
- How will covered agencies engage with each other on this deliverable?
- Janet H.: LURB organized a meeting with PUC and PSD to discuss this deliverable because they are similarly situated as regulatory and implementing permits
- Abbey W.: How to get leadership engaged with this work? Is there an opportunity to get shared learning across leadership at the cabinet level? Trying to mitigate pushback from leadership around certain community engagement best practices
- Kim B.: How do you bridge that gap?
- Karla R.: Is there an opportunity to identify minimum standards for certain types of engagement across the board? Interested in exploring this model where certain areas are identified and then each agency expands on those areas in a way that is unique to them
- Elizabeth S.: Interested in creating a framework for each agency to work with
- Xusana D.: Doing public engagement implicitly obligates agencies to act on that engagement, and agencies are often hesitant to do that. Centralized playbook for how to do engagement could be helpful – menu of options approach. Important to cover things like safety. Lack of interest from government to set a fund aside to do community engagement
- Juliet B.: DEC Connecting People to Power Report. Notes important findings: 1) don't come to communities with things government has already decided on 2) Language Access is key
- Karla R.: Likes this idea of having a shared framework. Can free up capacity.
- Claire M.: Notes that the VDH Public Involvement Plan could be a helpful resource alongside the Core Principles of Community Engagement and the DEC Connecting People to Power report
- Marcella D.: AOT developed a Public Involvement Guide in 2017 and is currently being updated. Wants to note that the "template" or shared framework should be a tool to help instead of a requirement for covered agencies in order to allow agencies like AOT or VDH that already have plans to continue utilizing the work they have.
- Janet H.: DEC pilot recommends that agencies develop a Public Involvement Plan for all public involvement activities. Is this something we should aim for?
- Juliet B.: Big takeaways from the report are the preferred methods of community engagement and preferred environments for engagement. Not sure about the feasibility of Public Involvement Plans (PIP).

- Karla R.: Agencies should share tools and tactics for community engagement and language access. ANR has a Language Access Plan Implementation Procedure and a Language Access Card to support members of the public who speak languages other than English. Regarding PIP, there may not be capacity to develop a PIP for every engagement effort, but ANR has considered tiering engagement and utilizing PIP for more involved, more risky, or more complex engagements. PIP recommendation comes from EPA.
- Kim B.: Xusana, do you have any thoughts on ways you and ORE can support this group throughout this process?
- Xusana D.: Legislative advocacy or fiscal advocacy. ORE considered making community engagement guidance, but didn't pursue it. It's clear that there are a lot of great resources already being shared from Vermont. ORE also has vital document funds available to support language access across the state.
- Karla R.: Creating a forum for leadership from the agencies to discuss community engagement would be beneficial

3:55 PM

Next Steps

- Juliet B.: Identified next steps 1) each IAC member set an intention to get organized internally around the CEP deliverable 2) Karla and Elizabeth will work to develop a CR and EJ Complaint Summary Report response according to today's conversation 3) support with targeted outreach for the EBSG
- Kim B.: There will also be a need for more collaboration between agencies as we are working towards finalizing the reporting process in the EBSG

4:00 PM

Close Out