



## California's oil and gas regulators get an "F" grade in environmental justice report

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The [California Environmental Justice Alliance](#) (CEJA) today gave the Division of Oil, Gas and Geothermal Resources (DOGGR), the state organization charged with regulating the oil and gas industry, an "F" grade for continuing to neglect the needs of environmental justice and low-income communities in the organization's third annual [Environmental Justice Agency Assessment](#) for 2018.

These communities house a majority of the 8,500 active oil and gas wells that fall within 2500 feet of schools, homes, and hospitals," according to a statement from CEJA.

In contrast with the reputation that California has acquired for being the nation's "green leader," the report reveals that many state agencies are not "successfully integrating environmental justice into their decision-making and continually fail to prioritize long-standing health and quality of life needs of constituents."

"In the report we look at their permitting process in LA and Kern counties and urge DOGGR to institute a science-based mandatory health and safety buffer zone that puts at least 2,500 feet between oil and gas rigs and sensitive receptors such as schools, daycares and hospitals," the group stated.

During Governor Jerry Brown's administration, oil and gas industry regulators approved an amazing 21,000 new oil and gas drilling permits throughout the state, including over 200 new offshore wells in state waters under existing leases.

The new report is the "only one in the nation" to assess how well state regulatory agencies engage, respond, and implement environmental policies and programs in low-income communities and communities of color, according to CEJA. [Download the full report here.](#)

"Our state regulatory agencies wield vast power in implementing environmental policies and shaping which stakeholders benefit most from the accompanying state investments," said Gladys Limón, Executive Director for the California Environmental Justice Alliance. "Without strong leadership from our state agencies, the groundbreaking environmental justice policies communities have tirelessly advocated for will not lead to the meaningful reduction of pollution and improved environmental health. We need our state officials to be resolute in fulfilling mandates

to protect the public's health and safety in executing regulatory duties, and to double-down on commitments to do so justly and equitably.”

Using eight principles of environmental justice, the report assesses how well the agencies' actions conformed with each of the principles.

“These assessments are made in the spirit of charting a course to improving agency actions, with the ultimate goal of improving conditions that negatively impact our communities, particularly those disproportionately impacted by environmental harms and least enjoy environmental benefits and protections. This assessment will guide both agencies and advocates on areas of improvement for stronger partnerships,” CEJA stated.

Of the nine state agencies assessed in the report, grades range from A- to F on their performance in implementing or failing environmental policies and programs that impact low-income communities and communities of color. “While some agencies demonstrate meaningful community engagement, evident by integration of community expertise into their policy development and implementation, others leave plenty of room for improvement,” the group said.

“By engaging with local residents and using that input to shape our state policy, California regulatory agencies can ensure that environmental burdens are reduced and benefits are shared,” CEJA said.

**The group gave the California Air Resources Board a C- grade, the California Department of Pesticide Regulation a D, the California Department of Toxic Substances Control a D, the California Division of Oil, Gas and Geothermal Resources an F, the California Public Utilities Commission a B+, the California State Lands Commission an “inconclusive,” the California State Water Resources Control Board a B, the California Strategic Growth Council an A- and the California Coastal Commission a B-.**

CEJA members and partners from across the state responded to the report, outlining key challenges at several agencies and recommendations for improvement:

“The Division of Oil, Gas, and Geothermal Resources (DOGGR) is an agency that has for too long only focused on supporting the oil and gas industry in extracting California's fossil fuels at the expense of the health of low-income communities of color,” said Alvaro Casanova, Senior Policy Advocate, Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment. “DOGGR can improve by shifting its personnel and practices to center public health and the environment. This shift must include: hiring public health experts, community engagement staff, and interagency collaboration with public health agencies to ensure rigorous health risk assessment of the proximity and density of oil and gas operations near sensitive receptors before granting permits.”

However, Casanova said his groups is are encouraged by “DOGGR taking steps to work with CRPE on a citizen science project meant to engage communities and build trust, and we look forward to working more closely with DOGGR in the near future.”

“Last year, the California Air Resources Board demonstrated that it can take bold steps to significantly curb pollution by passing the Innovative Clean Transit rule, which set a statewide goal for public transit agencies to transition to zero emission bus fleets by 2040,” commented Andrea Vidaurre, Policy Analyst, Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice. “However, it’s imperative that they continue to prioritize community health by addressing the substandard air across the state that poses an extreme threat for thousands living with asthma and other respiratory issues. It’s with great urgency for CARB to exercise robust authority over air districts on pollution reduction measures, such as the Community Air Protection Program (AB 617), and be staunch on the regulatory front in supporting the most ambitious timelines and standards for emission reduction measures.”

Shana Lazerow, Legal Director, Communities for a Better Environment, said, “Efforts to center our energy future around equity are really starting to show results at the California Public Utilities Commission, with tangible progress in considering communities of color and low-income communities on topics ranging from planning for additional clean resources and retiring polluting power plants to requiring utilities to include adaptation in how they think about the future of energy.”

“Throughout the Transformative Climate Communities process in Fresno, the Strategic Growth Council has and continues to conduct itself as one would hope a public agency would,” concluded Grecia Elenes, Senior Policy Advocate, Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability. “Staff were respectful of residents, listened to their concerns and were very responsive. Many staff even built their own relationships with community members and communicated regularly with each other. Unfortunately, we often see governmental bodies not treat the people they serve with the respect they deserve, but it was refreshing to see how well the Strategic Growth Council interacted with residents.”

Below are the agency assessment overall scores:

### **Agency Assessment Overall Scores**

<b>Name</b>	<b>2018 Overall Assessment Grade</b>
California Air Resources Board	C-

California Department of Pesticide Regulation	D
California Department of Toxic Substances Control	D
California Division of Oil, Gas, and Geothermal Resources	F
California Public Utilities Commission	B+
California State Lands Commission	INC*
California State Water Resources Control Board	B
California Strategic Growth Council	A-
California Coastal Commission	B-
California Department of Food and Agriculture	To Watch
California Department of Water Resources	To Watch
California Energy Commission	To Watch
California Transportation Commission	To Watch

CEJA's full 2018 Environmental Justice Agency Assessment is available at: [bit.ly/EJAA2018](https://bit.ly/EJAA2018)