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## **New Report Shows Many California State Regulatory Agencies Fall Short on Environmental Justice**

*EJ Advocates Assess Nine Agencies and Highlight Six Agencies to Watch*

**Oakland, CA | May 8, 2018** — A new report released today takes a closer look at how well state agencies develop, implement, and monitor policies that address environmental issues that impact low-income communities and communities of color. The [California Environmental Justice Alliance](#) (CEJA)'s [2017 Environmental Justice Agency Assessment](#) demonstrates the need to more deeply institutionalize EJ in our state agencies and where there are areas for improvement.

In CEJA's 2nd Agency Assessment, EJ advocates shine a light on key policies that these agencies were responsible for — from basic human rights like clean water and clean air, to innovations in renewable energy and sustainable development. The Assessment uses eight principles of Environmental Justice and looks at how well the agencies' actions conformed with each of the principles, and assigned an assessment of "poor," "fair," or "good" for their performance. The report assesses nine state agencies that are seen as critical implementers of — or roadblocks to — EJ policies and programs, and highlighted key issues at six agencies to watch.

"Our 2017 Environmental Justice Agency Assessment reveals that overall many state agencies still make decisions that actively harm EJ communities and fail to meaningfully prioritize long-standing health and quality of life needs. Without strong leadership and aggressive, equitable implementation from our state agencies, groundbreaking environmental justice policies will not lead to the meaningful reduction of pollution, increased environmental benefits, and improved environmental health for communities most impacted by climate change and pollution burdens," said **Amy Vanderwarker, Senior Policy Strategist, California Environmental Justice Alliance** and one of the report co-authors.

**For the full 2017 Environmental Justice Agency Assessment:** [bit.ly/EJAA2017](https://bit.ly/EJAA2017)

Environmental justice advocates across the state responded to the report, highlighting key challenges at several agencies assessed:

The Division of Oil, Gas, and Geothermal Resources, received assessments of "poor" for their continued permitting of oil and gas production activities in EJ communities including the expansion of operations in those communities, such as in South Los Angeles and Kern County.

"The California Division of Oil, Gas, and Geothermal Resources (DOGGR) needs to accept its obligations to protect the public against adverse impacts of drilling and fracking instead of operating as an extension of the oil and gas industry. It is shameful that in California, which in many ways is at the forefront of the environmental movement, this agency has been allowed to operate with such disregard for the welfare of residents by the Governor and the Legislature. Frontline communities deserve and demand more."

— **Darryl Molina Sarmiento, Executive Director, Communities for a Better Environment**

“Though California’s oil is some of the dirtiest on the planet, Governor Brown’s oil regulators issue thousands of new drilling permits each year. This dirty oil extraction fuels climate change and endangers the millions of Californians who live, work or go to school next to toxic drilling operations. And because drilling occurs disproportionately in communities of color, California’s devastating oil problem is both a public health and environmental justice emergency.”

— **Maya Golden-Krasner, Senior Attorney, Center for Biological Diversity**

The California Transportation Commission’s transportation policy, planning and allocations have traditionally been developed to sustain freeways and goods movement infrastructure, but unfortunately without consideration of air quality. CTC received assessment of “poor” for most of the eight EJ principles. The agency will have new Commissioners appointed this year.

“Today’s current California Transportation Commission is a roster of industry elite and developers who can too easily trivialize EJ concerns about our roadways, which bring black clouds of diesel and concrete to desecrate our communities. We need commissioners that move beyond the current silos of concrete and grade separation and will boldly push the Commission to work alongside the Public Utilities Commission and Air Resources Board to ensure that our infrastructure supports a zero emissions goods movement industry for California’s future.”

— **Allen Hernandez, Executive Director, Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice**

While The Department of Toxic Substances Control, one of the few agencies included in CEJA’s first assessment in 2016, continues to overwhelmingly fail on its progress towards including the eight EJ principles in its work.

“Despite years of public and legislative scrutiny, the Department of Toxic Substances Control remains an agency in crisis. DTSC’s well-documented failures to protect the public from toxic harm have done little to change the department’s policies and practices that shroud the agency in secrecy and exclude the public from decision-making processes. Unless we change the structure of this broken agency, California families will continue to be poisoned by toxic chemicals where they live, work, and go to school.”

— **Ingrid Brostrom, Assistant Director, Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment**

Bright spots in the Agency Assessment showed strong performance from the Strategic Growth Council and the California Public Utilities Commission, as well as a growing number of agencies who are developing EJ policies, such as the California Coastal Commission.

“While there is still some work to do, Strategic Growth Council has by far led its peers in ensuring focused investments in and engagement from communities most in need. The Transformative Climate Communities program alone creates a strong foundation to require local jurisdictions to engage communities, better integrate funding opportunities and improve economic, health and environmental outcomes. The legislature has an opportunity to build on SGC’s work and fund the program appropriately.”

— **Veronica Garibay, Co-Director, Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability**

Report collaborators included CEJA’s ten members and partners organizations, and four additional organizations: Californians for Pesticide Reform, Center for Biological Diversity, Community Water Center, and The People’s Senate.

The actions of state regulatory agencies are also a reflection of the Governor’s priorities, as state agencies fall under his executive administration and leadership. The assessments in this report are made in the spirit of charting a course to improving agency actions, with the ultimate goal of improving conditions that negatively impact our most vulnerable residents. This progress is needed not just for environmental justice communities, but ultimately to benefit all Californians.

**For the full 2017 Environmental Justice Agency Assessment: [bit.ly/EJAA2017](https://bit.ly/EJAA2017)**

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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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