

Public Meeting of the Vermont Environmental Justice (EJ) Advisory Council (AC)
Hybrid Meeting Minutes
February 11, 2026

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: February 11, 2026

Meeting Time: 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM EST

Attendees:

Advisory Council (AC): Mariana Sears, Rich Holschuh, Britaney Watson

State of Vermont: Juliet Birch, Kim Barrett, Karla Raimundi, Kate Jerman

10:00 AM

Welcome & Introductions

- Consent to [Community Agreements](#)
 - Consent received, no comments.
- Approve September 26, 2025 [Meeting Minutes](#)
 - Quorum not achieved.
- Approve February 11, 2026 [Agenda](#)
 - Agenda approved, no comments.

10:20 AM

VT EJ Mapping Tool Re-Orientation

- Kim B.: Today we will the legal requirements for the EJ Mapping Tool, elaborate on the Mapping Tool phases and tasks, highlight the ways the AC can contribute to each phase and task. The EJ Mapping Tool is intended to depict EJFPs and measure environmental burdens at the smallest geographic level practicable.
- Kim B.: The Agency of Natural Resources will:
 - Create and maintain the Tool

- Determine the elements contained in the Tool
 - Consult with the AC and the IAC
 - Act as final decision-makers in the development of the tool
- Kim B.: The Advisory Council:
 - Provides consultation to ANR that informs the elements in the Mapping Tool
 - Has the ability to reach consensus on what to include in their consultation
 - Does not have decision-making or voting power on how their consultation is used
- Juliet B.: The GIS phases of the EJ Mapping Tool development are (some of these phases are in chronological order, some may happen simultaneously):
 - Developing a strong plan
 - Conducting research – uncovering pre-existing data in the state that can help inform the mapping too
 - Identifying gaps – identifying places where we may not already have reliable data
 - Developing and integrating data – creating new data to fill data gaps
 - Developing the initial tool
 - Connecting with communities – working alongside the community engagement contractor
 - Training and capacity building – teaching the public how to use the tool and teaching SOV employees how to use the tool
 - Planning for the future
- Juliet B.: For each task under the GIS work, we will describe what the task entails and highlight how the AC can contribute. These contributions are optional based on your capacity and interest, not required:
 - Task 0, Project management: Setting up a workplan and coordination structures including stakeholder meetings. AC contribution: Participate in stakeholder meetings with the GIS contractor to inform their project planning
 - Task 1, Background research and data discovery: Finding pre-existing data in Vermont and explaining what gaps in data may exist. AC contribution: Provide content (reports, examples of mapping projects, relevant data) for the GIS contractor to review
 - Task 2, Gap-filling and data development: Contracting will create new data that helps us fill gaps of data that we don't have across Vermont. AC contribution: Provide feedback on how relevant the data produced by the GIS contractor is to the communities you represent
 - Task 5, Community engagement and participation: GIS contractor must engage in community engagement activities coordinated by the

community engagement contractor. AC Contribution: collaborate with the contractors at public meetings, listening sessions, and other community touchpoints

- Tasks 3 and 4 are skipped because they are technical and do not really include an AC role
 - Task 6, Testing, reporting, and final delivery: Doing user testing to make sure the tool is user friendly for SOV employees AND members of the public. Trainings to be provided. AC Contributions: participating in the user testing, getting community members are involved in user testing
- Mariana S.: How will the GIS contractor report their findings? Will they attend public meetings?
 - Karla R.: There will be a phase of the work where both the GIS and the community engagement contractor will develop workplans. This process will include communicating how best the AC and IAC want to engage with the contractors. This could be in public meetings, but it is likely that, due to the magnitude of this project, it will be important to have some discussions happen outside of public meeting. This could be in the form of a task group!
 - Mariana S.: Will we have an opportunity to share our needs?
 - Karla R.: Yes, this is not prescribed. The workplan will be built in collaboration with you.
- Kim B.: The Community engagement phases of the EJ Mapping Tool development:
 - Developing a strong engagement plan
 - Determining data gaps
 - Determining community needs
 - Engaging with communities
 - Integrating data – Finding a way to appropriately represent the data that is collected through the engagements into the Mapping Tool
 - Providing recommendations
 - Training and capacity building
- Kim B.: For each task under the Community engagement work, we will describe what the task entails and highlight how the AC can contribute. These contributions are optional based on your capacity and interest, not required:
 - Task 0, Project management: Developing the plan for how they will coordinate their work across their teams, our teams, and the GIS contractor. AC Contribution: align on goals, deliverables, and timeline. Inform early workplan
 - Task 1, Outreach and engagement plan development: developing an outreach and engagement plan including strategies and methods of

engagement for gathering input. AC Contributions: Inform and prioritize outreach and engagement strategies, review engagement materials

- Task 2, Gap analysis and community needs assessment: identifying gaps and needs of communities to help inform strategies. AC contributions: support in the identification of engagement and data gaps, highlight underrepresented populations, surface barriers to participation, share missing or community-specific data
- Task 4, Community engagement implementation: Actually implementing the community engagement strategy. AC contributions: lead and co-facilitate engagement in your communities, act as trusted bridges between community and government, share engagement strategies through your expertise and lived experience
- Task 5, Reporting and recommendations: Providing reports and recommendations for future engagement efforts by covered agencies to ensure that institutional knowledge remains. AC Contributions: review findings, highlight key themes, advice on accessibility improvements, contribute to a knowledge transfer
- Task 6, training and capacity building: Host training sessions and create public materials. AC contributions: help coordinate trainings, review training materials, participate in the trainings or encourage communities to participate

10:55 AM

Public Comment

- Kate Jerman: Very impressive task. Impressed with how community can be involved in the development of this tool!

11:00 AM

Break

11:10 AM

Facilitated Working Session

- Juliet B.: Just want to make it clear that all of the AC contributions that we highlighted in the previous section are optional, and AC members can participate based on their discretion, capacity, and interest. The only this AC members must

to minimally to meet their expectations under the Law is to provide consultation on the elements to be included in the EJ mapping Tool. If nothing else, AC members have to participate in that. The rest is optional. Let's take some time to weigh how AC members want to be involved in the Mapping Tool process besides this minimum requirement.

- Mariana S.: Is there a timeline we can use to help provide feedback
 - Kim B.: You can anticipate the community engagement work, for example, starting in 4-6 months
 - Karla R.: The timeline will be determined in full once the contractors have collaborated with each other and with us to develop their work plans. Would recommend creating a task group to help alleviate some of the burden on the AC at large.
- Rich H.: Looking at the tasks, would be interested in working on developing a plan, identifying gaps, and connecting with communities.
 - Juliet B.: When you express interest in connecting with communities, do you have specific things you want to see the community engagement contractor do to help you and your community get involved?
 - Rich H.: The communities I represent are spread throughout the state. It would be challenging to come up with an approach that captures everyone's thoughts and comments. The contractors could visit the VCNAA meetings for the four Vermont state recognized tribes, perhaps meet with the VCNAA itself to give a presentation. If the Commission knows what is going on, they can relay that back to their communities. It's easy to focus on the people who have a label, those without a label are sometimes unrecognized
 - Karla R.: The opportunities under the tasks actually come from the contractors' preliminary workplans from their proposals. We just need to know more about timeline. But these tasks are a reliable picture of what this process would look like operationally.
 - Kim B.: Recognizing that it can be difficult mapping indigenous populations because the borders are not the same
 - Rich H.: A quote: "The map is not the territory." Mapping is a culturally-bound process – what you put on a map is what your culture has decided is important
- Britaney W.: Would want to look at these tasks in more detail and provide my thoughts in writing.
- Mariana S.: What Rich said about the cultural implications of maps is really important. We need to center the people and the communities, even in the face of the obstacles associated with this process.

11:50 AM

Updates

- Juliet B.: Quick updates on non-Mapping Tool related work:
 - VT EJ Community Engagement Subgroup has begun meeting to develop guidance to inform the development of the Community Engagement Plans
 - Baseline Spending Reports are set to be published publicly and submitted to the AC on February 13! Keep an eye out for an email
 - IAC met in January to finalize approach to submitting final Baseline Spending Reports
 - Working on Excellence partnerships (formerly the buddy system): If you are interested in having a buddy from the IAC, respond to the survey. If you have already responded to the survey, expect to be given a partner soon!
 - EJFP representative vacancy: Walter Brownridge has resigned so we are looking to fill his seat!

12:00 PM

Close Out