Public Meeting of the Vermont Environmental Justice (EJ) Advisory Council (AC)
Virtual Meeting Minutes
September 26, 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

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Meeting Information:
Date: September 26, 2025
Meeting Time: 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM EST

Attendees:

Advisory Council (AC): Mariana Sears, Trey Martin, Rich Holschuh, Matt Lawless, Sean Moran, Xusana Davis, Victor Davila, Jennifer Byrne

State of Vermont: Juliet Birch, Kim Barrett, Karla Raimundi, Charles Martin

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11:00 AM

Welcome & Re-introductions

- Welcome new AC members
    - Re-visit and approve Community Agreements

11:15 AM

Approvals + Community Agreements Discussion

- Approve August 1st, 2025 Meeting Minutes
    - Minutes approved. No comments.
- Approve September 26th, 2025 Draft Agenda
    - Minutes approved. No comments.
- Juliet B.: Asks AC if they would like to discuss the community agreements to determine if they still resonate with all members.
- Jennifer B.: Offers a new process proposal to the council. Does not think reading the agreements is helpful or a good use of time
- Trey M.: Likes the agreements, wants to continue centering them, would consider having the group read it to themselves for each meeting as opposed to reading them out loud
- Mariana S.: The council members are generally very familiar with these agreements. Good to have accessible, but no need to read them each time

- Rich H.: Agreements are fine, not necessary to read during every meeting
- Sean M.: Agreements clearly center respect. We should just be respectful, listen to each other, not dominate the space.
- Victor D.: When we know members of the public are on the call, these agreements would be important to read aloud to ensure everyone is on the same page with expectations for the meeting
- Xusana D.: Unnecessary to read every meeting. Probably helpful to have reminders, perhaps quarterly
- Juliet B.: AC could continue to discuss this during unfacilitated time

11:25 AM

Environmental Benefits Spending Guidance (EBSG) Updates

- Kim B.: Provides detailed updates regarding the EBSG:
- Kim B.: Groups involved:
    - Civil Rights and Environmental Justice Unit, AC + VT EJ Interagency Committee (IAC), EBSG TG, ANR staff, Business office staff, CA staff
    - The EBSG an area of the law where the AC + IAC contributed through a phased consultation process spread across the last couple of years. Today's meeting will be another opportunity to provide thoughts and suggestions. We continue to welcome feedback at any time.
- Kim B.: Meetings**:**
    - AC and IAC consultation at several public meetings in 2024 + 2025; EBSG Task Group (TG) meetings. The EBSG TG developed and led activities at some of these public meetings.
- Kim B.: Materials:
    - There were many materials produced over the last two years in support of releasing the EBSG.
    - "The Guide to the Guide" provided covered agencies with key questions to consider as an early framework for the draft EBSG.
    - EBSG TG meeting notes on "The Guide to the Guide" were synthesized and analyzed.
    - CREJU's synthesis was used by the next iteration of the EBSG TG to form early draft outlines of the EBSG. Trey Martin, Claire McIlvennie, Claire Madden and Bob Donohue were integral to the development of these outlines.
    - CREJU developed Technical Assistance materials with assistance from the EBSG TG to support the IAC's EBSG Informational Sessions. These materials were reviewed by the AC.

    - CREJU developed public-facing EBSG materials for the EBSG Public Comment Period with support from the EBSG TG. These outreach materials were reviewed by the AC.
    - CREJU's EBSG Public Comment Period Presentation was developed to share with the public during the public comment period. This presentation was revised after extensive AC feedback in a public meeting.
    - There were 2 EBSG drafts before the release the Pub. Comm. Period that were reviewed by the AC and the IAC and 1 final draft that included input from the public comment period before the official release on 9/15/2025.
- Kim B.: Public Comment Period:
    - Ran from July 1 – August 11; Oral comments were collected at two hybrid meetings, a Microsoft form and by email.
- Kim B.: Responsiveness Summary:
    - This summary is underway and development started before the comment period ended.
    - Revisions to the EBSG based on public feedback during the public comment period were:
        - Clarifying that the EBSG is not a living document
        - Clarifying that the "Applied Examples" list is not exhaustive
        - Clarifying that the main purpose of the "Important Concepts" section is to provide the covered agencies with more context as they implement the EBSG. This was requested by the IAC in several technical assistance meetings.
        - Clarifying Step 6
- Kim B.: IAC Technical Assistance:
    - CREJU will be providing technical assistance in the coming months for the IAC and staff across the covered agencies to support the development of their Baseline Spending Reports.

11:35 AM

Public Comment

- No comments.

11:45 AM

Applying the EBSG

- Kim B.: What is the EBSG, and what does it do?
    - Guides agencies through creating the Baseline Spending Reports on February 15, 2026

    - Evaluates past spending to inform future investments in environmental benefits
    - Emphasizes discretionary funds
    - Is flexible to allow agencies to tailor their approaches to meet their needs
- Kim B.: What doesn't the EBSG do?
    - Does not decide where money goes
    - Does not direct how dollars are spent
    - Does not override agency budget processes
    - Does not provide exhaustive information
    - Does not stand alone as a deliverable
- Kim B.: What does the reporting process involve?
    - Step 0: Building capacity
    - Step 1: Environmental benefits assessment
    - Step 2: Initiative assessment
    - Step 3: Investment assessment
    - Step 4: Identifying investments to report on
    - Step 5: Data gathering
    - Step 6: Describing and quantifying environmental benefits
    - Step 7: Reporting
- Kim B.: What do covered agencies need to do to be successful?
    - Intra-agency collaboration
    - Identify initiatives and environmental benefits using program staff
    - Find and categorize data using financial and business office staff
    - Address challenges in finding geographic data through collaborative processes
    - Taking the data and putting it into a public-facing report
- Mariana S.: Overwhelmed by what the outcome of these reports could look like, making the outcome more plain language would be a good goal
- Juliet B.: The intended audience for the guidance is the covered agencies. However, the report can be developed in a way that both helps inform investments for the covered agencies and makes the report digestible for the public.
- Karla R.: We would like the AC to help us figure out the best ways to make the reports understandable, relatable, and digestible. Outlines the steps in the reporting process.
- Victor D.: What are the reports intended to achieve?
- Jennifer B.: Can help with internal analysis of spending for covered agencies, and can inform the EJ Mapping Tool
- Juliet B.: Reports are meant to be self reflective for agencies. The public could use these reports for awareness and advocacy

- Karla R.: The baseline spending reports are not necessarily intended to be used in the Mapping Tool under the law. The reports pertain to environmental benefits and the Mapping Tool pertains to environmental burdens. The contents of the report can be captured as a layer in the tool.
- Mariana S.: Simpler language is needed and more examples
- Juliet B.: Environmental benefits definition has list of examples, guidance asks agencies to include a written rationale component where they describe their decisions and findings in their reports. These are ways these things could be made more tangible for the public.
- Sean M.: Mobile home communities are concerned about stormwater runoff and treatment requirements. Is this part of the point of this council and these deliverables?
- Karla R.: We take the concerns you share and center them in the design of technical assistance and implementation of deliverables under the law.

12:20 PM

Break

12:30 PM

IAC Meeting Recap + Brainstorm

- Victor D.: Can you summarize the utility of the report for the public? What are we being asked to weigh in on?
- Kim B.: The baseline spending reports are only named in the law as being used by covered agencies to analyze spending, but we believe the reports should be accessible and readable. We are looking for AC to weigh in on how best to make these reports more accessible and usable
- Juliet B.: September 17th, 2025 IAC Meeting Takeaways:
    - Covered agencies made progress
    - They've formalized teams and working groups
    - Some agencies have defined processes and approaches
    - Some agencies have focused on identifying benefits and investments
    - Some agencies are problem-solving around capacity constraints
- Juliet B.: Questions for AC to consider:
    - What are potential ways the covered agencies can best support the public in interpreting the contents of the Baseline Spending Reports?
    - How can covered agencies best receive and respond to feedback from the public after the release of their reports?
- Jennifer B.: Shares DEC focus group report from 2021. Would be interested in revisiting the IAC/AC buddy system conversation

- Juliet B.: When we tried to pair AC and IAC members last year, there was not a lot of response to the survey, so we would need more responsiveness to get the buddy system up and running.
- Mariana S.: Would be interested in the buddy system

12:45 PM

Unfacilitated AC Time

- Victor D.: Would like to use this time to go through Jennifer's proposal for process
- Jennifer B.: Perhaps first go around and everyone shares a burning question or something they'd like to address with the AC
- Trey M.: How can the AC be the conduits for the implementation and interpretation of the law? AC as the conduit between the covered agencies and the public
- Rich H.: Are we looking at Jennifer's proposal?
- Victor D.: Proposal would give us a structure to communicate through
- Rich H.: In favor of reviewing the process proposal, could be helpful and in the spirit of the AC being functioning as advisory
- Matt L.: What was the history of this group/the impetus for this process proposal?
- Mariana S.: In the past, the AC has been feeling lost because the processes under the law are so complex. The law is, in part, about changing these complex processes. Having a process that makes the AC feel more structured and involved
- Jennifer B.: Would ANR be able to track down consensus agreements from past AC meetings? What are the requirements around meetings?
- Juliet B.: Looking for consensus documents. 12 meetings per year, four required to be joint, 6 people need to be present for quorum
- Jennifer B.: Walking through proposal, leadership and facilitation structure:
    - Rotating chair model
    - Work w/ ANR staff to finalize the agenda
    - Facilitate meeting using circle process
- Trey M.: In other contexts, rotating chair has been successful
- Mariana S.: Being in the planning process could help with making the meeting's contents proactively more accessible.
- Matt L.: Has more experience with nominated chairs. Limiting chair opportunities to once a year could limit opportunity to practice facilitation and getting used to the format
- Victor D.: At SlingShot, they use rotating facilitators. Not everyone gets a turn, but rather whoever volunteers first. No one can volunteer more than two times

consecutively, to ensure there is not domination of the space or overburdening with facilitation responsibilities

- Sean M.: Does not feel comfortable facilitating for this group
- Jennifer B.: Shares opening and closing round suggestions, agenda setting and review. Not sure how detailed the proposal needs to be, but has a section regarding speaker protocol. Would be interested in getting a catalogue from ANR on what formal actions have been logged by the AC. Public comment and meeting documentation protocol
- Sean M.: Public comment should be uninterrupted by the council. Concerned about content-based restrictions
- Xusana D.: Doesn't want content-based restrictions, but want to discuss restrictions on what language is considered respectful
- Matt L.: A variety of position options in tests for consensus can make reporting difficult
- Mariana S.: Conversation continues if there is disagreement

1:30 PM

VT EJ Law Updates + Next Steps

- Juliet B.: Quick logistical reflections: Because of meeting cap it may not shake out that all AC members get one opportunity to chair per year. Also, ANR would perhaps like more time to collaborate on the agenda in advance of a public meeting.
- Karla R.: Questions regarding minutes and recordkeeping and the role of the rotating chair, agenda-setting needs to happen further in advance than the proposal allows. How to manage and triage public input? ANR's technical assistance materials and order for topics is developed through regular collaboration and work. The rotating chair should also be able to participate in those collaborative conversations.
- Mariana S.: Can ANR put their thoughts in the document?
- Jennifer B.: Was taking notes in the document
- Kim B.: Community Engagement Component of the VT EJ Mapping Tool:
    - The first iteration of the VT EJ Mapping Tool is due January 1, 2025.
    - The selection committee is comprised of Trey Martin and Mariana Sears from the AC, Stephanie Smith from the IAC, CREJU and 1 member of ANR's Climate Action Office.
- Kim B.: Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Component of the VT EJ Mapping Tool:
    - GIS Selection Committee chose Stone Environmental as the GIS contractor

    - This was done through a blind review process. This meant that all identifiable information was redacted by our General Counsel's office. Firm names, names of individuals, location of firms, past project titles, etc. were all removed for the 2 rounds of review
- Juliet B.: Cumulative Burden Deliverable:
    - The cumulative environmental burden rulemaking deliverable is a deliverable we will be providing technical assistance to you all in the coming months.
    - Agency of Natural Resources must create a rule that guides both us and other agencies on how to consider the collective impacts of environmental burdens in decision-making.
    - Vermonters experience multiple environmental burdens not in isolation, but as cumulative effects. This rule requires us to take those cumulative impacts into account as we make decisions.
- Karla R.: This is a good opportunity to think about what would be helpful for a potential future chair on the AC.
- Karla R.: ANR is in the process of preparing technical assistance materials for Advisory Council and Interagency Committee members on the cumulative burden deliverable. Internally, ANR has already held multiple meetings with the General Counsel's office and EJ Network and gathered feedback.
- Karla R.: It would be ideal if potential AC chair could join some of those meetings that we're having, because as Juliet indicated, we all learn this process together. There are folks within our team who know this in and out. This is one of my favorite areas of environmental law, but there are others who this is new to them.
- Karla R.: We will all learn together and develop materials together. The chair would ideally participate in these meetings with us so that when the time comes to facilitate the AC meeting, there is a deeper understanding of what the deliverable entails, not only for the Advisory Council, but also for the covered agencies, which is what you would be informing.
- Juliet B.: Community Engagement Plan Deliverable
    - The AC Advisory Council produced this beautiful document called the Core Principles of Community Engagement, which will inform the community engagement plans that each covered agency will create.
    - The Interagency Committee met in July to start exploring what those plans could look like and we really just introduced the idea of this deliverable.
    - This is an area that the Advisory Council members have expressed a lot of interest. We look forward to having more meetings where the Advisory Council and the Interagency Committee can get together and put their heads together on these plans.

    - So Mariana, looking at you again, I know that you're super interested in community engagement and I hope this is an area that you can feel really confident about.
- Kim B.: VT EJ Law Timeline Needs + Next Steps:
    - All of these deliverables overlap extensively. The next five to six months really does require nimble scheduling, not only our Unit but for you all. We recognize that some Advisory Council members are wearing multiple hats by being on the community engagement selection committee and there's going to be a lot of intensive meeting around that.
    - We know it's hard because we all are juggling a lot. We'll be sending out Doodle polls for each month. Please fill them out as soon as you can. Please communicate your scheduling needs with us. Please fill out your per diem forms.

2:00 PM

Close Out